Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics

Editor-in-Chief: William Schweiker

Volume One: Moral Enquiry

Volume Editor: Maria Antonaccio

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2022

Registered Offices
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Office
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data applied for
Hardback ISBN: 9781118471982

Cover Design: Wiley
Cover Image: © Shelby McQuilkin

Set in 9.5/12.5pt STIXTwoText by Straive, Pondicherry, India

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Preface to Volume 1 – Moral Inquiry

Maria Antonaccio

The *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics* introduces readers to basic issues in moral inquiry, a selection of moral traditions, and surveys a range of moral issues. Each of the three volumes covers one of these three elements of religious ethics, with Volume I focusing on moral inquiry.

What distinguishes "religious" ethics from other approaches to ethics is, first and foremost, its connection to the religions. While there is much debate in modern scholarship about the precise meaning of the term "religion" there is at least a widely shared conviction that there are such things as religions, by which is meant social groups and traditions of thought and practice that are in one way or another about the deepest human questions and the ultimate goal(s) of human life, including but not limited to reverence for a divine being or beings. Thought about or practice in relation to what is held to be ultimately real and important seems to be a longstanding feature of human life across historical periods, geography, and cultural traditions.

Volume I addresses general theoretical issues in the study of religious ethics in order to clarify the contours of religious ethics as a discipline and intellectual practice. The entries contained in this volume provide conceptual resources for understanding the moral beliefs and practices of diverse religious traditions, the social practices and institutions that transmit those beliefs and practices, and the methods and approaches used to compare religious ethical traditions. Accordingly, the volume is divided into three parts: (1) Reflection (2) Transmission (3) Comparison. Each of these parts is further divided into sections that provide additional specification of these general themes. For example, Part 1 on Reflection represents the major foci and theories of religious ethics as a field of study, with sections on moral knowledge, moral formation, and normative approaches. Part 2 on Transmission addresses the mechanisms and pathways by which traditions of religious ethics are reproduced, interpreted, and contested, with sections on texts, institutions, and practices. Part 3 on Comparison presents some of the most salient theories, approaches, and concepts that have been deployed in the task of comparing traditions of religious ethics.

Many of the entries in Part 1 of this volume reflect the fact that the field of religious ethics overlaps in significant ways with moral philosophy. For example, in the section on normative approaches, readers will find entries on deontology, consequentialism, and virtue, among others. Other entries in this volume highlight themes that are distinctive to the study of religious ethics, such as entries on performance and

liturgy, and on pilgrimage and meditation (in Part 2 on Transmission). Still other entries reflect recent developments and approaches to the study of religious ethics that have been informed by trends in other disciplines, such as the entry on embodied knowledge (in Part 1) and on secularism and post-secularism (in Part 3).

Taken together, the entries in this volume are intended not only to provide an accessible overview of a particular topic, but also to reflect the authors' distinctive contributions to the field of study. No attempt has been made to impose on the contributors any particular view of the topics on which they were invited to contribute. Rather, the diversity of topics and approaches contained in this volume reflects the vitality of religious ethics as a field of study. We encourage readers to make use of Volume I not only to seek information on the particular topics contained herein, but also to gain a broader understanding of the shape of religious moral inquiry as a complex and dynamic enterprise that takes place within and among individuals, communities, and institutions over time and space.

In his entry "On Religious Ethics" that introduces each volume of the *Encyclopedia*, William Schweiker speaks of religious ethics as a field of study that undertakes three interrelated *tasks* – critical, comparative, and constructive – from what he describes as a hermeneutical *standpoint* and with respect to interlocking *dimensions* of reflection: descriptive, normative, practical, fundamental, and metaethical. These dimensions of inquiry arise from the persistent questions that surround human existence – questions, Schweiker notes, that "demarcate a space of human existence determined by the problem of how one ought to live religiously." The *Encyclopedia* as a whole enacts this multi-dimensional approach insofar as the three volumes present for scholarly reflection "the space or network of questions within which human life transpires and the answers a community gives to those questions in order to shape character and guide conduct."

While the editors of the three volumes of the *Encyclopedia* support, to varying degrees, a hermeneutical approach to religious ethics, to view the field of religious ethics as presented in these volumes as proceeding from a hermeneutical standpoint is less a prescriptive than a descriptive statement – and even an invitation. Readers are invited to engage in the critical, constructive, and comparative tasks themselves as they consider the entries in each volume of the *Encyclopedia*. The entries in the present volume introduce readers to major concepts, categories, and theoretical approaches in the study of religious ethics, illuminating how moral thinking and moral formation occur in religious contexts and thereby providing resources for the comparison of moral traditions in Volume II as well as constructive reflection on practical moral problems in Volume III.

INTRODUCTION

On Religious Ethics

William Schweiker

The publication of the *Blackwell Companion of Religious Ethics* in 2005 represented a defining moment for religious ethics. Happily, this new *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*, incorporating and updating the entirety of the three volumes and published fifteen years later, continues the work of defining the meaning, task, and forms of religious ethics. Ethicists, historians of religion, theologians, philosophers, political theorists, and other experts have explored the moral outlooks and practices of the world's religions. Drawing on and revising religious resources, basic themes in Moral Theory as well as a host of contemporary moral and political problems are treated. The *Encyclopedia*'s three volumes mirror the structure of the Companion but now greatly expanded: Volume I on issues in Moral Theory; Volume II on Moral Traditions; Volume III on Moral Problems. Throughout the volumes, topics will be explored in depth and in most cases comparatively even as the individual authors express their reasons and judgments on the topics.

Given the comprehensive nature of this work, the purpose of the present entry is not to provide a detailed "introduction" to the volumes. Such an introduction is not possible given the sheer size of these volumes and insofar as this is a collective work rather than a single line of argument. This entry is meant to provide orientation to the range of questions and kinds of thinking found in the various parts of *The Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*.

Religious Ethics?

Anyone who works in religious ethics confronts an immediate and obvious problem. "Ethics" or "moral philosophy" is not indigenous to the world's religions. Inspired by Socrates and other sages, Greek and Roman thinkers engaged in the rational analysis and justification of norms, practices, forms of character, and ways of life believed to secure human happiness or well-being (*eudaimonia*). The inspiration of Socrates, and the memory of his conviction and execution on the charge of impiety, meant that ethics was also a challenge to the authority of religious and traditional moral beliefs. What is more, the conception of a good human life advocated by Hellenistic philosophers is foreign to the religions. Religious traditions obviously sustain reflection on human well-being, happiness. However, these accounts are set within an order defined by beings, realms, ideals, purposes, and practices not limited to human life and flourishing.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

The scope of concern found in the world's religions is thereby wider than the discourse of ethics and Hellenistic ideas about human well-being. It is quite unremarkable, then, that the world's religions have generally not used the idea of ethics to specify the character of their outlooks on what defines a good life, right conduct, noble character, and proper social relations. For scholarly purposes, *ethics*, as used in this *Encyclopedia*, is the term for a discipline of thought that interprets, critically assesses, and, often, applies the *morality* of a religious community or tradition. *Morality*, accordingly, is the actual rules, duties, goods, rituals, practices, and values of a community used to orient life.

Similar problems surround the idea of "religion." None of the historical legacies explored in this *Encyclopedia* initially defined themselves as a religion. The term seems to have arisen from the Latin *religare*, meaning to tie or to bind. Religion specified how one was bound to the origins of the city of Rome as itself a sacred reality. Other ideas of religion developed, especially during the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, in order to facilitate the study of the beliefs, practices, values, and histories of human communities. As explored in the following volumes, definitions range from religion as belief in gods or one God, claims about sacred power, ultimate concern, to the charge that religion is about concealed mechanisms of domination.

Most contemporary scholars agree that a religion includes several features: convictions about what is most important in life (experiences like birth and death, sex and sorrow) in relation to what is believed to be ultimate, sacred, holy, or divine, ritual actions, beliefs about the whence and whither of existence, codes of conduct, communal life and its structures, and also experiences of transcendence (e.g. enlightenment, redemption, mystical insight), religious leaders. However, these features of religion are disputed and bear different meanings in diverse cultures and traditions. Again, for scholarly purposes, this *Encyclopedia* holds that the distinctive feature of *religions* from other human sociocultural forms is that they are about what is ultimately important and real for some community of people. That is to say, the referent or object of religious devotion and/or practice is not just what is important or valuable to people, but it must also, in some way, be real, defined in many ways. Likewise, what is real (however defined) is not the referent or object of religion if it is not ultimately important to some human community. While variously conceived, some social and cultural form or practice is not *religious* if it does not bind together importance with something, someone, or some condition that is held to be real.

The idea of "religion," just like "ethics," is a scholarly invention. As rightly noted in the various parts of this *Encyclopedia*, these ideas are not native to traditions, much less necessary categories of the human mind. They are tools for inquiry and reflection. What is more, one must keep distinct, if sometimes related, the morality or ethics of a religion (the actual ways of life, beliefs, values, norms, and outlooks of a people) from the intellectual labor of scholars and thinkers called "ethics" and/or "religious ethics." What is sought in these volumes and this entry is an account of the intellectual enterprise of religious ethics ever mindful of complex connections to ways of religious and moral living.

Given the conceptual problems surrounding religion and ethics, it is not surprising that one finds different options in the intellectual pursuit of religious ethics. Some distinct approaches have typified the field, although there are manifold subtypes and variations (see Schweiker 1998; Twiss and Grelle 1998, 11–33). First, some religious ethicists have sought to specify a unique concept, phenomenon, rational structure, or set of practices called religion more or less manifest in what are conventionally seen as the "religions." Often called the *formalist* approach to religious ethics, the task is to show the place and import of religion for the moral life (see Green 1978; Gamwell 1990). Others adopt, second, a *sociolinguistic* approach. These thinkers explore specific action guides recommended by communities and/or

how communities specify through ritual, myth, discourse, and belief often incommensurable ways of life (see Little and Twiss 1978; Stout 1988). Third, there are scholars who develop versions of *ethical naturalism*. This approach is concerned with the particularity of moral outlooks, but also "treats a system of beliefs as a whole and refuses to isolate moral propositions for analysis from propositions about how things are in the world and how they come to be that way" (Lovin and Reynolds 1985, 3). More recently, a group of scholars, headed by Elizabeth Bucar and Aaron Stalnaker, have written about a third wave of work in Comparative Ethics focused especially on cultural and moral diversity (Bucar and Stalnaker, 2012). This has opened the field to cultural and ethnographic studies without loss of a normative purpose. Each of these approaches in religious ethics, as well as various permutations on them, can be found in this book. No attempt, thankfully, has been made to demand agreement among them.

Another way of conceiving religious ethics is now in view and it finds expression throughout this *Encyclopedia* and other works (see Schweiker and Clairmont 2020). The remainder of this entry gives an account of this *hermeneutical* and *multidimensional* option alongside other approaches to the field. Like formalists, a multidimensional approach specifies a structure for ethical thinking necessary to examine specific traditions, but is not reducible to their distinctive languages and practices. Yet, as shown below, it moves beyond most formalist proposals in terms of how knowledge and disciplines are conceived. With the sociolinguistic and naturalistic options, a hermeneutical approach to religious ethics examines the distinctive outlooks of traditions. However, precisely as hermeneutical in character, religious ethics labors between and among traditions rather than focuses on the incommensurability of language-games, distinct action guides, or even moral worldviews. And with more recent accounts of Comparative Ethics, a hermeneutical approach insists on understanding the cultural and social location of the religions even as it seeks to draw on them as resources for constructive ethical and religious ethics. "Religious ethics," on this account, is defined in terms of critical, comparative, and constructive *tasks* of moral inquiry into religious resources undertaken from a hermeneutical *standpoint* and with respect to interlocking *dimensions* of reflection. My contention is that this account captures something of the scope and spirit of this *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*.

Of course, it must be stressed that what follows is a proposal for religious ethics, developed in view of this work. There is no assumption that every author or editor will agree or even ought to agree with this depiction or, for that matter, any other depiction of religious ethics. As a field of inquiry, part of the vitality of religious ethics is precisely that it must constantly engage in appraisals of its purposes, methods, and criteria of adequacy. In fact, this *Encyclopedia* must partly be seen as engaged in that kind of appraisal.

We turn next to the question of how to characterize the *tasks* and *dimensions* of religious ethics in order that the full import of these volumes can be grasped.

Tasks and Multidimensional Inquiry

There are many ways to define ethics and also many ways to carry out ethical reflection. Contemporary scholarship in *religious ethics* undertakes to a greater or lesser extent several related *tasks*.

Religious ethics entails the *critical* inquiry into complex ways of religious and moral life, but often also indicates the *constructive* use of religious sources in meeting current problems. Each of those tasks, the critical and constructive, is often bound to the work of *comparison*. As found in Volume II, a scholar

critically explores a tradition by comparing its expressions through time and/or seeing it in relation to other cultural and social dynamics, including other religions. Constructive work, like that undertaken in Volume III, compares accounts of how to live with other proposals in order to assess duties and values binding on people. The question – explored in Volume I of this *Encyclopedia* – becomes: how ought we to define religious ethics as a discipline, an intellectual practice?

With the rise of the modern Western world there were extensive debates about what constituted a discipline of thought. There emerged the conviction that any genuine discipline must have a distinct, or unique, subject matter, even as there was the need to define a "system of the sciences" around a fundamental principle or scientific method in order to ensure the coherence of knowledge. The core of the modern project was to understand the world and free human beings from ignorance and illusion. One did so by specifying the method, purpose, and criteria of various disciplines in such a way that each was *autonomous* and yet consistent with all others because they shared a *rational* structure. As Stephen Toulmin has noted: "In the underlying European worldview, then, the value of a single all-embracing system of theories, into which phenomena of all kinds could eventually be fitted, was taken for granted right up until the twentieth century" (Toulmin 2001, 87). Ethics, for instance, had to be about a distinctive domain of human conduct, say, about obligation or utility, which was different than other sciences, and yet founded rationally or empirically in the same way as other sciences. This led to the radical distinction between ethics as a *normative* discipline and other *descriptive* approaches to human behavior even if they shared similar cognitive commitments. One finds, interestingly enough, residues of this modern outlook in formalistic approaches to religious ethics. Even those who reject the modern enterprise, from the Romantics to some sociolinguistic thinkers and ethical naturalists and the cultural turn in ethics, assume that definition of a discipline only to deny it. They often contest the modern account through ad hoc or unsystematic approaches to inquiry.

This *Encyclopedia* aptly shows that the aspiration to isolate one formal structure of reason built on a single principle or to specify one scientific method as alone adequate for research is insufficient given genuine moral, religious, and cognitive diversity. Still, as formalists have long seen, there is also the need to define and characterize the discipline of religious ethics as an intellectual pursuit. Further, the modernist desire to establish the autonomy of ethics around some *sui generis* dimension at action (e.g. the moral "ought" or obligation or virtue) fails to indicate how moral reflection can and must interact with other intellectual practices in order to address exceedingly complex problems and phenomena. A crucial aspiration of much contemporary discourse is to move beyond the formal rationalism of the modern project as well as its denial by Romantics and others. It is to grasp a more humane, practical form of reasonableness. Yet in order to be apt for religious ethics, this construal of ethics must also, as naturalists, sociolinguistic, and cultural/ethnographic approaches show, explore the connections among "moral" beliefs and actions and other convictions and practices of actual living communities.

There is an important turn of late in providing an account of knowledge that bears promise for religious ethics. This is what can be called *multidimensional* thinking. What is rejected by a range of thinkers in various fields is a depiction of knowledge gained and justified through autonomous disciplines tenuously held together by *one* formal rational structure or method of inquiry. As the moral philosopher Mary Midgley has astutely noted:

> We exist, in fact, as interdependent parts of a complex network, not as isolated items that must be supported in a void. As for our knowledge, it too is a network

> involving all kinds of lateral links, a system in which the most varied kinds of connection may be relevant for helping us to meet various kinds of questions.
>
> (Midgley 2003, 25)

In this light, the burden placed on any intellectual practice aimed at knowledge is to specify those points at which it is linked to other disciplines given shared interests, norms and even values. Knowledge is a complex, reflexive network; it is a space of warranted intelligibility or reasonability.

This depiction of knowledge is important not just for addressing shared interests. It is basic to the determination of the cogency, scope, and integrity of a discipline. Rather than focusing on the *autonomy* of a "discipline," one will be interested in the *lateral links* wherein reflection and information move in and out of an intellectual practice (see Gustafson 2004). *Scope*, rather than *autonomy*, will be essential in deciding the validity, the truth, of claims. Accordingly, a discipline is best defined in terms of the basic questions it seeks to answer. When carefully examined these basic questions naturally pose other questions that, if answered, implicate a form of reflection in other modes of inquiry pursuing their own questions. A method must be devised not on one formal model of rationality but in order to match the problems and questions that need answering.

A multidimensional account of rational inquiry seems particularly apt for religious ethics. In very different ways, what scholars call the *religions* provide guidance for human living through rituals, myths, exemplars, doctrines, and teachings that answer a range of questions surrounding human existence. These questions demarcate a space of human existence determined by the problem of how one ought to live religiously – say, live as a Protestant Christian, a Shīʿite Muslim, or a Tibetan Buddhist. *Morality*, the religious ethicist can insist, is a term for the space or network of questions within which human life transpires and the answers a community gives to those questions in order to shape character and guide conduct. From the perspective of actual traditions, religious ethics must be conceived as examining various features of how the moral space of life, as we can call it, is conceived and enacted in life. Viewed as a whole, this *Encyclopedia* can be seen to enact just this kind of examination of religious moralities.

If one takes seriously recurring questions found in the legacies of religions and formulates them at an appropriate level of generality, it is possible to adduce the multidimensional shape of religious ethics (see Schweiker 1995; Schweiker and Clairmont 2020). At least five deeply interrelated questions ground the dimensions of inquiry used to engage in its comparative, critical, and constructive tasks. What is more, each of these dimensions of ethics probe various tensions, or *aporia*, in order to isolate analogues among religious outlooks. The questions that found the dimensions of ethics are not related in a sequential or deductive manner; they are not a check-list to be applied to thinkers, texts, or practices. They arise out of tensions in human life and constitute the interacting "dimensions" of ethics that aim to explicate a religion's account of and directions for orienting existence and conduct in the moral space of life. And insofar as religions use stories, rituals, and exemplary characters in order to guide life, these dimensions explicate and analyze the moral meaning of these phenomena. Further, the dimensions are important for the reader of this work in order to understand what specific questions a scholar is answering, even as the religious ethicist is held accountable for questions not answered but which are in the background of a religious outlook.

This account of moral inquiry articulates an approach for religious ethics that labors alongside *formalists* and those working *sociolinguistically*, *naturalistically*, and *cultural/ethnographic* approaches to reli-

gious traditions and communities. The account admits with formalists that a construal of ethics is an intellectual construct, but it denies that one dimension alone defines ethics and it specifies, like the other approaches, questions and answers of ethics from within the resources of real traditions. In this way religious ethics escapes the modernist reduction of a discipline to one rational principle or method, while also avoiding relativistic forms of postmodernism. What, then, are the multiple and interacting dimensions of ethical inquiry that represent a distinctive option for religious ethics and can provide orientation for reading these volumes? Recall, these are not ordered in any hierarchical way; they are mutually interactive and informative.

Dimensions of Ethics

The Descriptive Dimension

Human beings live and act in specific places, times, and sets of relations. How a situation is described, defined, and interpreted has implications for the possibilities and limits on actions and relations. In its widest compass, some construal is given of the moral context of the entirety of human life, often enough through myths, ideologies, or a moral worldview. Specific moral situations will be described, defined, and interpreted with reference to the wider outlook.

So when, for example, a Buddhist practitioner must decide in a situation what to do, there is the need to answer a basic question, "what is going on?" This is a difficult question not only because of the complexity of any situation, its openness to multiple interpretations, and the limitations of human perception and attention. The question is rendered all the more difficult because someone (authority figure, practitioner) must sort out what reality or perspective on reality is at issue, one marked by conventional truth or one rooted in *Dharma*. A devout Muslim too must determine "what is going on" in a specific situation. This requires not only a description of that case, but also knowledge of how Allāh is acting, the import of *Sharīʿa* on a case, and also specific reasoning skills. Behind these religious teachings is a basic human perplexity: how is genuine insight into a situation related to and blocked by human "blindness" to what is the case? Importantly enough, the religious often explore the dialectic of blindness and insight.

While each tradition provides answers to the question "what is going on?" they do so in wildly complex and different ways. Ethics has a *descriptive* dimension that is linked to other interpretive or hermeneutical disciplines, aimed at genuine insight, ranging from studies of myth to specific analyses of events and situations that provide ways to construe and understand moral situations. Religious ethics draws on a range of resources, experiences, types of discernment, and even beliefs about reality. These resources provide the means to describe and analyze a situation in terms of its moral meaning.

The Normative Dimension

Deciding "what is going on" in any concrete situation is never a disinterested activity. The descriptive dimension of ethics is necessarily related to some norms and values that orient thinking and action. These norms and values allow some realities to appear within moral perception; they also can conceal realities, and hence the tension of blindness and insight. Christian ideas about neighbor love, for instance, might allow a perception of human worth and vulnerability even for those deemed enemies. This

depends, of course, on how neighbor and love are normatively understood. "What norms and values ought to guide human life?" That too seems to be a basic question asked repeatedly in the legacies of religious traditions. A religious ethics has a *normative* dimension.

A bewildering diversity is found among the religions on the normative question. In many traditions there are distinct and sometimes conflicting *sources* for defining what norms and values ought to guide life. One source is the native intelligence of human beings struggling to live together; it is reason and intelligence. Another source is the ultimate binding claims and teachings, the revelation, of the community. Consider aspects of Jewish thought. Rooted in the so-called Noahide covenant, Jewish thinkers have long insisted that every person can at some level grasp moral principles. Yet, for the Jewish community, this knowledge is rudimentary in light of the revelation of the divine will in Torah. Not surprisingly, there are debates within religious traditions about the relative authority of the various *sources* of norms and values and how these ought to relate in living religiously. The sources drawn upon in moral thinking also link to other intellectual practices, especially ones interested in human valuing, social norms and goods, and debates about moral intelligence.

Disputes about the sources of moral norms and values also turn on the *content* of and *relations* among norms and values. Generally speaking, religious traditions acknowledge and seek to sustain a range of goods, like bodily integrity, family, education, art, and, at the highest level, moral excellence and righteousness (see Finnis 1983; Nussbaum 2000). How these goods are understood differs between traditions and even within a tradition; they constitute another link to disciplines, from economics to anthropology, which explore basic goods. Classical Hindu accounts of caste show, for example, that the meaning of bodily integrity shifts between the warrior caste (Kṣatriyas) and the priestly caste (Brahmans). Nevertheless, some domain of goods or values is protected and promoted by living morally. There are also debates about the norms for deciding how to respect and enhance goods. African beliefs about what is owed ancestors as the norm for human choice are decidedly different than, say, the Ten Commandments in the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. In each case, norms protect and promote goods within religious living.

However, matters are more complex. Just as the descriptive dimension of religious ethics probed the tensions between blindness and insight in human moral thinking, normative reflection has to address the question of whether or not the divine, sacred, or ultimate is beyond our conventional distinctions or good and evil or not. In fact, most religious traditions, despite their profound differences, hold that the sacred, ultimate, or divine somehow transcends or exceeds the common sensical distinctions of good and evil. And if that is so, then, normative and descriptive dimensions of inquiry are reflexively related at the level of perception and decision-making. They link ethics to other ways of articulating, describing, and valuing human actions and relations. Adducing these dimensions from widespread questions in no way shields us from the stark differences between and within traditions. Attention to these dimensions facilitates critical, comparative, and constructive work.

The Practical Dimension

When people ask about what is going on and what are the norms and values that ought to orient their living, they do so for practical rather than merely theoretical reasons. Whatever else we want and must say about the religions, they are first and foremost ways of orienting human life. They are ways of addressing the tensions, the *aproia*, of perplexity and wisdom in human life, fighting perplexity in the

name of wisdom. While the ethicist or religious thinker will develop complex epistemological theories or debate the nature of value and the validity of some conception of a norm, this is not the concern of most people. For example, as the Bhagavad Gītā opens Arjuna, standing beside Kṛṣṇa, watches a bloody battle unfold between members of his family. Should he join the battle? In the struggle of decision, a host of forces might be active, the advice of a god (Kṛṣṇa), duties bound to class or social role, bonds of love. Here too is a basic question: "what ought I or we to do?" Where is wisdom to be found?

Religious ethics has a decidedly *practical* dimension, no matter how theoretical and speculative moral inquiry becomes. It is related to other disciplines that focus on decision-making and judgment. Little wonder that so many religions link their ethics to law as well as the demand to imitate moral saints or to participate in practices of divination or study and commentary. Traditions develop complex and subtle patterns of moral reasoning in order to answer the practical questions of life. Confucian teachings about how to live the scholarly life are decidedly different than Jewish patterns of *Halakhic* reasoning. Each is, nevertheless, a response to the practical question "what ought I or we to do?" Of course, it might be illuminating to explore how *Halakhah* throws light on Confucian practices of moral reasoning and vice versa. Comparison is always possible in religious ethics.

It is also clear that this "I" or "we" is never some kind of isolated and ghostly being, but someone in relation to others. What I ought to do is related to what we ought to do. Who we are is related to other communities, who speak of "we." While certain traditions have emphasized a radical individualism in moral action, by and large there is profound awareness that moral quandaries find people amid others. Therewith develop patterns of communal reasoning and judgment; that is, the formation of a political ethics. The point is that some form of practical reasoning and judgment will be found. The work of scholars in other fields (law, social analysis, rhetoric) can aid the religious ethicist. Noting the practical dimension of ethics facilitates, rather than delimits, critical, comparative, and constructive thinking.

The Fundamental Dimension

Insofar as individuals and communities confront questions about how to orient life, something is asserted about the moral structure of reality and human beings as creatures with the power to act and choose in concert with others and thereby influence reality, themselves, and others. That is, ethics is about the proper conduct of agents, human and otherwise. Human beings can be and ought to be aware of themselves in relation to others, the context of life, and with respect to norms and values about how rightly to live. But, ironically, human beings confront here too a tension, the one between freedom and bondage. We are – to some extent – freely acting beings but in a world and universe that constrains our freedom even as we can be (and usually are) in bondage to powers beyond ourselves, say, addictions, or political forces, genetic makeup, family structures, or economic necessity. Any ethics aims, thereby, to answer a question seemingly presupposed in other moral questions: "what does it mean to be a moral agent within the wider compass of reality?" From philosophy to neuroscience, religious ethics is linked with other fields of inquiry into human being and doing and the nature of reality itself.

Religions present fantastically complex accounts of agency and the moral context of life. This is what is meant by the subject matter of the *fundamental* dimension of ethics. A good deal of modern Western ethics defined an "agent" as a being with reason and will, who can act intentionally, bring about changes in reality, others, and the agent's self, and have accountability for actions imputed and/or ascribed to him or her (see Gewirth 1978). The scope of the moral world is determined by the interactions, cooperatively

or not, among these agents. Each of the defining attributes of agency has of course been hotly debated. What do we mean by reason or will or intentionality or accountability or moral ascription? How do we best understand the formation of moral character, say through the virtues? There has been reflection on the limitations of agency, the nature of corporate agency, and questions about moral self-understanding.

Work in religious ethics is challenging and amending modern Western conceptions of agency by attending to non-human agencies and also the wider realms of reality. Human beings can be – and often are – in bondage to powers beyond themselves even as they also retain a measure of freedom. In the Christian tradition, what it means to be an agent is defined not only in terms of the power to act and to be held accountable. It is also defined by patterns of relation in which the self exists in God and in others through faith and love before God's kingdom. Further, faith and love are understood with reference to the divine activity, and this means, paradoxically, that at least two agents, the human and the divine, act in any genuinely good action. Sin, or a broken relation to God and others, is marked not just by wrong acts, but, more profoundly, by an estrangement in which one must act alone and for one's own purposes and good. God's judgment on sin is really the withdrawal of the divine presence such that the agent is left to his or her own devices. In traditional African ethics what it means to be an agent is rendered complex by the fact that the ancestors are operative agencies in the world. This is also why, as noted above, practical and normative issues in Buddhism hinge in part on the distinction between conventional and Dharmic truth and so on a distinction between "self " and "person." Insofar as the root problem is craving that gives rise to suffering, one can only speak of an agent or person through conventional terms. In the light of the teachings of the Buddha, ultimately, there is no-self.

In the religions, forces other than self, insofar as we can speak of a self, are at work in the world and in the individual. Each of the religious traditions, furthermore, examines complex psychological and sociological mechanisms that lead to moral failure, delusion, and conflict – mechanisms like inordinate craving (Buddhism), distorted loves (Christianity), ritual impurity (Hinduism), violation of ancestral bonds (African and Native-American ethics), and systemic, social distortion. An agent is set amid forces that must be considered in attaining valid understanding. Inquiry into what it means to be an agent within these rich accounts of moral reality is the fundamental dimension of religious ethics simply because these ideas are presupposed, and so *fundamental*, in all other moral questions.

The Metaethical Dimension

If one looks at the legacies of religion, there seems to be one further general question that helps to constitute the shape of religious ethics. It arises from the tensions between truth and illusion in human experience. The Buddha insisted that anyone could test the truth of his teaching in actual life. Jesus is reported to have said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Hindu ways of life claim to accord with the truth about the cosmos and also the specific tenor and form of individual life. Muslims believe that the Qur'an gives the final and ultimate revelation of the will of God. Every religion, despite what modern critics hold, purports to be truth seeking and truth teaching. Communities and traditions implicitly pose the question and provide some account of the truth of their morality and their picture of how to orient existence in the moral space of life. Of course, claims to truth differ and so too the means for showing their validity (experience, teaching, revelation, etc.). To enter into this kind of reflection is to engage in what is often called by scholars, somewhat unhappily, "metaethics." Reflection centers on clarifying moral concepts, strategies of validating claims, and forming judgments about the relative weight the

evidence and interpretations from other fields of inquiry can and ought to have in guiding life. This is meant to sort out truth from illusions the confusion of which too often befalls human life. The question of validity or truth is posed from within the religions. This too is a dimension of religious ethics, both about a religious morality and about the discipline of religious ethics itself.

The question of the truth of a moral outlook is without doubt one of the most vexing issues for religious ethics. While the ethicist might explore dimensions of a tradition's morality, how does one judge the truth of an entire religion? How does one show that a constructive religious ethics is true? On one level, the religious ethicist can address this question comparatively and critically. In Volume II of this *Encyclopedia*, readers will see scholars examine the ways in which one or several traditions go about showing the truth of their moral beliefs and practices. Further, if the religious ethicist is working within a specific tradition, say, Shīʿite Islam or Zen Buddhism, then, presumably, its strategies of validation will be in play, a matter also explored in parts of this *Encyclopedia*. Finally, when a thinker attempts to offer a constructive religious ethics, comparatively or not, then some account of how the position is validated must be given.

When the ethical task is to speak critically, comparatively, and constructively across traditions about shared human problems, matters become pressing. It poses a question implied in the very undertaking of religious ethics: from what *standpoint* is inquiry carried out and what criteria of adequacy or truth pertain to its work?

Hermeneutical Standpoint

The *dimensions* of inquiry gleaned from persistent questions and perplexities of human life aim to provide a coherent way to undertake, singularly or collectively, the comparative, critical, and constructive *tasks* of religious ethics. They also signal the kinds of questions engaged by scholars represented in every part of this work. Moral knowledge is thereby depicted as a network of intelligibility, a space of reasons, about how rightly to orient life that is held and enacted by some tradition or community and examined by scholars and religious leaders through multidimensional reflection. The religious ethicist might also make constructive claims about how rightly to live. This is, a proposal for the orientation of conduct and life that is responsive to the complexity of the "religions" and also shifts in the way knowledge and disciplines are conceived. The account of the scholarly labor of religious ethics in this *Encyclopedia* does not prejudice one set of moral beliefs over another, say African over Confucian; nor does it specify only one kind of ethics, say virtue ethics or deontology, as best for a normative understanding of the religions and meeting present-day challenges. It is an inductively developed *method* for, or *approach* to, religious ethics. Working alongside other options in the field, this proposal is, hopefully, subtle enough to facilitate the examination of the moral outlooks and practices of the world's religions. Through its dimensions, religious ethics interacts with many fields of inquiry.

However, we have been led to the thorny question of the standpoint and criteria of religious ethics. For those who take a *formalist* approach, the contention is that despite empirical differences among religions one can discern or articulate philosophically a basic structure shared by the religions that facilitates critical, comparative, and constructive work. One seeks to develop an ethics outside of substantive connections to any tradition or the surrounding life-world (see Benhabib 1992). The criterion of adequacy must be determined with respect to moral rationality itself and/or through a metaphysical vision. Those who

pursue a *sociolinguistic* approach in the discipline insist that the sheer diversity among religions and cultures means that material differences rather than formal similarities must be basic to method in religious ethics. Moral rationality, on this account, is tradition-constituted rationality (see MacIntyre 1990). The means to validate a position are internal to a tradition or they emerge at the intersection of competing traditions. *Ethical naturalists*, for their part, insist that norms and values must be grasped and evaluated in terms of their place in a whole outlook on life. And those who adopt a *cultural/ethnographic* approach grant the sheer differences in moral outlooks. The standpoint of the religious ethicist, thereby, is to engage in the examination of a community's moral worldview even while acknowledging the substantive outlook that backs her or his inquiry.

Shifts in how to describe moral knowledge enable one to conceptualize religious ethics in a new way. Similarly, there are developments afoot that demand a standpoint in religious ethics somewhat different than the other approaches in the field. While the method of religious ethics is aptly described as *multidimensional*, its standpoint can also be conceived as fully *hermeneutical* in character conjoined to specific criteria of adequacy. The importance of this standpoint is found in the moral significance of recent global developments that parallel shifts in the construal of human knowledge.

Recent Developments

Developments that characterize the present age warrant a hermeneutical standpoint in religious ethics. These recent developments, and others too, are charted throughout these volumes. A prominent one is the growing awareness around the world of the diversity of religious and moral beliefs, practices, and convictions. A good deal of modern Moral Theory seemed to efface the particularity of outlooks out of a concern to isolate general features of human existence deemed of universal ethical relevance. The need nowadays is to understand and to explain the moral vision of communities and cultures on their own terms without an initial judgment of truth or goodness. This requires interpretive engagement with the forms of thought, types of texts, practices, rituals, and organization of religions and societies.

The present awareness of global diversity has spawned the critical and comparative tasks of religious ethics, both in formulating more adequate categories of thought (Volume I), by exploring the legacies of traditions (Volume II), and in order to address shared moral problems (Volume III). However, understanding beliefs and practices, no matter how critical that might be, is not the same as justifying them, determining their truth. In a world in which the religions too often and too readily sanction violence and hatred of others, neglect or denigration of the environment, and also back excessive preoccupation with one's religious condition, judgments about what counts as a valid policy for living are required. Present worries about moral diversity provoke inquiry into how one is to establish norms that transcend particular systems of authority in order to address shared human concerns. This seems to require that the standpoint of religious ethics be neither so formal as to efface differences nor so historically particularistic that normative judgment across moralities becomes impossible.

The awareness of moral and religious diversity is just one development in the current situation that challenges how one conceives of the standpoint of religious ethics. The age of "globality," as it is called, is marked by multiple forms of reflexivity, ranging from economic processes to cultural and informational flows (see Schweiker 2004). Reflexivity is the ability of an acting entity to respond to information coming from elsewhere and to adjust its self-understanding and actions in this light. Human persons can

respond to recommendations and judgments on their actions, say, from others, a sage, moral saint, or a god, and then seek to live and act better. Reflexivity is then a kind of self-examination. Increasingly, one is aware of the ways in which social systems, cultures, and religious traditions are, analogically, reflexive or learning and self-testing beings. Global reflexivity works through economic, cultural, imaginary, and legal mechanisms shaping human and non-human life.

The reflexive dynamic of global flows has brought with it new and unexpected developments. During the twentieth century, many scholars of religion defined their work in terms of secularism. The modern world was supposedly a time in which ideas and experiences of religion or transcendence or the sacred were being effaced by the pressure of differentiated social structures and the march of science to demystify the world. Similarly, the legacies of colonialism demanded that peoples around the world adjust their lives and cultures to the secular order (see Appadurai 1996). Throughout this *Encyclopedia*, and especially Volume II, one can trace the ways religious traditions have responded to secularism, colonialism, and modernism.

The noonday of the secular world never really came, or it only appeared in faint glimmers. The present age is characterized by nothing so much as the force and movement of the religions on the global scene. Global reflexivity, the ways in which communities appear in the "gaze of the other," is of great moral import. One can witness the transformation of traditions in and through interactions with and resistance to other global forces, including other religious traditions, rather than the pressure of secularization. This also seems to require a hermeneutical standpoint in religious ethics insofar as hermeneutics examines the dynamics of human understanding through encounters with divergent claims to meaning, encounters in which transformation of life as well as conflict are possible.

The awareness and worries about moral diversity and global reflexivity arising out of the contours of the emerging age are deeply intertwined with shifts in moral sensibilities. These shifts in sensibility are other developments that impinge on the standpoint of religious ethics. The modern world from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries saw the apotheosis of human power in technology, political organization, the media, and economic systems, and with these developments an exclusive concentration on human flourishing. Ironically, modern anthropocentrism turned against itself. Holocausts, genocides, terrorism, grinding poverty, and horrific wars scarred the twentieth century and now too the twenty-first century. Massive suffering and violence have sparked deeper sensitivity to the vulnerability and preciousness of persons (see Gaita 2000; Glover 2000). Conjointly, there is growing awareness of the interdependence of every form of life on this planet. People around the world are imaging the scope of moral value to include but also to exceed human well-being. This ecological sensibility has challenged longstanding beliefs about moral value and standing. In various ways, moral sensibilities for the worth of all realms of life are spreading around the world. This is sorely needed insofar as the religions continue to take violent expression and to foster ignorance and the neglect of finite, planetary resources. Emerging sensibilities can and must aid in the transformation of the traditions that spawn but also thwart moral aspirations.

The realities of moral diversity, global reflexivity, and emerging moral sensibilities are obviously interrelated developments. Taken together, these demarcate some of the contours of the current moral space of life. In order to understand and respond to them, religious ethics must carry out critical, comparative, and constructive work. Because of the deeply interrelated nature of current dynamics, religious ethics obviously needs to be defined beyond modern conceptions of what constitutes a discipline or an intellectual practice. Furthermore, something important is at stake in an account of an ethical standpoint once

the reflexive dynamics of cultural interactions amid human diversity in global times is seriously considered. The religious ethicist does not simply exist within or outside actual traditions. She or he is always thinking at the *lateral connections* among communities, traditions, and intellectual practices. What does this fact mean for the standpoint of religious ethics?

Standpoint and Criteria

In order to specify the standpoint of religious ethics in the light of current global developments, one can reclaim terminology from the Hellenistic world that arose within its religious and cultural imagination prior to the development of "ethics." The standpoint of religious ethics is *hermeneutical*. Derived from the Greek god Hermes, hermeneutics is reflection on the possibilities and limits of understanding ambiguous meanings won through the act of interpretation and thereby how meanings are conveyed from one realm to another. In the Homeric texts, the virtual sacred literature of that culture, Hermes conveyed meanings from the gods to mortals. Other religions, as found in this volume, explore the conveyance of meanings across boundaries in revelations, divinizations, rituals, exegetical strategies, and mystical insights.

The point is certainly not to reclaim Greek ideas in order to define the standpoint of religious ethics! The insight is that religious ethics conceived as a hermeneutical enterprise moves between traditions or among expressions of one tradition, seeking understanding and the orientation of conduct and life. No doubt that movement will always be marked by the ethicist's "home tradition," religious or secular. One remains a Chinese or Japanese Buddhist religious ethicist or an African Christian or a postmodern European Aristotelian. No one (thankfully) must necessarily sacrifice their identity for the sake of undertaking religious ethics. Yet the standpoint, the posture of thinking, takes place at the reflexive connections of traditions and other forces working in the world. The religious ethicist on this picture enacts the lateral links among the dimensions of ethics and other forms of inquiry into the moral beliefs and practices of the religions. In the process some degree of knowledge and understanding is attained, a shared world of meaning is partly disclosed, even as identities can be confirmed or tentatively transformed. The religious ethicist participates in the enacting of a complex network of moral knowledge, never complete yet nonetheless attained. This hermeneutic action is achieved by undertaking the adventure of thought signified through the various dimensions of religious ethics.

How then are we to judge the validity or truth of the work of a religious ethicist? This is a question hotly debated in the pages of this *Encyclopedia,* particularly in Volume I. Generally stated, two *criteria* bear on a hermeneutical standpoint in ethics. First, any adequate ethical claim, whether about the beliefs and practices of a specific tradition or a proposal for meeting a current moral problem, must prove its great adequacy to relevant material in argumentative exchange with other accounts. A position is truer than some other insofar as it answers more comprehensively and coherently the range of questions specified in the dimensions of ethics. It must, accordingly, meet demands entailed in the act of multidimensional inquiry, as well as be error reducing with respect to rival positions or interpretations (see Taylor 1990). Again, scope rather than autonomy is basic to the adequacy of an ethics. This is a *procedural* criterion. It means that a religious ethics is never justified prior to lively engagement with other positions. Additionally, a position must afford some advance in thinking by provoking or providing deeper insight into a moral problem or way of life. This second *heuristic* criterion is more illusive than

the procedural one. What counts as insight, let alone "deeper" insight? Nevertheless, a moral position can claim greater adequacy, greater truth, if it enables one to apprehend, understand, and respond to factors really pressing on human lives but missed by other moral positions. *Heuristic* and *procedural* criteria are applicable to the scholarly labor of criticism and comparison as well as to constructive ethics. These criteria can, of course, be elaborated in much greater detail, a task not needed in this Introduction but one explored throughout the *Encyclopedia* as a whole (see Schweiker and Clairmont 2020)

There are good reasons within the religions as well as those found in global dynamics to adopt a hermeneutic standpoint in moral inquiry. The religious ethicist can isolate and articulate these various reasons as backing for her or his work. Abiding by the criteria of a hermeneutical standpoint within multidimensional inquiry, religious ethics can, but need not, aid in the reconstruction of religious identities around criteria of ethical truth, rather than subjecting the question of truth to communal identity. In this way, a thinker critically and comparatively releases the resources of traditions and communities for constructive thought about how rightly to orient human life.

Conclusion

This entry has sought to address terminological, methodological, and also criteriological issues within the ongoing work of religious ethics. It has sketched an approach to the discipline working alongside others in terms of *tasks*, *dimensions*, and *standpoint*. This proposal is meant to aid the reader in exploring the richness of the thought represented in this *Encyclopedia*, as well as to outline a new possibility for religious ethics itself. One should not expect all scholars represented here to use this proposal, nor is that needed. As noted before, part of the vitality of the field is to keep constantly in play the appraisal of its work and adequacy. Yet by enlisting a vast range of renowned scholars from various disciplines, traditions, and cultures, the labor of religious ethics now crosses disciplinary boundaries that have for too long inhibited its development. *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics* presents an exciting vision of moral inquiry engaged with the fantastic resources of the world's religions, open to other fields of reflection on the human adventure, and dedicated to understanding and addressing moral challenges and possibilities emergent in our global times.

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Part I

Reflection

1 Moral Knowledge

CHAPTER 1

Moral Theories

Robin W. Lovin

Moral Life and Moral Theory

Every religious tradition offers guidance for living a moral life. At the most basic level, this guidance is simply woven into the fabric of observances, beliefs, and expectations that shape a way of life we identify as Hindu, or Christian, or Ibo, or Confucian. In most cases, traditions also give rise to teachers, prophets, and philosophers who provide a critical assessment of these everyday expectations. Aristotle (384–322 BCE) gave a systematic account of the virtues that were honored in Greek culture. The Hebrew prophets (eighth to fifth centuries BCE) identified principles of justice and mercy that explained the requirements of the Law (Torah) and sometimes criticized the ways the Law was generally observed. Confucius (551–479 BCE), Lao Tzu (sixth or fourth century BCE), and Chuang Tzu (399–295 BCE) showed the right way to observe Chinese traditional virtues by relating them to the demands of social harmony or to the patterns of an underlying natural order. Such reflections may be called "moral philosophy." By identifying principles on which practices rest, these reflections systematize prevailing expectations, and they also provide a basis for criticizing and revising them. Most religions have had moral philosophy, in this general sense, for a very long time (Donagan 1977).

Modern moral theory, however, has a more comprehensive critical purpose. Moral theory is less about how to live a particular way and more about why we ought to be moral and what it means to say that a rule, an action, or an ideal is moral. Western philosophers, beginning in the seventeenth century with Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, and Locke, attempted to answer these critical questions by establishing the rational requirements for any sort of morality. A moral theory in this modern sense may also give rational arguments for specific moral commands and prohibitions. Some moral theorists begin with this normative task. Others concentrate first on the questions of moral authority and moral meaning. In either case, the theorist develops a comprehensive basis for explaining, comparing, and criticizing existing ways of life or systems of moral philosophy, including religious moralities. On the basis of the moral theory, the theorist can make judgments about whether the requirements a religion or a way of life imposes are morally justifiable. The theorist also appears to have in principle a powerful tool for comparative study by assessing diverse systems of belief and practice in light of the structure of morality that the theory provides. At the beginning of the modern period in Western thought, these theoretical tools were believed to hold great promise for adjudicating religious conflicts and settling disputes about morality.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Moral Theory and Religion

The earliest use of moral theory in religious ethics, then, was by Western philosophers who used their theories for a critical evaluation of traditional Christian ethics. This theoretical assessment of prevailing moral traditions has been repeated, with important variations, by other philosophers in relation to other traditions around the world (Cho 1998). Extensive use of moral theory as a tool in the comparative study of religious ethics is a more recent development (Little and Twiss 1978).

The way that a modern moral theory can relate to a religious tradition is well illustrated by the work of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Kant based his moral theory on a *categorical imperative*, an exceptionless moral rule that requires us to act only on those reasons that we can also make into universal laws, governing the choices of others as well as our own. Thus, lying is morally wrong because we cannot rationally formulate a rule that would require it as a universal practice. We choose to tell a lie only by allowing ourselves an exception to a rule that we acknowledge in the very act of breaking it (Kant 1964).

Kant's moral theory overturned several understandings of the moral life that have been common in Western Christianity. A Kantian could not argue that God has implanted certain ends and purposes in human beings by nature, so that all people share certain moral aims. Desire for a goal, even if it is universally shared, does not explain why we are morally required to pursue it. Kant's theory thus disposes of a pattern of argument, based on the universal human desire for peace, or happiness, or blessedness, that Catholic Christian writers had learned early from Greek philosophy and built over the centuries into an elaborate theory of natural law, given special prominence in the work of Thomas Aquinas (1125–1274). Likewise, Kant calls into question the claim, more common among Protestant theologians, that we are obliged to obey God's commandments simply and solely because it is God who commands us. Even when God is the lawgiver, the rational person cannot accept the command as a *moral* law unless it meets the test Kant sets out in the categorical imperative.

While there is little left of some religious ways of thinking about morality in Kant's moral theory, Kant preserved what many people regarded as central to the practice of Christian ethics. Other theories raised more radical questions about conventional moral expectations. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) devised a moral theory in which the basic principle is the development of a person's capacities for creativity and control over the circumstances of life, so that when we ask what we are required to do, the answer must be closely tied to the possibilities inherent in our individual personalities. When viewed from this theoretical perspective, many prevailing moral expectations and the religious beliefs that support them have no moral justification (Nietzsche 1998). In this case, the theory does not provide a rational basis for traditional moral requirements, but offers instead a moral justification for setting traditional morality aside. Nietzsche understood his task to be the destruction of traditional Christian morality, so that something new might arise in its place.

Varieties of Moral Theory

Kant and Nietzsche are two of the most important moral theorists in terms of their impact on religious thought, but they hardly exhaust the possibilities for moral theory. The study of moral theory in the West since the seventeenth century has produced a variety of competing accounts of the basic principle of morality, rather than a single, dominant theory. While all of the theories aim to provide a basis for ethics

that is independent of existing moral beliefs and particular religious traditions, they establish that starting point for morality in different ways, and their assessments of religious beliefs and practices vary accordingly. In this section, we will briefly survey the main types of moral theory and consider the general implications of each for our thinking about religious ethics.

There is no universally accepted taxonomy of ethical theories, nor even any strict conventions about how to name them. Nevertheless, the main types of moral theory are generally recognized, and we can follow an outline that allows us to consider the implications of each for thinking about religious ethics. The terminology used here appears, with some modifications, elsewhere in this volume and more widely in the contemporary literature of philosophy and religious ethics.

We have already noted that moral theory has two basic tasks. The first is to make sense of the multitude of rules, proverbs, parables, tales of moral heroes, lists of virtues, and descriptions of moral ideals that guide the moral life as we are supposed to be living it. "Normative ethics" develops theories that systematize moral expectations and explain how a living moral tradition can be understood as a consistent system of moral requirements. The second task of moral theory is to explain why a certain kind of discourse is, or appears to be, uniquely authoritative for conduct. Why is it that when we use moral language, we make a claim on someone's behavior that is more demanding than when we recommend a restaurant or a movie? Why should we expect other people to concur in our moral judgments and act in ways that support the moral claim? Philosophers have given the study of these questions about the meaning and authority of moral language the name "metaethics." (The term is coined by analogy to "meta-physics," which inquires into the nature of reality, while physics systematizes the laws that govern how reality behaves.)

Metaethics and normative ethics, then, are two main divisions of ethical theory which answer rather different questions about the nature of moral claims in general and about the norms that guide specific moral choices. Each of these questions, in turn, has elicited a variety of answers that become the main types of ethical theory.

Normative Ethics

Religious traditions usually offer a variety of guides for specific moral choices. They teach moral rules. They use stories and parables to show how the moral life is lived in specific situations. They identify saints and heroes or produce lists of virtues to explain the goals of the moral life. Normative theories generally try to establish one type of guide as primary. The rule or the goal becomes the key to understanding the varieties of traditional moral advice. A theory may try to show, for example, that a large body of cautionary tales, commandments, and proverbs all express a small number of basic rules. Alternatively, a theory may argue that rules, laws, and virtues a tradition teaches all point to a single goal, or perhaps to a small number of primary goals.

Deontology presents normative ethics as a system of rules. (The term derives from the Greek *deon*, meaning that which is necessary or obligatory.) A deontological theory might, for example, give an account of Jewish ethics that emphasizes the centrality of obedience to the Law. A deontological theory of Confucian ethics would stress the rules governing relationships to parents, rulers, patrons, or teachers that are essential to the Confucian way of life. A comparison of two different religious traditions based on deontological theory would identify the key moral rules in each tradition and compare the patterns of

action expected from believers who follow these rules. Deontological theories give less attention to consequences and focus more on choices and actions when deciding the right thing to do.

Teleology, from the Greek *telos*, or goal, focuses the decision about whether an act is right or wrong on the results which it is intended to achieve. A teleological theory of religious ethics evaluates actions in terms of how they contribute to a goal, rather than how they conform to a rule or commandment. The goal might be a characteristic of a community of believers, such as being organized to welcome strangers and provide hospitality for their needs. It might be a state of affairs in society, such as having a system of justice that treats rich and poor equally. Or the goal might be a virtue of persons, valued habits they acquire by repeated patterns of choice and action. A teleological theory may include a number of important goals, or it may propose that the variety of our goals can be understood in terms of a single goal – "happiness," "blessedness," or "love," for example – to which all the rest are subordinate. In any case, a teleological theory evaluates choices and actions in terms of whether they sincerely intend and effectively achieve the goal.

Because every religious tradition probably includes both rules and goals, devising a deontological or teleological theory that accounts for how a tradition guides moral choice inevitably involves a decision about which parts of that guidance are most basic and most important. This can be controversial. Christian ethics, for instance, regularly sees new versions of the argument between deontological thinkers, who insist on doing what the rules require, and teleological thinkers, who are prepared to ignore familiar moral rules to achieve the most loving results. Hindu ethics can be interpreted either as a set of rules governing an elaborate hierarchy of specific relationships, or as a set of virtues that characterize the person who knows how to order life well within those relationships.

Metaethics

Religious traditions do more than provide normative guidance. They also explain why we are required to do what the moral norms prescribe. Moral theories provide several types of frameworks for understanding these explanations. We will focus here on three of them: rationalism, naturalism, and non-cognitivism.

Rationalism

Kant's ethical theory is an example of ethical rationalism. Failure to follow the requirements of morality always involves us in the contradiction of willing to do something that we are unwilling to make into a general rule that human beings ought to follow. What ethical rationalism shows us is that moral requirements are not imposed on us by outside authorities to test our obedience. We impose moral requirements on ourselves, if we think rationally about our conduct. We are required to act morally because acting against the basic principle of morality is self-contradictory (Gewirth 1978).

Rationalist moral theories can develop in close connection with traditional religious ethics. Rationalist moral theories often offer as the basic principle of morality some version of the requirement that we treat others consistently with the ways we would expect to be treated ourselves (Green 1988). The same principle appears in more traditional form in many religions, including the "Golden Rule" of Christianity (Matthew 7:12). On the other hand, the close resemblance between the basic principle of morality and a traditional religious precept that requires us to "do to others as you would have them do to you" does not imply that

the moral theorist will find every requirement of traditional morality logically consistent with this basic principle. Ample opportunity remains for philosophical critique of conventional moral expectations that are not obviously consistent with the basic moral principle. Also, even with respect to central moral principles, the moral theorist may conclude that treasured religious language about persons as children of God or as individuals with a sacred dignity is superfluous once the logical point is clearly understood.

Naturalism

Where rationalism grounds moral requirements in reason, naturalism seeks that ground in the regularities of nature and human experience. While these would seem to be more difficult to state precisely than the requirements of reason, there is no doubt that nature imposes some constraints on all of us. We all have basic physical needs. Physical security requires that we live in society, and although societies vary greatly in the ways they are organized, they must all restrain and support us in some of the same ways, or their promises of security will be in vain. Every moral system offers some account of what we have to do to live a good human life within these constraints of nature and society.

Ethical naturalism makes understanding of the human good the key to ethical theory. What we are required to do, morally speaking, is the thing that allows us to flourish as human beings under the particular constraints with which we live. The set of requirements we develop may vary considerably as individuals with different talents and needs seek to make their way in societies that differ a great deal in the resources and opportunities they offer. The classical philosophers who first gave us versions of ethical naturalism did not always experience or appreciate that variety, but the task of building a moral theory calls our attention to the common project that underlies many quite different ways of talking about the things that make a life worth living. A great variety of moral and religious traditions share the thought that claims about what we ought to do are based on the persons we want to be, and on what it takes to become that sort of person. The proof that we have it right, for this kind of moral theory, is not that our rules do not contradict themselves, but that they point us toward becoming recognizably good people.

Naturalism provides a moral theory that is well suited to religious traditions that speak about ethics in stories of saints, heroes, and other exemplary lives, or that recount the natural constraints on human life in myths about the creation of the cosmic order (Lovin and Reynolds 1985). In Western religion and philosophy, it provides a way to link contemporary philosophical ethics to the discussions of virtue and human excellence that run from Aristotle through Thomas Aquinas to modern Roman Catholic moral theology (Porter 1999).

However, a naturalistic moral theory may also suggest that the traditional language of religious morality is superfluous or misleading. If we learn by careful observation what human flourishing requires, what sense does it make for a religious tradition to tell us that the requirements of morality are God's commands? Moral theorists who adopt a thoroughgoing naturalism often regard religious language with suspicion, suggesting that the supposed commands of God are really expressions of the self-interest of the preachers, and proposing that we might all see that more clearly if we insisted that the case for a moral requirement be made only in naturalistic terms.

Non-cognitivism

For all the differences between them, rationalism and naturalism agree that sound moral judgments rest on knowing something that is universally true, whether that knowledge is about moral reason or about

human nature. Each type of theory struggles to make this claim to universality credible in spite of obvious human diversity, and to accommodate diversity in spite of the claim that moral truths are universal. Some moral theorists, however, have sought to resolve this tension by abandoning the claim to universality. Indeed, they deny that our claims about what morality requires rest on any knowledge at all.

For the non-cognitivist, moral language is a way to praise the sorts of action we call moral and a way to express our commitment to acting morally, even if we find it difficult to do so. We can avoid arguments about whether the world really is the way our moral language says it is by recognizing that moral language does not make claims about facts (Hare 1952). Moral language expresses the commitments of persons and groups to ways of acting. It does not make sense to ask whether such a commitment is "true."

Non-cognitivist moral theories have proved most useful in thinking about ways of life that are radically separated by time and distance. It is not altogether plausible to say that two persons locked in a face-to-face moral dispute are not really making any claims about what is the case. By contrast, attempts to settle the differences between, say, the Aztec culture of warrior virtues and the European bourgeois values of individualism and moderation by assessing their views of human flourishing from some supposedly neutral standpoint often leave us with a sense of irrelevance (Williams 1985). The differences are just too great to think that they can be reduced to right or wrong ideas about some set of facts. We will understand them better, the non-cognitivist suggests, if we recognize that these alternative moral worlds are not built on views of the facts at all.

Non-cognitivism may seem an unpromising moral theory for religious ethics, useful primarily to those who reject religious claims to moral knowledge. Non-cognitivism does, however, offer a strong alternative to all forms of naturalism and rationalism for theologians who seek to build their moral systems directly on divine revelation. A religious thinker who finds no secure basis for morality in human experience and believes that obedience to God's command is what makes an action right or wrong will find an interesting ally in the non-cognitivist, who will at least join in demonstrating that none of the languages of morality actually make the universal claims about the world and our knowledge of it that they appear to be making at the outset.

Criticism of Moral Theories

Recent developments in philosophy have called into question the construction of moral theories. Critics suggest that a principle of morality cannot be isolated from the way of life in which it is embedded. Normative theories at their best are accounts of the central convictions that shape a particular way of life. Metaethics, however, is largely useless. The effort to build a general theory of morality, critics charge, distorts the religious and cultural systems to which the theory is applied, and the accounts which emerge reflect more of the theorist's own ideas than of real moral life.

In religious ethics, the criticism of moral theory has often been received as good news, freeing religious thinkers to explore a multitude of relationships between religious beliefs and moral practice, unconstrained by a rigid philosophical system that seeks a logic of morality independent of its practices (Stout 1981). Use of moral theory as a tool for comparative religious ethics has also been criticized for privileging a set of Western philosophical questions and then making these the basis for comparison (Cho 1998).

These criticisms are important, but they suggest caution in the use of moral theory, rather than an entire rejection of it. Several centuries of effort have failed to produce a general theory of morality that

could function in the way that theory functions in the natural sciences. It would be a mistake to use a moral theory as a standard against which religious ethics could be measured, or as a system by which all religious ethics might be organized. The questions of moral theory do reflect the modern, Western philosophical context in which they emerged, and there are no doubt other questions in traditional religious thinking which are important to those traditions, and which the moral theory may miss entirely.

Nevertheless, the questions of moral theory are important, if only to those who have been trained by Western philosophy to ask them. To give up on the creation of an authoritative standpoint from which to view all possible traditions does not invalidate the more modest project of asking how different traditions look when we try to examine them carefully from our own partial point of view. Precisely because the moral life as lived does not come with a theory attached to it, the possibility of systematic comparisons between lived traditions will often depend on having some theory to guide the study. The task, especially in comparative religious ethics, is to determine which theory least distorts the experience of persons in the tradition, while best enabling the investigator – from his or her own distinctive standpoint – to make meaningful connections between the traditions.

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CHAPTER 2

Moral Truth

Maria Antonaccio

Moral Truth and Moral Realism

All religions make moral claims that are considered binding on their adherents: claims about what moral beliefs to hold, what moral values to pursue, and what forms of moral character and conduct to cultivate. Insofar as a religious community embeds its moral claims within a larger vision of reality and human life and expects its members to conform their lives to that vision, some notion of "moral truth" seems to be presupposed in every such community. Religions differ, of course, in the content of what they regard as morally true and in their methods of validating or sanctioning their moral claims. And the scholar or moral theorist may regard the validity of a community's moral claims in quite different terms than its members do. But religious communities are implicitly "realistic" about their moral claims: those claims are considered true in the sense that they refer to and provide access to some notion of "the real."

Philosophers have made a similar point about the practice of morality generally: some notion of moral truth seems to be presupposed in everyday moral practice (Smith 1991). The fact that persons routinely argue about moral claims, appraise actions as right or wrong, and seek resolutions to moral conflicts, suggests that persons engaged in moral argument are trying to avoid a mistaken judgment or course of action. Common moral practice thus seems to assume some version of moral realism – the view "that there are correct answers to moral questions to be had" and that "there exists a domain of moral facts about which we can form beliefs and about which we may be mistaken" (Smith 1991, 399; Brink 1989).

Nevertheless, the notion of moral truth is one of the most contested subjects in ethical theory. In an age of awesome scientific advances, acute recognition of moral and religious diversity, and persistent global conflict over moral claims, the idea of moral truth seems hard to sustain, perhaps even dangerous. How is the religious ethicist to make sense of a community's moral truth claims in an age of moral skepticism?

The aim of this chapter is metaethical, namely, to provide the conceptual tools needed to understand how religious traditions validate moral claims. The chapter begins by addressing some background assumptions that have shaped contemporary discussions of the idea of moral truth. It then presents a typology of metaethical theories and critically assesses them in relation to the task of religious ethics.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Moral Truth: Background Assumptions

Ordinary notions of "truth" seem to assume that truth claims can be tested by their conformity to some knowable fact. Purported statements of fact (e.g. "The cat is on the mat") can be tested by comparing what is asserted to the reality or state of affairs to which the statement refers ("Is the cat really on the mat?"). But when it comes to assertions purporting to state truths of a moral nature (e.g. "Murder is wrong"), difficulties arise. While one can test an assertion such as "The cat is on the mat" by looking to see whether this is in fact the case, there is no analogous procedure for testing whether the assertion "Murder is wrong" is true (i.e. nothing in the act of murder itself from which we can *directly* determine its "wrongness"). The problem seems even more acute in the case of moral imperatives, such as "Thou shalt not kill" or "Love your enemies." What kind of "fact," if any, can determine the truth status of such commands?

Many moral theorists of the twentieth century took the difficulty just noted as indicating a fundamental difference between moral discourse and factual or "value-free" science. Unlike scientific inquiry, there seem to be no empirical facts in relation to which the truth status of moral statements can be assessed, and hence no "truth" to be discovered about morality. The distinction between facts, which tell us how things objectively "are," and values, which tell us how things "ought to be," underlies one of the most influential arguments in modern moral philosophy – the so-called naturalistic fallacy. In its basic form, the argument logically prohibits the deriving of evaluative conclusions from factual premises. But in practice, it carries far-reaching implications for ethics. One of its effects was to sever the deep connection between moral claims and a wider vision of reality that had been traditionally affirmed by many metaphysical systems and religious traditions. Moral – as well as religious, political, and aesthetic – beliefs were no longer regarded as genuine insights into the character of reality, but as the subjective attitudes or recommendations of the thinker who proposed them (Murdoch 1960). Values were seen as the product of human choice, rather than as perceptions of the real.

Given these assumptions, much twentieth-century moral theory was inhospitable to moral realism, and thus to religion as well. The traditional realist claim that there are moral facts (or "correct answers to moral questions") discoverable by human reason was thought to violate the fact–value distinction, which defines "facts" as morally neutral. The perceived failure of moral realism spurred the growth of antirealism in ethics. But the extremes of realism and antirealism do not exhaust all of the available options in metaethics. New forms of moral realism have emerged which reject both the empiricist assumptions of modern moral theory and traditional realist views about how to validate moral claims. The following section presents a spectrum of metaethical theories and considers their implications for the study of religious ethics.

Varieties of Moral Realism

Metaethical positions may be distinguished by their answers to three fundamental questions: (1) Do moral facts exist? (2) Do moral statements have truth value? (3) Can moral claims be rationally validated? These three questions may be called ontological, semantic, and epistemic, respectively. The ontological question is usually answered by referring to theories as "realist" or "antirealist"; the semantic question, by referring to theories as "naturalist" or "non-naturalist"; and the epistemic question, in terms of whether theories are "cognitivist" or "non-cognitivist." Forms of moral realism generally give a positive

answer to both the ontological and the semantic questions. However, different forms of moral realism provide different accounts of what *makes* moral statements "true" (or meaningful) as well as how their truth can be known. In its strongest (traditional) form, moral realism holds that moral facts exist independently of our beliefs and theories about morality (Brink 1989, 7), that is, independently of our "mental machinery" or our cognitive frameworks. But what, exactly, are "moral facts"?

Ethical Non-naturalism

Some theorists, called "intuitionists," held that moral facts have a unique mode of existence: they are "non-natural" properties perceived through a special kind of moral knowledge (i.e. intuition). The intuitionist G. E. Moore argued that moral terms such as "good" and "right" refer to some really existing property of persons, actions, or institutions. But that property cannot be identified with or reduced to any other property or state of affairs (e.g. happiness); it is *sui generis*. Moore was, in this respect, a non-naturalist. Non-naturalists deny that moral values can be derived from any determinate account of non-moral nature. Kant, for example, held that the ground of obligation must be sought not in the nature of the moral agent or the agent's circumstances, but *a priori* in the concepts of pure reason. Although non-naturalists can be moral realists (like Moore), all non-naturalists leave the fact–value distinction intact: moral values are distinct from non-moral facts.

Some scholars argue that divine command theory is a form of non-naturalist moral realism. The Christian theologian Karl Barth, for example, held that the command of God defines a revealed morality that may differ radically from what reason can discover. The Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas made a similar point about the function of valid ethical commands. In both cases, the domain of moral value, defined by a command or duty, is discontinuous with the realm of non-moral "nature."

Ethical Naturalism

Other moral realists, called "naturalists," reject the claim that moral facts are unique non-natural properties known by intuition or revealed by God's command. There are no distinctive moral facts and properties "over and above the facts and properties that can be specified using non-moral terminology" (Pigden 1991, 421). Many moral and religious traditions are "naturalist" in this sense. Thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, in Christian ethics, and Moses Maimonides, in Jewish ethics, held that moral terms like "good" or "right" can be predicated of actions and beliefs that conform to the principles of natural law. Some scholars of Buddhism have argued that dharma functions similarly to natural law, representing both the principle of order and regularity in nature and the idea of universal moral law (Keown 1996). Other forms of naturalism hold that "good" and "right" can be predicated of those forms of excellent human character and conduct whose cultivation leads to human flourishing. In each case, goodness or rightness is not seen as a *sui generis* moral property. Rather, to call something "good" or "right" is to say that some particular set of facts or state of affairs warrants the attribution "moral."

From the perspective of a non-naturalist like Moore, naturalist moral theories (by definition) commit the naturalistic fallacy: they identify moral value with a description of certain features of reality, thus confusing "is" and "ought." But this judgment is misleading. Naturalists reject the distinctions on which the so-called naturalistic fallacy rests: the distinction between moral (i.e. non-natural) and non-moral (i.e. natural) reality. While strict naturalists hold that moral claims are coterminous with claims about reality and human existence, other naturalists (sometimes called "non-reductive" naturalists) are more

sensitive to Moore's charge. They contend that the domain of morality must include but is not reducible to natural goods; the latter are ordered by a principle of assessment that is relatively independent of natural goods (Schweiker 1995).

Naturalism is well suited to describe religious views that stress the connection between beliefs about reality and claims about moral goodness. An influential paradigm in the study of comparative religious ethics adopts the perspective of ethical naturalism to analyze the relation between cosmogony and ethical order (Lovin and Reynolds 1985), and the correlation between "worldview" and "ethos" (Geertz 1973) in diverse traditions.

The remaining two versions of moral realism seek to revise the metaphysical claim of traditional moral realism that moral facts exist independently of our beliefs and theories. They also qualify the assumption that moral facts are known and validated through intuition, commands, or natural moral knowledge.

Reflexive Realism

"Reflexive realism" argues that moral claims are validated with respect to some feature of human experience understood as morally basic (Schweiker 1995; Antonaccio 2000). Although reflexive realists contend that the *source* of moral truth lies in some reality that exists prior to or independently of our knowledge of it (e.g. nature, God, the Good), our *grasp* of moral truth is mediated and rendered meaningful through some feature of human existence. Versions of reflexive realism identify different aspects of human experience as the medium through which moral claims resonate in human life. Some religious thinkers argue that moral claims impinge on human life through various "senses" (e.g. of gratitude, dependence, obligation, etc.) (Gustafson 1984). Others are more rationalistic, claiming that there is a "deep structure" of religious reason keyed to specific features of human moral experience and expectation (Green 1988). Still others identify the call of conscience as morally basic (Schweiker 1995). In each case, the locus of the validity of moral claims shifts from direct knowledge of "moral facts" to some feature of human experience. Moral knowledge is not simply a matter of "discovering" moral truth, as traditional moral realism holds. Rather, the moral life requires human beings to engage in the creative work of interpreting what moral claims mean as they impinge on human experience in particular circumstances.

Reflexive realism illuminates a feature of religious traditions that traditional moral realism often obscures: the *difficulty* of acquiring truthful moral knowledge. Even when a tradition posits a paradigmatic moment when moral truth is apprehended (e.g. when the moral law is revealed to the community, or the sacred manifests itself in the natural order), this is only the beginning of moral knowledge, not the end. Religious traditions contain complex forms of textual interpretation, patterns of moral and legal reasoning, rules for ritual practice, techniques of prayer and meditation, discourses of great moral teachers, etc., in order to further the process of moral education. In thus depicting moral insight as a struggle requiring moral effort, religious traditions may present a subtler version of moral realism than the idea of "discovering moral facts" suggests. Moral truth is not passively apprehended, but creatively refracted through human experience and understanding.

Internal Realism

"Internal realism" also revises certain features of traditional moral realism. It argues that moral claims are validated not by reference to an empirically knowable set of independently existing "moral facts," but with respect to some cognitive framework, such as a community's moral beliefs. The truth or falsity of

moral claims can only be established in relation to the total system of cultural meanings of which they are a part, rather than in relation to some metaphysical account of "moral facts" *tout court*. This has led some theorists to classify this position as a form of "ethical constructivism" or "idealism" rather than realism (Brink 1989, 19). For example, Christian narrative ethicists argue that the Christian community's vision of life is constituted by beliefs and narratives that cannot be translated into the general language of "natural" or "public" morality (Hauerwas 1981). Attempting to warrant Christian truth claims in terms of some general notion of intelligibility is unfaithful to the biblical witness. Fidelity means taking the moral claims of the community as true; no extra-communal warrant is needed.

Other accounts of internal realism, however, stress that it is still a form of *realism* (Putnam 1987; Stout 1988). They acknowledge that a certain "conceptual relativity" is unavoidable in moral theory. Yet these positions leave open the possibility of a convergence of moral truth claims between communities. A comparative analysis of moral communities informed by internal realism would proceed "holistically." Rather than asking whether a particular community affirms the belief that "Murder is wrong," the theorist asks what the concept of "murder" (or its closest analogue) means in that cultural context: how it is defined, under what conditions it applies, and to what other beliefs and practices of the community it is related. The identification of cross-cultural moral truths is possible as long as the theorist recognizes that the meaning of moral claims is dependent on a wider framework of cultural beliefs.

The Challenge of Antirealism

Despite these revisions of traditional moral realism, many theorists remain unconvinced. Recalling the three questions noted above, antirealists give a negative answer to the ontological question about moral facts; they deny that moral statements have truth value; and they usually embrace some form of non-cognitivism in ethics. But forms of antirealism differ over what a moral statement means once its truth status is undercut, and whether reason has any role to play in ethics under these conditions.

If one assumes that all religions start from "realist" premises, then antirealism seems to threaten the very idea of religious ethics. Antirealists advance a different notion of the "validity" of moral claims than the idea of conformity to a set of moral facts (as in moral realism) by highlighting the practical dimension of morality. Moral values are human constructions meant to serve practical purposes. Although moral statements are not fact stating, they are not meaningless. Their aim is practical or action guiding rather than cognitive.

Moral Nihilism

The most radical form of antirealism, moral nihilism, claims that there are no moral facts, and hence no "truth" about morality. While other antirealists hold that ethics can continue without the notion of moral truth, nihilists believe that the whole project of morality and its rational justification is a "sham" (Smith 1991, 35). The paradigmatic case of moral nihilism is Nietzsche's critique of Western (and especially Christian) ethics, whose moral claims he saw as a disguised form of the human will to power. Morality had nothing to do with finding the right answers to moral questions, but with "the struggle for mastery, and envy and resentment of those who achieved it" (Schneewind 1991, 154). Nietzsche's method of unmasking moral claims to lay bare the psychological and political interests that drive them, seems to be

aimed at the traditional realist claim that moral values are rooted in reality. But a revised form of moral realism, such as reflexive realism, recognizes that distortions and abuses of morality are inevitable given the fallible, mediated character of human understanding.

Emotivism

Although emotivism, like other forms of antirealism, denies that moral statements can be judged in terms of truth and falsity, it does not regard ethics as a sham, as nihilists do. As developed by the American philosopher C. L. Stevenson, emotivism articulated a novel theory of moral language. Moral statements do not make truth claims or provide any factual information whatsoever; they express the subjective attitudes of the speaker who utters them. The statement "Murder is wrong" does not purport to state a moral truth, or even a fact about the speaker's disapproval of murder (Rachels 1991). Rather, moral statements are "emotive"; they *express* the speaker's moral disapproval ("I'm against murder!"). The purpose of such statements is to persuade others to share the speaker's attitude, and thereby to influence their conduct.

Many theorists today reject emotivism as irrational (i.e. as denying the place of reason in ethics). Yet emotivism may still be a useful theoretical tool for religious ethics insofar as it shifts attention away from the emphasis on "moral reasoning" and the rational validation of moral claims characteristic of much (Western) modern moral theory, and suggests that there may be other (emotive or expressive) functions of moral language besides the statement of purported truths. Instead of testing the validity of moral claims in relation to a set of moral "facts" (as in traditional moral realism), a constitutive feature of experience (reflexive realism), or a community's beliefs (internal realism), emotivism insists that the function of moral discourse is expressive and persuasive. This insight expands the range of available options in analyzing the function of moral discourse both within and across traditions.

Prescriptivism

Prescriptivism, associated with the British moral philosopher R. M. Hare, builds on some of the insights of emotivism and was developed in part to answer its deficiencies. Like emotivism, prescriptivism shifts the debate in metaethics away from the ontological question of "whether moral facts exist" toward the semantic question about the meaning of moral statements. Against the view of many moral realists that moral statements are *wholly* descriptive (i.e. fact stating), prescriptivists contend that moral statements may also contain a "prescriptive" element (formerly called "emotive") (Hare 1991, 452). In fact, there are many kinds of sentences whose meaning is not determined by "truth conditions" at all. Imperatives are a case in point. The meaning of the sentence "Shut the door" is not dependent on establishing its truth conditions (it has none), yet we still understand its meaning (Hare 1991, 452). Where prescriptivism departs from emotivism is its insistence that the presence of the action-guiding element in moral discourse does not necessarily mean that one cannot reason about ethics. "Universal" prescriptivism holds that "there are rules of reasoning which govern non-descriptive as well as descriptive speech acts" (Hare 1991, 455). Imperatives associated with "ought" statements are governed by the rule of universalizability (Hare 1991, 456).

Prescriptivism influenced one of the earliest methodological approaches to comparative religious ethics. David Little and Sumner Twiss (1978) adopted the conceptual terminology of "action guides" in

order to stress the practical and prescriptive force of moral and religious discourse in influencing human behaviors and attitudes.

Conclusions: Moral Theory and Religious Ethics

The metaethical theories presented here, while often technical, address a set of questions that are crucially important to religious communities. Does the validity of moral claims rest on their connection with some notion of "the real," as moral realism holds? Does their validity derive from their practical force in motivating human conduct toward particular ends, as antirealism argues?

Much current academic discourse is "antirealist" in sensibility. It holds that moral beliefs (as well as other human ideas and social practices) are "social constructions"; they have no validity beyond what human beings attribute to them to further their interests. Scholars of religious ethics often share this view. Yet for many members of religious communities, morality is not a contingent matter of human preference or social convention. It is a force that is as deep and often recalcitrant to human preference as the notion of "reality" itself. Faced with this apparent disparity between current critical discourse and the lived experience of moral communities, how should the scholar of religious ethics proceed?

Theories of moral realism challenge both the view that reality is value neutral, as well as the constructivist claim that reality is infinitely malleable to human purpose, by insisting on the connection between moral beliefs and claims about reality. Even if the scholar rejects this connection, realist theories remain indispensable to the study of religious ethics because they clarify why and how moral claims exert the force they do *on those who actually believe them to be true*. The danger of assuming an exclusively antirealist methodology is that the substantive claims of a tradition may be subordinated to the methodological commitments of the scholar rather than illuminated in their own terms.

At the same time, religious ethicists should be wary of relying exclusively on moral realism as the metaethical theory best suited to the study of religious communities. Academic study presupposes the need for critical distance between the scholar's perspective and his or her subject matter. An exclusively realist perspective threatens this distinction by allowing the scholar to accept the claims of the tradition as the last word on the validity of its beliefs and practices. Moreover, the claim of some realists that moral truth is immediately apprehended (e.g. revealed by divine command, or discovered in the regularities of nature) understates the ambiguity of moral and religious experience as well as the strenuousness and fallibility of human understanding. Theories of antirealism, almost by definition, presuppose some reflective distance from a tradition's own (realistic) account of its moral claims. They require the scholar to ask how moral discourse functions and how truth claims are actually validated in the life of communities.

Revised forms of moral realism may strike an appropriate balance between theoretical rigor and appreciative understanding of religious traditions. Reflexive and internal realism recognize that moral knowledge is mediated by the particular institutions, beliefs, and vocabularies of historic religious communities, and that members of those communities may grasp its moral truths only in a partial or distorted fashion. Yet both positions retain the realist insistence that the validity of moral claims must be assessed in terms of some general notion of intelligibility – some notion of "the real" – rather than being confined to the preferences of individuals, the claims of communities, or the scholar's own theoretical commitments.

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CHAPTER 3

Norms, Values, and Metaphysics

Franklin I. Gamwell

What is the relation between norms and values in religious ethics? Critical reflection addressed to this question should include a clarification of the key terms involved: "norms," "values," and "religious." In discussions of morality and religion, each of these terms may be used in differing ways, the merits of which are part of the discussion. This chapter seeks philosophically to explicate the distinctive nature of religious ethics and, in that respect, the basis for comparing the ethics of differing religions. Meanings of the three key terms will be stipulated in the course of that pursuit and thus will be commended only insofar as they permit a coherent and useful statement of the character common to all religious ethics. The term "ethics" is also used in differing ways, sometimes to mean a critical theory of the moral life. In contrast, "ethics" will here designate sets or systems of moral beliefs or prescriptions in terms of which humans explicitly seek to lead their lives, and I will use "moral theory" to mean critical reflection on the validity of such moral systems.

Given this use of "ethics," the three key terms will be so defined that they are connected in the following way: Distinctively religious ethics are those that ground all valid norms in a comprehensive value or set of values. On this account, as I will seek to show, religious ethics presuppose a certain conception of human decision and imply that moral theory, including the study of comparative religious ethics, is incomplete without metaphysics, that is, critical reflection on the character of reality and human purpose as such. The discussion here proceeds in the context of theoretical thought in the West. This restraint does not, I think, prevent valid conclusions about religious ethics generally, but it does mean that full confirmation of those conclusions waits on attention to comparative inquiries not pursued here.

Defining the Terms

In the present discussion, "values" designates the ends or states of affairs that human activities seek to realize or promote. Given the limits its situation sets, a human activity becomes what it is through pursuit of some end or ends. This follows from the evident fact that distinctively human life occurs with self-understanding. The object of a self-understanding must be the self inclusively and thus can only be the purpose in or by which all aspects of the self or all relations to its situation are integrated or unified. In understanding itself, then, an activity understands the difference it makes to the realization of some

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

state of affairs. This initial description, we might note, does not explicitly say whether human life involves a substantial self that persists throughout some extended time, a conception some religions or religious thinkers deny. The self that is understood in a self-understanding is the present activity, and the relation of this activity to what appears as a human individual is another question.

A self-understanding, moreover, must be chosen. Although every activity is caused in greater or lesser measure by its situation, self-awareness means an understanding of those determinations and, therefore, cannot be simply another product of external causes. The ends or states of affairs we pursue are properly called values because each activity chooses from among alternatives for purposes the situation allows, and taking this choice with understanding means an affirmation of the chosen alternative. Because human activities understand themselves, we live by way of decision for some or other end we take to be good. So interpreted, Aristotle's dictum cannot be surpassed: "The good has rightly been declared to be that at which all [human] things aim" (Aristotle 1941, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a, 2–3).

Religious ethics, I propose, are distinguished from other moral systems by the affirmation of some comprehensive value or values or by taking something to be comprehensively good. Such a value or set of values defines an all-inclusive end, to which all specific purposes ought to contribute or of which all other values ought to be specifications. Each religious understanding of the moral life, then, asserts something as the comprehensive purpose that every decision for a self-understanding ought to exemplify or the comprehensive telos by which strictly all human activity ought to be directed, although differing religions may disagree about the character of the comprehensive good. On many conceptions of morality, the notion of a comprehensive good is finally not sensible, so that religious ethics as here understood are impossible. For this reason, a coherent theory of values and norms in religious ethics must show that such an ethic can be valid, and I will argue below that there is a comprehensive purpose or, what comes to the same thing, that the conception of human decision presupposed by all religious ethics is valid. It will be useful further to explicate that conception here.

Religious ethics presuppose that every decision for a self-understanding includes an awareness of the comprehensive good, which we either pursue authentically or violate by also taking something else to be the comprehensive telos. This follows because "ought implies can." No human can be morally bound to decide in accord with a principle of which she or he is ignorant, and a religious ethic asserts that all human activities ought to exemplify the comprehensive purpose. Since the decision for an authentic or duplicitous understanding of this purpose is taken in a particular situation, this choice is simultaneously a choice among the specific possible purposes available; that is, the former determines how the specific alternatives are evaluated. Thus, we can say that activity by way of self-understanding is a decision for some answer to the question of our ultimate worth, and this question is "we ourselves" (Tillich 1951, 62).

I do not mean that all human activity is religious. "Religion" designates the primary form of culture in terms of which we humans *explicitly* ask and answer the question of life's ultimate worth (cf. Ogden 1992, ch. 1), a definition more or less clearly illustrated by the so-called world religions or the principal differentiations within them. In contrast, the decision for a self-understanding is implicit in consciousness, in the background rather than the center of attention, because this decision integrates the activity as a whole, and clear consciousness can focus only on a fragment of what is understood. The function of a religion, then, is to represent explicitly in concepts and symbols, including ritual practices, an answer to the question of ultimate worth and, thereby, to mediate or cultivate implicit decisions for that answer in the lives of those who participate in the given religious community.

This is the point in saying that religion is the *primary* form of culture in terms of which the question of ultimate worth is explicitly asked and answered. We may also speak of a secondary form or forms of culture in terms of which the same question is addressed, namely, concepts and symbols that allow theology and philosophy critically or theoretically to interpret and assess answers to this question. In distinction from both our implicit decisions and our moral theory, then, a religious ethic is an account of the comprehensive good, and of moral principles and prescriptions grounded by it, in terms of which adherents of the religion in question seek explicitly to lead their lives. So understanding religious ethics is, naturally, controversial, and this underscores that the definition stipulated here is not sensible unless the presupposed understanding of human decision is valid.

The remaining term to be clarified is "norms." It is often used broadly to mean all more-or-less general moral prescriptions, and this meaning accords with our frequent designation of moral systems as normative systems. But our present discussion will be served by using the term in a more narrow sense, namely, to designate rules or principles of human interaction that prescribe constraints on the values of given actors or the ways in which values may be pursued. Norms, in other words, constitute social practices or prescribe reciprocal rights and responsibilities in some pattern of interaction. Although such prescriptions may be legal in character, all institutions or enduring associations are constituted by norms. Still, rules and principles in this sense presuppose that actors have other values they pursue even while they participate in a given social practice, and thus no norm or set of norms defines an all-inclusive good.

Religious ethics have sometimes been criticized as inconsistent with fundamental norms of this kind. Stated in terms of a traditional distinction, the indictment asserts that a comprehensive telos excludes all perfect duties, duties "not to do, or not to omit, an action of a certain [specific] kind," whatever the consequences, because all specific duties can be canceled by the imperfect duty "to promote a certain general end" (Donagan 1997, 154). For this reason, it is said, the affirmation of such a telos implies the absence of any inviolable human rights, including basic rights to life and bodily integrity. Rights are at best provisional because subject to rebuttal by the overriding obligation to create the best consequences.

The objection further concludes that religious ethics finally prevent any social practices at all, because all rules of social interaction can be overridden by the imperfect duty to pursue a comprehensive end. Since no individual can have settled expectations about the circumstances in which others will make their choices, it follows that she or he cannot have settled expectations about what others will do. For instance, one cannot count on another keeping a promise because circumstances when the promise falls due may require or permit some other action in service to the best consequences. Further, this unpredictability is, as it were, cumulative. If the promiser finds, at the time when keeping it arrives, that the future she or he faces is less settled, then it becomes less likely that keeping the promise is required in order to maximize the good. Hence, no one would have reason to participate in social practices or institutions in which reciprocal duties are to be observed whatever the consequences. One can even say that a religious ethic self-destructs. On any plausible account of the comprehensive telos, maximizing the good requires the social coordination and cooperation that an ethic of this kind prevents.

Although the issues raised by this criticism are complex, it cannot succeed against all religious ethics without the following assumption: An ethic based on some comprehensive value or values prescribes "looking at each calculation in isolation, and not taking adequate account of the effects on a society's capacity to function of its being known that all actions are taken on the basis of such calculations" (Barry 1995, 219). But whether a religious ethic so prescribes depends on what comprehensive value or values it affirms. If taking each act separately means that the ethic self-destructs, then the comprehensive telos

in question insofar implies that cases should *not* be so taken, precisely for the reasons on which the criticism depends. It is one thing to apply a comprehensive purpose directly to every human activity and something else to apply it indirectly through social practices required to maximize the good. Moreover, such a purpose may prescribe its indirect application through certain inviolable human rights presupposed by all permissible social practices, and whether a religious ethic does so consistently cannot be determined without attention to its understanding of the comprehensive good.

In sum, a religious ethic asserts that a comprehensive value or set of values grounds all valid norms. Recent moral theorists have often distinguished between teleological and deontological ethics. On a typical account, the former grounds morality in some good to be maximized, and the latter asserts moral principles that are independent of any such telos. I believe that religious ethics require a more nuanced set of terms, in which two conceptions of norms are differentiated. Principles said to be independent of any inclusive good to be maximized should be called non-teleological. Accordingly, a non-teleological ethic asserts that the supreme moral principle is a norm or set of norms. In distinction, deontological principles prescribe duties to be honored whatever the consequences. In a given ethic, these norms may or may not be non-teleological, depending on whether they are said to apply indirectly a comprehensive purpose.

Defending Religious Ethics

Contemporary Western moral theory widely denies that any religious ethic, as here conceived, can be valid. Behind this denial is the recognition that a comprehensive purpose depends on or implies a value defined by the fundamental nature of reality. If there is an inclusive good by which all human activities ought to be directed, it follows that every possible object of human attention must implicate this good – and because humans can at least think about all things, at least in general, this good cannot be defined independently of the common character of all things. For this reason, the religions in our world typically relate comprehensive value to ultimate reality; in presenting an explicit answer to the question of ultimate worth, a particular religion typically includes an account of human purpose in relation to reality as such. Thus, a theoretical explication of any given religious ethic is inseparable from metaphysics, and the similarities and differences among the ethics of differing religions cannot be fully explicated without a metaphysical comparison.

But contemporary Western moral theory widely holds, at least by implication, that no metaphysics can be validated and, therefore, a valid ethic cannot depend on a conception of ultimate reality. In this respect, moral theory since Kant has been convinced by his arguments against the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. He, too, recognized that a comprehensive purpose could only be defined by reality as such and argued that the moral law must, therefore, be radically non-teleological. It cannot be determined by any possible values and thus can be defined only by the formal universality of practical reason. Few contemporary moral theorists endorse non-teleology in this radical sense. Most are convinced that Kant's categorical imperative is empty; that is, no distinction between moral and immoral actions or maxims can be derived from it. Nonetheless, there is a dominant consensus that moral theory is properly independent of metaphysics.

Within this consensus, some who also reject Kant's moral theory conclude that there are no moral values or norms. Only understandings of value-free facts can be valid, and critical reason can only be scientific in the empirical sense. Fundamental values are determined by an individual's subrational

decision, and norms are merely prior agreements that themselves depend finally on subrational value affirmations. More persuasive among philosophers earlier in the twentieth century, this theory continues to influence practical thought, notably in the social sciences (especially economics) and in wider political debates. But this view contradicts the conception of self-understanding given above. If the self is a choice with understanding among alternatives for purpose, then the alternatives must be compared evaluatively. A merely descriptive or factual comparison would not understand them *with respect to choosing* or would not understand the self as the decision. It then follows that a human activity necessarily is or involves a claim to validity for its evaluation, because, were the choice subrational, the comparative understanding of possible ends could only be descriptive or factual. In sum, no human could consistently believe that there are moral values or norms.

If we set that view aside, theories of morality without a comprehensive good are largely framed by two principal projects. Following widespread usage, we may call these neo-Aristotelian and neo-Kantian types of moral theory. If Kant held that an ethic of values implies an understanding of reality as such and concluded that the moral law must be radically non-teleological, these theorists typically seek to escape the apparent dilemma by denying the first or the second of these two assertions. One project has affinities with Aristotelian teleology. Rejecting whatever influence Aristotle's metaphysics may have had on his own moral theory, these neo-Aristotelians conceive of practical reason independently of strictly universal values and define the moral life by some ethos that is in all respects contingent on some specific tradition or culture. Thereby, moral teleology is affirmed without a comprehensive value and thus independently of metaphysics. Some hold that such an ethic is required by Wittgenstein's account of language as presupposing a specific form of life or by Gadamer's analysis of the "pre-understanding" involved in all hermeneutics, and some so-called communitarians and neo-pragmatic theorists illustrate the type.

I am persuaded that a theory of ethics as thoroughly tradition-specific cannot avoid a kind of moral relativism and, against itself, thereby implies that values and norms are determined finally by subrational decision. Every assertion that morality is historically specific in all respects implicitly claims validity for a comparison of moral traditions, namely, that their differences are historically specific in all respects. Since it cannot consistently depend on one of the moral traditions in question, this comparison can only purport to be a value-free fact. But saying that all differences between or among moral traditions are merely factual implies that no given such tradition can be valid. The same conclusion is reached by noting that a person who understands two or more historically or culturally specific moralities is thereby given a decision between differing sets of values or norms with which to evaluate her or his alternatives for purpose. If this decision cannot involve an evaluative comparison and thus a claim to moral validity, it cannot be taken with understanding.

For reasons similar to these, others who share the dominant consensus hold, with Kant, that a teleological ethic requires a telos defined by reality as such. Their project, then, denies the second assertion creating the dilemma Kant's legacy seems to offer, namely, that a non-teleological moral law can only be the formal universality of freedom as he conceived it. These theorists may be called neo-Kantians because, with him, they claim universal validity for some or other non-teleological principle or norm, even while they seek so to revise Kant that this principle or norm does indeed ground distinctions between moral and immoral action. More often than not, perhaps, the result is a theory of human rights, respect for which constrains or overrides any conflicting values that might direct an individual's decision (e.g. Apel 1979; Gewirth 1996).

I believe that a non-teleological ethic is also finally indefensible. As prescribing constraint on the pursuit of values, a norm evaluates alternatives for purpose in one respect. If it is independent of a comprehensive purpose, a universal norm or set of norms implies that differences among the alternatives in other respects are morally indifferent or make no difference with respect to choosing. But this implication *is* a moral evaluation of the alternatives in those other respects. The conclusion that something about possible choices is morally indifferent is not itself morally indifferent, since any of those choices is insofar said to be morally permissible. Hence, the norm in question implies, against itself, another moral principle in terms of which possible purposes in all respects are evaluated.

One can also make the point this way: to understand one's alternatives with respect to choosing is not simply to compare them as similar or different in one respect but, rather, to compare them inclusively, because the choice is among them as complete things. Hence, a norm can obligate the choice only by presupposing an inclusive evaluation with which that norm is consistent. Were there no such inclusive principle, there could be no norms at all, and the chooser would be obligated only hypothetically by whatever purpose she or he has chosen. But this, too, asserts the view that values and norms are determined finally by subrational decision, and that assertion contradicts the fact that humans live with self-understanding.

Naturally, these summary comments on the two principal projects in contemporary Western moral theory can do no more than suggest how the dominant consensus might be challenged. But if a more thorough treatment can sustain such criticisms, they provide a negative argument for an ethic based on a comprehensive value. If, against neo-Aristotelians, an ethic requires some or other universally valid principle, and if, against neo-Kantians, this principle cannot be a non-teleological norm, then there can be no morality at all without a comprehensive purpose. Success in this negative argument will insofar vindicate Kant's lucidity in this respect: a valid ethic either depends on a comprehensive good or is independent of all possible values. But the sound option is the one that both he and most Western moral theory since him have rejected.

Religious Ethics and Metaphysics

The above review of contemporary moral theory also includes the elements of a positive, although summary, argument for the validity of some or other possible religious ethic. On this argument, a comprehensive purpose is implied by the distinctive character of human life. Activity with self-understanding is a decision with understanding among alternatives for purpose. It is, therefore, a comparison of the alternatives with respect to choosing, and, since there could be no such understanding except as a claim to moral validity, there must be a valid principle of morality. The supreme principle of morality must be universally valid because it could not be understood as historically specific without thereby becoming one among many alternatives for choice that must themselves be evaluated. Finally, this universally valid principle of morality must be teleological, because the alternatives must be inclusively compared, and they can be theoretically explicated only in metaphysical terms because human purposes may include attention to strictly all things.

Assuming that this argument can be upheld in a more extensive examination, we can say that every human in every moment of her or his life is aware of the comprehensive good, at least implicitly, because "ought implies can." Life with self-understanding is constituted by asking and answering the question

we ourselves are. Sustaining this conclusion requires a more or less complete moral theory in which the character of our comprehensive telos is formulated and defended. Among other things, that theory must explicate how this purpose consistently requires its indirect application in or through deontological norms or social practices, including a principle of human rights.

These demands cannot be met without the critical pursuit of a more or less complete metaphysics. Still, we can offer here a reason for thinking that a valid metaphysics and, therefore, religious ethic, will be theistic. The specific values that humans in diverse particular situations ought to pursue will be realized, insofar as they are, in diverse actual states of affairs. It makes no sense to speak of maximizing a comprehensive good unless these diverse actualizations, as they occur, constitute a totality of realizations. But this implies an actual totality and, thereby, a universal individual whose activities include completely all realizations of value. Charles Hartshorne (1948) makes the point in saying that human life implies "the divine relativity," an individual whose activities are completely relative to every other reality. Since this divine totality is itself the realization of value that increases everlastingly as value is realized in the world, the moral life is properly defined as the pursuit of values that maximize the divine good.

Saying that a comprehensive purpose and thus a valid religious ethic implies or presupposes a universal individual more or less obviously takes exception to some among the world religions. By this fact alone, some may think, that assertion is discredited. But ultimate reality cannot have more than one character. However impossible it may be in the final analysis fully to formulate and defend a metaphysics, it remains that metaphysical theism and its denial cannot both be true. To be sure, two or more differing religions may all affirm valid moral principles, even while they disagree about reality as such. But if a comprehensive purpose is inseparable from the nature of ultimate reality, then the common ground found in differing religious ethics either does or does not presuppose a divine individual, and the beliefs of a given religion cannot be false in this respect without introducing incoherence into its understanding of ultimate worth. This simply repeats that, however difficult the task and thus however tentatively conclusions should be held, the study of comparative religious ethics is incomplete without a metaphysical comparison. It also underscores that metaphysical comparisons, as those in moral theory, are finally inseparable from pursuit of the truth about reality and human purpose as such.

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CHAPTER 4

God and Morality

John Hare

The topic of this entry is the relation between the single God of monotheism and the practices and theories of morality that have prevailed in the places in the world where these monotheisms have been strongly present. The topic is not whether such a God exists (or is the same God in the different monotheistic faiths), but whether, given that such a God exists, morality is dependent in some way on divine activity, or by contrast whether divine activity conforms to some independent moral standard. One statement of the question here is Plato's question in the *Euthyphro* (10aff): Do the gods love the holy because it is holy, or is it holy because they love it? The chapter will discuss Christianity, Judaism and Islam. This is by no means a complete list even of the Abrahamic faiths (ignoring, for example, the Baha'is and the Druze), let alone monotheisms in general. But there is not space for a wider scope, even if the author were competent. There will be no attempt to cover the religions of the East.

Moral theory has two main fields, namely the theory of the good and the theory of the right. And the study in both fields can be either of the meaning of the central *terms* (meta-ethics), or of what is properly said to *be* morally good or morally right (normative ethics), or of what *practices*, especially professional practices, fit the criteria established in normative ethics (applied ethics). The present chapter will deal with meta-ethics and normative ethics, and will not try to cover applied ethics except insofar as it is concerned with religious practices. We will start with the theory of the right or the obligatory, and then go on more briefly to the theory of the good.

This chapter will be using a notion of morality as a set of norms for social practice. There is a difficulty here, that we should not beg the relevant questions by assuming at the beginning an account that already presupposes a certain relation with God, or that is already weighted in favor of one of the competing accounts of ethics *within* monotheism. One way to proceed is by non-controversial examples. Examples of moral norms are that we should keep our promises, we should not commit murder, we should be grateful to people who are kind to us, and we should not nurse grudges. Some of these norms tell us what to do, and some of them tell us what not to do. Some are norms for action, and some are for character or attitude. Some of them are also legal norms, but some of them are not. They are all, however, norms for social practice in the sense that they are taught within a society, and they prescribe how we should treat each other.

Within all three of the Abrahamic faiths mentioned, there is a tension between two different ways of looking at the relation between God and morality, where morality is understood in the way just described. We can use the labels "divine command theory" and "natural law theory" for these two tendencies. Divine command theory holds that an act is wrong because it is forbidden by God, or obligatory because

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

it is commanded by God. A natural law theory holds that the wrongness of an act or the obligation to do it can be deduced from the laws of human nature and human flourishing. These labels are misleading, however, because they suggest that there is a canonical version of each tendency, to which any description is properly held accountable. But this is not the case. Within Christianity, for example, there are theologians and philosophers we can identify as divine command theorists and those we can identify as natural law theorists. Any description of their theories is accountable to their texts; but there is no authoritative version of either theory unless some group of Christians chooses to make some particular author authoritative. We can take the philosophers Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) and John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) as characteristic of each tendency (though some of the secondary literature denies that Scotus is a divine command theorist).

For Aquinas, following Aristotle, "every man naturally wills happiness; and from this natural willing are caused all other willings, since whatever a man wills, he wills on account of the end" (Aquinas 1926–1936, q. 60, a.2). The Natural Law is the rational creature's participation in the Eternal Law which is in God's mind. Every created thing participates in some manner in the Eternal Law just in virtue of being created. But the rational creature "participates in the Divine Providence by providing for itself and others. Hence, it participates in the eternal plan through which it has a natural inclination to its due act and end. And this sort of participation in the Eternal Law by the rational creature is called the Natural Law" (Aquinas 1926–1936, I–IIae 91, art.2). This means that we can deduce the Natural Law from human nature and from these natural inclinations to the human natural end. Aquinas holds that the Natural Law is necessary and is known from its terms, and he lists the order of its precepts that is derived from the order of the natural inclinations: First there is the inclination to conservation of one's own existence (common to all substances); second, "certain special things according to the nature he shares with other animals, ... such as intercourse between male and female, the education of children and the like"; third, "an inclination to good according to the nature of reason which is proper to him, as man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, to live in society and ... [therefore] that a man avoid ignorance and that he should not offend others with whom he ought to live and similar things which relate to this inclination" (Aquinas 1926–1936, I–IIae 94, art.2).

For Scotus, by contrast, there are two fundamental drives for a human being, and not just one. Following Anselm, Scotus describes "the affection for advantage" for one's own happiness and perfection and "the affection for justice," which is a drive towards what is good in itself independently of its relation to oneself. Since we have both affections, the key question for us is how we rank them. The affection for justice is the "first check-rein" on the affection for advantage, and it is only because we have this check-rein that we have freedom (Reportatio II, d.6.q. 2, n. 10). Scotus has a more robust notion of the human will than Aquinas, since the will contains, in each person, a chosen ranking of the two affections. We can love God either for Godself, with the affection for justice, or for the sake of God's relation to us, in which our happiness consists, with the affection for advantage. There is nothing wrong with this second kind of love, and we will have it even in heaven, but the proper ranking of the two affections is illustrated by the thought experiment that we would will the glory of God even if this did not include our own salvation. The second "table" of the law (of the two "tables" brought down by Moses from Mt. Sinai) is held by Scotus not to be natural law strictly speaking, since it is not necessary or known from its terms (Ordinatio IV, dist. 17, see Ibid. III, suppl. dist. 38, art. 2). It is possible, and indeed Scripture records it, that God "dispenses" from the second table, as in the command to Abraham to kill his son, and other stories involving the Hebrew midwives, the command to Hosea to marry Gomer, and so forth. The *first*

table, on the other hand, which involves our duties to God rather than to our neighbor, is strictly speaking natural law and is necessary. Scotus holds that God can "dispense" from the commands of the second table, but not the first.

There are many issues between these two thinkers, but we can focus on two of these. The first is whether it is true that all our willings are properly directed finally at our own happiness. The second is whether our moral duty can be deduced from our natural inclinations. We can call the first "the question of *eudaimonism*" (from Aristotle's term *eudaimonia* meaning happiness) and the second "the question of deductivism." The second question will hang on what is meant by "natural." For the natural law theorist, the nature in question is *created* nature, not fallen nature. But for the divine command theorist, the question is whether our access to created nature is through our conception of the morally right, and whether it is God's commands that give us an appropriate conception of this.

Within Christianity, the tension between these two basic pictures of the relation between God and moral obligation has had a long history. Luther followed Scotus to a large extent. Kant followed Luther, in particular in his account of self-love. He held that we should recognize our duties as God's commands, even though he did not think it was God's command that *makes* something our duty. Kierkegaard returned to a divine command theory of moral obligation. The early British consequentialists, like Hutcheson and then Paley, thought of God as giving us by special revelation the ideals that would take us to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. On the other hand, there has been a rebirth of new natural law theories over the last fifty years, some of which are not theist at all, like the theory of Philippa Foot, and some of which treat God as destination rather than commander (rather as Aristotle says that the god moves by being loved, not by giving commands, Eudemian Ethics VIII.3. 1249b14–15). Thus, John Finnis defends a version of natural law knowable by reason, but there is in addition a figure (he calls it "D") and we are headed towards union with it.

Within Islam we can find a similar tension. We can start with the Mu'tazilites, who hold a version of natural law theory. The most worked-out version is given by 'Abd al-Jabbar (d. 1025), but there is a tradition behind him of at least a hundred years. One difficulty here is that 'Abd al-Jabbar does not make the distinction we have been using between a theory of the good and a theory of the obligatory. He does, however, have an account of wrongness according to which a wrong act is one that deserves blame, and an account of the obligatory, where the person who omits the act (if he is able to do the act) deserves blame; the obligatory is to be distinguished from the "merely right" and the "recommended." 'Abd al-Jabbar holds that right and wrong acts are evident to human reason in their right and wrong character. They are known immediately, independently of revelation. Revelation does indeed inform us of the obligations we already have and of means to fulfilling them, but these truths are recognized by reason when they are revealed, and this knowledge by reason is primary in justification (see 'Abd al-Jabbar. 1962, VI. 1. 64). These standards that we learn from reason apply also to God. "The Eternal Glorious One is able to do what would be wrong if he did it" ('Abd al-Jabbar 1962, VI. i. 127). Because God in fact only commands and does what is right (though He *could* do what is wrong), we can use these standards to judge what God is and is not commanding us to do. Describing 'Abd al-Jabbar as a natural law theorist is in one respect misleading, however. The Mu' tazilites, and 'Abd al-Jabbar in particular, hold that the right attracts us in itself, intrinsically, not because it leads to a benefit for us as agents of the action. Another way in which he resembles Scotus is that he insists that we have freedom of a particular kind, that we have "a power to perform an action or its opposite" ('Abd al-Jabbar 1962, XI. 168). God knows that we will disobey, but he does not will the wrong; *we* will it.

A contrast to the Mu'tazilites on all these points is provided by al-Ash'ari (d. 935), who was himself originally a Mu'tazilite, but came to reject the view. He holds that a thing is wrong on our part only because we transgress the limit and bound set for us by God, and since God is subject to no one and bound by no command, nothing can be wrong on His part (al-Ash'ari 1953, 169–171). Lying, for example, is wrong only because God has declared it to be wrong, and if God declared it to be right, it would be right. God also controls who hears the divine commands and who does not, and God seals the hearts of infidels and locks them against the truth (al-Ash'ari 1940, 114). On the question of human freedom, al-Ash'ari emphasizes God's sovereignty over everything that happens, including what we ourselves do. We acquire by the gift of God at the time of the act the power that is confined to the ability to do just that act. Al-Ash'ari considers the question of whether this means that God creates evil (or wrong). The answer is not straightforward. According to al-Ash'ari, God creates the injustice of his creatures as their injustice, not his. On the question of the relation between reason and revelation, he affirms the use of reason (indeed his work is mostly a string of arguments, one after the other, rather in the manner of the Christian scholastics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries). But he does not hold, like the Mu'tazilites, that the guidance of revelation gives human beings what they then recognize as means to what their reason already prescribed for them.

There are many later Ash'arites who make various qualifications to al-Ash'ari's positions. One important figure is al-Maturidi (d. 944), who holds that reason has some authority independent of revelation, though it is the junior partner, but because we have a natural tendency towards what has bad results along with a reason that is attracted by what is good, our inclinations are not a reliable guide. Rightness and wrongness derive from our relation to God, which is what determines whether some initial harm is in the end a benefit, and, since God knows this relation much more perfectly than we do, God's commands are more helpful even than our knowledge of ourselves (al-Maturidi 1970, 346). Another central figure is al-Ghazali (d. 1111), who was strongly influenced by the Sufis, and his works are still read very widely in the Muslim world. He opposes the project of constructing a vision of the good life for human beings on the basis of reason. He holds that the ultimate human good is unknown to reason or experience, since it involves the next life and thus is known only by God's revelation to us. One final note in the comparison between Islam and Christianity in relation to the questions we have been considering is that whereas the Christian natural law theorists embraced *eudaimonism*, in Islam the situation is reversed: the Mu'tazilites rejected *eudaimonsim* and al-Ash'ari accepted it.

Within Judaism, the most important advocate of a divine command theory is Maimonides (d. 1204). He discusses the Mut'tazilites and the Ash'arites (Maimonides 1963, i.71), and says that some of "our" authors followed the theory and the method of the first-named sect, though this was because they encountered them first, adopted them, and "treated them as demonstrated truth." But Maimonides himself thinks that the 613 commandments of the Torah are obligatory whether we understand the reasons for them or not. Sometimes we do see, after being given the obligation, how it is beneficial to us to obey (in a way particular to that obligation, and not derivative from the general benefit of obedience to God). But these reasons, though they may explain in some cases why God's beneficence gives the commandments to us, do not in any case render them obligatory. A key case here is the so-called Noahide laws, of which Maimonides gives us seven in the following order: the prohibitions of idolatry, of blasphemy, of wanton destruction of human life, of adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality, of robbery, the requirement to establish a judicial system in society, and the prohibition of eating a limb torn from a living animal. Of these seven, one tradition says that the first six were already given to Adam, and the

seventh was given to Noah (being derived from Genesis 9:4). Maimonides's position on these laws is that those who are under them are gentiles under Jewish jurisdiction, and the justification for requiring their obedience is that this law is given in the Torah (Maimonides 1989, 8, 11). The judgments of the nations about, for example, adultery or robbery, are only *secured* (in Maimonides's term tied to the "necessary") by God's revelation to Israel. Adam and his descendants knew these commandments, but only on the basis of convention. Maimonides says "The Law, although it is not natural, enters into what is natural" (Maimonides 1963, ii. 40, 382). This is to say that the law fits our human nature and our human situation, but it is not *derived* from our nature or our situation; it is made obligatory by being given to us by God.

For a contrast to Maimonides, we can most easily take not a medieval figure, but a figure within contemporary Judaism. The current situation of Jews has changed in three significant ways from the situation in which they lived during the time of Maimonides: the acquisition of citizenship by Jews as individuals in modern secular nation states, the destruction of one third of Jewry in the Holocaust, and the establishment of the State of Israel. David Novak has argued in a number of works that because of these changes the relations between Jews and non-Jews now need something not essentially internal to Judaism to which both Jews and non-Jews can appeal. His candidate is the Noahide laws, and he identifies these laws as natural law. "In the case of Judaism, the tradition of natural law is, of course, expressed in and through the Noahide laws, which express the minimal standards necessary for Judaism's moral justifiability" (Novak 2014, 7). Novak does not deny that the recognition of natural *law* as law depends on the recognition of the Sovereign of the universe who created us and gave us the law. But he makes the Noahide law do work in justification that divine command theorists cannot accept because they do not think the institutions presupposed by this law (property, marriage, a court system) are deducible from human nature. For example, we will be human in heaven without property, we were human in the Garden without it, and some groups (for example, Franciscans) are human without it now.

This entry has so far dealt only with the theory of the morally right or obligatory. To close, we will discuss the theory of the morally good. The chapter started with a conception of morality as a set of norms for social practice. Some of these norms concern obligation, for example, the norm that tells us to keep our promises. Some of them concern character, for example the norm that tells us to be grateful to people who are kind to us. The central case of moral goodness is goodness of character, or, in another term, "virtue." In what does moral virtue consist? One influential account is Robert M. Adams's view in *Finite and Infinite Goods* (1990) that moral excellence (along with all other excellence) is resemblance to God, a proposal that links moral goodness directly with monotheism in the way that Plato links virtue with the Form of the Good. Adams then ties this account of the good to his divine command theory by saying that moral obligation is constituted by the commands of a *loving* God, and a loving God is a God who is resembled by the things we by and large agree to be excellent. Adams here replies to the most serious objection to divine command theory, namely that it makes morality arbitrary. His view about resemblance is right about some moral excellence. Our faithfulness resembles God's faithfulness. But some moral excellences do not fit this model well. Consider bravery or self-control. God is not brave or self-controlled. There are large questions here about divine impassibility, but the traditional (Aristotelian) account of the moral virtues is that they involve having the right amount of the passions and if God does not have passions, God does not have these virtues. It is better for a theist to think of God's relation to the moral good as involving more than just resemblance. Some additional relations are that the moral good takes us to God (this would fit bravery and self-control), or manifests God's presence (in the way that beauty manifests God's presence).

The account of the moral virtues in the different monotheisms varies as the authoritative texts and paradigms vary. For Christians, the central authoritative text is the Bible, including both Testaments, and the central authoritative paradigm is the life of Christ. One central virtue that derives from this paradigm is the virtue of humility, and this is a virtue that does not appear in Aristotle's lists at all. Another example of this kind of divergence is that the New Testament commends loving our enemies. Within Judaism, Maimonides understands the Torah's precepts as a school of virtue. So we are commanded to help our enemy reload his fallen ass and to return the animal if it strays (Exodus 23:4–5). The point of saying it is the *enemy's* ass is to displace our tendency to help only our friends and harm our enemies. The point of saying we should return lost property is to displace our tendency towards greed and avarice. In these cases and many other similar cases, what is being aimed at is a character of a certain specified sort, and the character is fundamentally one that loves the neighbor as a way of loving God. Within Islam, there is a continuous tradition of teaching about virtue. Al-Ghazali in *al-Mundiqh* (2002) gives us a list that starts, chronologically, with repentance, abstinence, poverty, and patience, proceeds with courage and steadfastness, then gratitude, single-mindedness, truthfulness, and (the highest virtue) reliance, which is based on the knowledge of God's oneness or unification. The highest contemplation is an absorption of all human attributes in the vision of God and then annihilation in the everlastingness of God. The lover who claims to love the Most Lovable (which is God) must show some signs of this. The first sign is that the lover has no fear of death, for it means meeting the Beloved face to face. The second sign is that the remembrance of God remains fresh in the heart. The third is a sacrifice of one's will for that of the Beloved. The fourth is a love of all of God's activities, and therefore of all our fellow human beings. All three of the Abrahamic faiths discussed here, despite their differences, can be appropriately said to identify the central good for human beings as a right relation to God and the neighbor, though the detailed account of this relation will vary. The main point of this chapter has been that there is a similar tension to be found internal to all three faiths about how to conceive of the relation of God to morality.

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CHAPTER 5

Non-Theistic Ethics

Anton Sevilla-Liu

What is "non-theistic ethics?" This entry focuses on the ethics of non-theistic *religions*. How do their ethics differ from non-religious ethics and theistic ethics? And what approaches are employed to make such ethics possible? This entry provides a basic definition of non-theistic ethics and explores three basic "strategies" to realize this: emptying subjectivity, absolute mediation, and communitarian religiosity. It ends with a discussion of some key limitations of the very idea of non-theistic religious ethics.

Defining Non-Theistic Ethics

In order to obtain a clearer idea of "non-theistic religious ethics," we begin with the distinction between religious and non-religious ethics. Franklin Gamwell provides a helpful definition, suggesting that religious ethics are centered around comprehensive values. "Comprehensive" here means values that have to do with the ultimate meaning of one's life. In other words, the norms, values, and virtues that guide action in religious ethics are part of the larger task of answering the question, "What is life all about?" In contrast, non-religious ethics would then be forms of ethics that do not stipulate the ultimate meaning of life. This allows for a range of metaphysical orientations. Many modern moral theories are included within this sphere – deontology, utilitarianism, and modern virtue ethics do not require a particular metaphysical world view, allowing them to be applied to a range of worldviews.

This approach allows us to clear up a confusing point. Is non-theistic ethics not the domain of humanism (or "secular humanism")? Edward L. Ericson (1988) suggests that humanism has both religious forms (as in Ericson's own work) and secular forms (as in the work of Corliss Lamont 1997). While both forms of humanism agree on the focus on the human as a source of moral value, and a focus on this life (versus the afterlife), secularists oppose the label of religion altogether, whereas religious humanists do not. However, despite secular humanism's rejection of the category of religion, both forms of humanism stipulate the ultimate ends of man and make metaphysical claims. They do this when they make human happiness the *chief end* of human life, or take a scientific, materialist stance. Thus, they are both forms of "non-theistic religious ethics," if we follow Gamwell's definition. (Arguably, any ethics that is *lived* is difficult to separate from metaphysical beliefs.) However, there are many religious traditions from the ancient and medieval periods that are also non-theistic, and focus most of this introduction will be focused on ideas derived from these traditions.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Having differentiated religious from non-religious ethics, we now differentiate non-theistic from *theistic* ethics. What we have here is not just a need to define, but a clear conceptual challenge: Gamwell suggests that a religious ethic is *necessarily* theistic. Our moral choices are part of our self-understanding. Each choice we make says, "this is what matters" and we direct our will toward these values as an end. But if our self-understanding is to have any coherence, these ends have to cohere as an *actual totality* that includes all realizations of value – god.

Preliminarily, we can extrapolate from Gamwell's definitions and define non-theistic religious ethics as follows: (1) Ethics that orders moral life in response to ultimate concerns, (2) but does not unify values on a single point ("god"), and (3) does not draw ultimate meaning from one center. The conceptual challenge, however, is how can we fulfill condition 1 but at the same time fulfill conditions 2 and/or 3? We will examine three strategies for this, and then end with a brief reconsideration of the very definition of "god" and the relationship between ethics and religion.

Three Strategies for Non-Theistic Religious Ethics

In *modern* non-theistic non-religious ethics, there are various strategies for grounding ethics. The first is to focus on reason in the universal sense. This results in deontology and procedural interpretations of Kant – such as John Rawls' idea of justice. Another approach is to focus on rationality in the sense of a rational agent that seeks its own happiness – a utilitarian approach. Pragmatists like John Dewey offer a different spin on this "rational agency" approach, focusing on the individual experimentally finding ways to better live within social and natural environments – a "scientific" approach. These various approaches appear to be the main strategies for contemporary humanists and non-religious ethics as well, and they all share the focus on *rationality*. However, traditional religions offer a wide array of approaches to ordering life without directly appealing to modern rationality nor resorting to theism.

Among the vast array of traditional non-theistic religions, we have Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. One could examine overviews of the ethics of these religions, asking how they construct ethics. However, one challenge to this approach is the internal plurality of each religion. For example, some strains of Buddhism (such as Amidism) are arguably theistic in structure, while others are clearly atheistic. Confucius is deified in some forms of Confucianism, whereas other interpretations of Confucius clearly strive to be secular and this-worldly. Daoism can be interpreted as polytheistic or as atheistic.

In order to avoid this conundrum, this entry will take a different angle and explore three different *approaches/strategies* that draw from certain religions but might be applied to a range of religious views (even theistic ones). These three approaches are: emptying subjectivity, absolute mediation, and communitarian religiosity. The details of these approaches will be drawn out from three modern Japanese philosophers, all affiliated with the Kyoto School of Philosophy and its "philosophy of nothingness." These thinkers operated from within a largely non-theistic culture, drew from that tradition, and brought it into creative dialogue with Western philosophy and moral theory.

Emptying Subjectivity

Gamwell's suggestion that religious ethics must be theist derives from his view of the human being. Because the human being is self-understanding and wills certain values, then these values must cohere

in a final telos. In contrast, the first strategy of non-theistic ethics is to transform the very idea of moral agency itself, in a way that makes a unified "point" of values unnecessary. This approach is demonstrated by the philosophy of Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990) in *Religion and Nothingness*. He drew primarily from Zen Buddhism (both Rinzai and Sôtô schools), but his frequent reference to Meister Eckhart suggests that even Christianity can take a "non-theistic" approach.

The first "phase" of Nishitani's ethics is intra-personal, focused on acts of self-cultivation. Like Gamwell, Nishitani defines religion as an attempt to find meaning in life, to "fill" the deep void of meaningless that causes the self to suffer. But for Nishitani, the cause of this suffering is not a lack of "goods" but the very self – the ego – that tries to control reality using the will and the intellect. It is because of this desire to control that we suffer from the impermanence and ungraspability of reality. He thus urges us to face this "nihility" of impermanence and absurdity, in order to teach ourselves to let go and awaken to the "standpoint of emptiness." Therefore, ethics in this phase is not about obeying interpersonal rules or overt actions, but about meditative practices and a discipline of being mindful of reality – to not flinch in the face of its absurdity – and to allow oneself to fall into a "Great Doubt," where one realizes the utter futility of the will and the intellect.

Watsuji Tetsurô, who we will take up in succeeding sections, had a similar approach to early Buddhist ethics as a discipline of "emptying the self." In *The Practical Philosophy of Primitive Buddhism* (1920), he suggested that external morality (right speech, right action, right livelihood) and meditation (right mindfulness and right concentration) are attempts to *bodily realize* the wisdom that phenomena are merely phenomenal, and the self and all things are thus fundamentally empty. This sort of approach is gaining popularity in secular discourses in the form of "mindfulness" practices.

In both Zen meditation and in the moral practices of Theravāda Buddhism, the aim is a shift in what John Ross Carter calls the "zero level" of ethics. (The first and second levels have to do with everyday moral analysis and reflective moral analysis.) In this shift, one learns to *see* reality differently. In the case of Nishitani, he suggests the need for phenomena to be seen in their paradoxical nature: both true and ephemeral, where being and nothing are one, and the self is one with all things. Because of this shift, Gamwell's self-understanding and willing self are negated. Rather than aiming at a point, the will is burst open to become a locus of the "action of non-action," allowing it to have a sense of ultimate meaning without there being a "point" to things, or an ultimate telos that actions aim toward.

This intra-personal ethics is then expressed inter-personally. According to Nishitani, as one goes deeper into realizing the root of one's suffering, one realizes that the attachments that bind oneself to futile acts of control are actually part of a karma that one shares with all other people in history. Therefore, the struggle to awaken oneself becomes inseparable from the need to awaken all others from their attachment and their egotistic slumber. Here, great wisdom (Skt. *mahā prajñā*) is one with great compassion (*mahā karuṇā*).

This structure of awakening being expressed socially and historically as ethics is also found in the philosophy of Hisamatsu Shin'ichi (1889–1980), who saw awakening to formless self as tied to the unity of all humankind, and creating history suprahistorically. This would become the vision of a lay Zen group he formed called the "FAS Society." Additionally, this relationship between wisdom and compassion is also shared by the contemporary movement of socially engaged Buddhism.

Ethics of Absolute Mediation

A second strategy for non-theistic ethics is to decenter the self via the "other," and then realize ethics as a mediation of this other. Tanabe Hajime (1889–1962) uses this approach in his postwar masterpiece,

Philosophy as Metanoetics. He draws heavily from the teachings of True Pure Land Buddhism – a form of Amidism founded by Shinran (1173–1263) that is the largest religion in Japan.

As the title of Tanabe's book implies, the key practice of this ethics is *zange* (metanoia). For Tanabe, *zange* is the continuous practice of becoming aware of one's own failings as a person, of the hubris of thinking that we can perfect ourselves through self-power (*jiriki*), and then surrendering to the fact of our personal imperfection. This is a painful experience – one that Tanabe himself went through as he lamented his support of the Pacific War and the subsequent defeat of Japan. But as one goes deep into this remorse, one breaks through its bottom and is filled with a sense of peace in surrendering to absolute other power (*zettai tariki*). As such, one undergoes a conversion – metanoia – in two senses: one has a change of heart, and one goes beyond the contemplative thought ("noesis") of the path of self-power. Tanabe calls this path "*zangedô*" (metanoetics).

Tanabe's approach has similarities with Nishitani (who was his student and colleague) – it involves the transformation of the self in realizing its own limits. But there are clear differences that Tanabe himself emphasizes. First, he claims that the standpoint of Nishitani and his teacher, Nishida Kitarô (1870–1945) was a "gate of sages" – one that relies on the ability of the self to, by its own power, intuit the absolute. In Pure Land Buddhism, this is called *ôsô* (leaving the secular world), in contrast to *gensô* (returning to the secular). Tanabe emphasizes the latter. Second, this gate of sages implies an *overcoming* of egoism and radical evil. Tanabe does not think these can be overcome. Rather, in becoming remorsefully aware of these, they become an opportunity for opening up to the absolute other. Moreover, practice does not culminate in enlightenment – the practice of *zange* is endless.

This is similar to theistic ethics. Tanabe claims that Augustine, Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth drew close to the idea of metanoetics. However, Tanabe stresses that absolute other power does not exist independently as a "being" or as absolute Being. Instead, it is a nothingness that expresses itself purely as the self-negation of finite beings. To put it somewhat simplistically, the infinite only exists insofar as the finite realizes itself as finite. He thus describes this absolute as "absolute mediation" and "absolute nothingness."

The second difference from theism is that *zange* does not *aim* at the absolute as a telos. Tanabe explains this using several ideas in Shinran's *Kyôgyôshinshô* (which literally means "Teaching of Practice, Faith, and Witnessing"). Ethics has two senses here: practice (*gyô*) and witness (*shô*).

The former, ethics as practice, involves realizing one's own worthlessness and surrendering to other power through *zange*. In this ethics, one does not perfect oneself, but merely becomes more aware of one's imperfection. This is drawn from a common teaching of Pure Land Buddhism called "the doctrine of the salvation of evil persons" (*akunin shôki setsu*) which states that "even good people will attain Buddhahood, what more evil people." Evil people, because of their evilness, need the salvation of Amida Buddha more. Thus, this ethics does not destroy sin but transforms it into an opportunity for repentance.

The latter, ethics as witness, is the overflowing of this repentance in gratitude. Overjoyed by the experience of salvation, one tries to help others realize their own sinfulness, repent, and experience that same joy. One becomes an existence as "expedient means" (Skt. *Upāya*), an expression of nothingness that allows others to awaken to nothingness as well. This is necessary because the absolute is not being, it does not act independently as a "savior," but saves people only through the mediation of the relationship between relative beings. This is an ethics of love, of absolute mediation, where one's awareness of one's finitude makes space to be loved by others and to love them in return. Additionally, Tanabe develops this interpersonal ethics into a social ethics, attempting to unify *liberté* and *egalité* with a *fraternité* that is transformed by the idea of love above, and calling for national *zange* in postwar Japan.

Neither ethics as practice nor ethics as witness brings the self closer to the absolute, nor aims at the absolute. Rather, ethics moves outward *from the absolute*, as absolute "other power" that is mediated by the self-power of finite beings. It is *a-telic*, an "action of no-action," radiating from nothingness, through the self, and to others.

Communitarian Religiosity

The third strategy for non-theistic ethics is decentering the self through surrender to the moral community. Watsuji Tetsurô (1889–1960) demonstrates this approach in his magnum opus, *Ethics*, which he wrote in three volumes from the beginning of the war up until right after Japan's defeat. This system had a strongly Confucian tone. (Watsuji never claimed to be Confucian, or even religious for that matter. But Confucian scholars like Takashima Motohiro argue for the similarity of Watsuji's ethics to Confucianism, particularly that of Itô Jinsai.)

Having written books on early Buddhism and Zen Buddhism, Watsuji was fundamentally sympathetic to the need for personal awakening. But when he developed his systematic ethics, he found personal awakening to be too individualistic. He saw the human being (*ningen*) as a combination of individuality (*nin*, person) and communality (*gen*, relation) and argued for a return to relational ethics. In other words, instead of arguing for the (Buddhist) approach of transcending the self toward the transpersonal and then subsequently engaging society, he took the (Confucian) approach of transcending the self *directly* toward the interpersonal. One learns to let go of one's egoism, one's selfish desires, by considering others, working for the group, trying to respond to the trust others have placed on oneself.

Furthermore, individual and totality do not form a simple binary relationship. Similar to the Confucian classic, *The Great Learning*, Watsuji saw the individual as emplaced within a cascade of relationships – the family, the local community, the cultural community, the state, and the international community. In each community, one has distinct trust relationships to fulfill and virtues to embody. And each community is emplaced within a larger community that it must in turn respond to selflessly. Additionally, this outward movement toward community is balanced by an inward movement that tries to value the individual's realization of his/her own uniqueness and capacity to contribute, or even transform, communities. (The Buddhist idea of individually realizing emptiness returns in this inward movement.)

An important point, however, was that this ethic was not "secular." During the premodern period, many Japanese Buddhists appropriated Confucianism in such a way that Confucianism provided for rules governing social structures, and Buddhism answered to individual spiritual needs. For Watsuji, however, community life was itself a source of ultimate meaning – something to live for, to even die for. He saw the Buddhist ideal of emptiness expressed in people's trust and sincerity toward each other, the source of virtue in every level of social relationships. (This also contributed to his unfortunate involvement in the Pacific War, a foray that is well documented.)

More than merely providing an alternative to theistic ethics, Watsuji also provides an interesting *critique* of monotheism as a whole, in several articles on "National Morals" written in the 1930s. Drawing from the sociological work of Émile Durkheim, particularly *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Watsuji argues that originally, even the God of monotheism was merely a god of a particular tribe. Individuals felt the totality of their tribe to be infinitely powerful compared to the individual, and this awe was the origin of theism. However, with the rise of empires, the community was no longer a small community

the individual could actively participate in, but transformed into a large, unnavigable empire. This uprooted the individual from the lived totality and gave rise to a new way of thinking. Cosmopolitan religions abstracted God from the community, and tried to bypass community, bringing the individual directly before God.

This genealogy presents a double critique of monotheism: First, monotheism is abstract. It ignores the actual totalities an individual is part of in order to deal with the individual directly. Second, monotheism can be imperialist and intolerant, presuming that values and worldviews are universal, independent of communities, when in fact they are culturally relative.

Avoiding imperialistic or individualistic ethics, he advocated for ethics as expressions of emptiness (the negative – tensional – relationship between individuals and communities) that are culturally and historically unique. He saw multiple centers to moral life, unified by this shared structure of individuality-communality. However, there was also a dark side to this argument: Watsuji was eager to praise Japan's polytheism and philosophy of emptiness as superior to the Western model, an argument that fit well with Japan's imperial aggression. But despite these dangers, he presents a clear account of how ethics can be drawn not from God or from reason but from the various communities we live in.

Spectrums of Religion and Trans-Ethics

Above, we see that there are different ways of finding a sense of ultimate meaning and aligning morality to that, without relying on theistic ethics. The strategy of emptying subjectivity denies the grasping, willing self entirely, allowing for morality to emerge not from a single divine point, but from a field of emptiness. The strategy of absolute mediation relies on an absolute other power (that may or may not be a god) to dislocate the ego, without making the Other the telos of ethics. Finally, communitarian religiosity decenters the self via finite communities.

Perhaps one has been wondering what the word "god" even means. From the discussion above, perhaps it is better to think of "religion" and "theism" as spectrums and not as binaries (religious vs non-religious, theistic vs non-theistic). Ethical systems vary in the degree to which they decenter the everyday existence of the human being. Pragmatic and utilitarian ethics do not stress this decentering at all. Watsuji decenters the self, but not as strongly as even Kantian ethics. This transcendence becomes acute in overtly religious ethics. This transcendence also varies in "shape" and can be diffuse, as a field of transcendence – emptiness, the way, nature. Or it can be focused – avatars, bodhisattvas, Buddhas, lesser deities, impersonal *kami* in Shinto. As this focus comes to a point, as it does in some views of Amida Buddha, non-theistic ethics can draw very close to theism, without necessarily giving the Other traits ordinarily given to the God of monotheism (omnipotence, transcendence from time, etc.).

In *Religion and Ethics at Odds*, Buddhist philosopher Sueki Fumihiko (1949–) suggests his own "spectrum" of religiosity. Inspired by the history of Japanese religion, he places the human being within a world that ranges from the clearly exhibited (*ken*) to the dark and concealed (*myô*). On the side of *ken*, he places ethical relationships between person and person, which are governed by reason and clear rules. But the human being lives in relationship with a shadow as well. There are aspects of oneself that one does not even understand. Even more concealed are the innermost thoughts of others. And at the borderline between the secular and the religious, we have the dead – people who we continue to relate to, to long for or to fear, but who are no longer "being." As we go deeper into the recesses of *myô*, we have *kami*

(gods) and Buddhas, and at the infinite depths, God and nothingness. On one hand, this model can allow us to situate the range of religious ethical orientations – centered on reason, on communitarian sentiments, on responding to the irreducible other, responding to the dead, responding to Buddhas, awakening to nothingness, theistic ethics, and so on. But on the other hand, this model presents a *critique* of religious ethics itself.

Sueki's (2016) idea of religiosity, what makes religion "comprehensive," is how religion addresses the shadowy aspects of life, where things are no longer reducible to reason – dealing with one's inescapable moral frailty, with death, with one's continuing relationship with those who are no longer physically present. It is only by dealing with *myô* that religion emplaces the person (and his/her finite range of understanding) within a context that exceeds understanding.

As we have seen in this entry, religion can lead to and support ethics – self-discipline, social rules, compassion. However, if ethics is narrowly defined as that which can be grasped by reason and can be ordered, then religion is fundamentally constituted by a "trans-ethical" moment. Because religion deals with *myô*, religion can lead to a surrendering to sinfulness rather than an ethical rejection of sin. Or, in focusing on selflessness and becoming one with others, it can fall into dangerous forms of nationalism. The problem of relating with the dead can bring religion into tension with politics and justice, as it does in the debates on Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima atomic bomb commemoration. Therefore, while Japan provides us with a rich history of non-theistic religions giving rise to ethics, it also provides a history of religion's trans-ethical side, a history we would do well to keep in mind as we explore religious ethics.

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CHAPTER 6

Language and Morality

Per Sundman

Language relates to morality in numerous ways. The aim for this entry is to suggest a structure for thinking about these complex relations. After a short introduction about the nature of language, this entry offers a brief investigation of how language relates to morality on three interrelated yet basic levels, namely ontology, epistemology, and meaning. Along the way, an account of how these relations ought to be interpreted, labeled linguistic constructivism, is presented and defended.

There are many conceptions of language. An overview aiming at completeness is impossible. Instead, a core definition borrowed from the well-known linguist Noam Chomsky is stipulated. According to him, language is "[...] a system of rules and principles – a 'generative grammar', in technical terms – that associates sound and meaning in some specific fashion" (Chomsky 1987, 140). In reality, a generative grammar typical of language does not only associate sound and meaning, but also signs and bodily movements and meaning. There are meanings of different form. Words are used to describe, express, and prescribe. Given patterns of signs, bodily movements and sounds are used by us to communicate. As we grow up, we learn how to use them, and to participate in the collective inventions of new meanings, as well as, in some cases, in the gradual change of inherited meanings. At the center of the systems of rules and principles that constitute a language are concepts, or better, the rules that determine how given norms constitute concepts, say the often tacit rules about the correct use of the words "true" and "truth" that users of English adhere to in order to distinguish true from false, or truth-telling from lying.

Concepts are constitutive in virtue of making it possible for us to identify things, and to distinguish them from each other. Looking up we can see clouds and distinguish them from the sky and from raindrops. Looking at the being next to us we can see our neighbor, we can see a stranger, or we can see something completely alien, depending on the conceptual skills we have acquired through using words (Butler 2005, 35).

Thus, we orient ourselves with the help of concepts. Without them, we are lost. We would not be able to identify what we see, hear, and feel. We arguably could not even tell the difference between seeing and hearing, although there most likely would be stimuli of different kinds. According to this, an infant can be overwhelmed by displeasing sensations, yet it will take some time before she learns that sensations of a particular kind constitute what she later will refer to as hunger, and perhaps even more time before she learns to choose between alternative ways of acting upon sudden feelings of hunger.

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Moral Ontology

Let us now turn to how language relates to ontology. *Ontology* is a label for accounts about the nature of being. It concerns the kinds of things that have existence, and how they exist. Arguably, some things, say elementary particles, exist independent of human activity. Whereas the existence of items such as money and clothes depends on human activity. We can say that the latter kind of things are constructed, though the metals used in coins might not be. Arguably, language belongs to a category of socially constructed "things." The system of rules and principles, that constitutes concepts, and that defines language, would not be there were it not for language users. The ontological problem concerns whether there is a moral reality beyond language.

One great divide as well as a longstanding theme for philosophical debate concerns whether moral language denotes an independent moral reality, or if moral language is self-referential in the sense of referring to a socially constructed reality essentially constituted by language itself. One could say that in virtue of being "manmade," tables are socially constructed, but that their existence is inextricably linked to material items such as wood, metal, or glass, for example. Analogously, philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham, Richard B. Brandt, and Sam Harris, argue that the existence of values is reducible to certain natural facts such as biochemical aspects of happiness, and pain, or to a scientific description of life. Yet others, such as David McNaughton and John McDowell, claim that values refer to qualities that exist partly separately from natural facts, analogously to how the existence and nuances of colors are irreducible to the wavelengths of light. The point is that values in both cases can be claimed to exist in a way similar to how furniture exists. Their existence would either supervene on or by itself be something real, something that exists independent of human activity and language.

If on the other hand the only reality moral claims and beliefs refer to is constituted by language, then moral words would, in spite of what their users might think, not denote anything beyond language itself. We can call this linguistic constructivism. Though the absence of an independent moral reality might seem disturbing, it can be on its place to remind one that sitting on wood or brute iron might be quite an uncomfortable experience, whereas sitting on a chair probably is much better. Thus, it is the conceptual content that is of use to us, not the material, only.

Nevertheless, there are significant counterarguments to linguistic constructivism. In the context of this entry, one is of particular interest, namely the possible incoherence between ordinary language use and a constructivist ontology. An alleged incoherence builds on common descriptive usages of moral words. It appears, that moral language at least occasionally *describes* characteristics that belong to a world that exists on the outside of the communicating subject, and possibly, on the outside of language. The word "good" is, indeed sometimes used to denote qualities that belong to fellow human beings, perhaps in the form of qualities of character, as if these qualities exist independently of the language-bound concepts we use to identify them.

The fact that language sometimes is used as if there is an external moral reality, does, however, by itself not establish the existence of that reality. Explicating all remaining language related arguments pertaining to this matter is beyond the reach of this text. Nevertheless, besides descriptive language use, which can be interpreted as a significant part of an argument for believing in a moral reality independent of language, there is a potential counter argument to realism that needs to be mentioned. I am thinking about the difficulty of showing not merely that something exists independently of language, but the problem of establishing that our moral concepts are more or less correct images, or mirrors, of that moral

reality. Any interpretation of the nature of reality will namely, by necessity, make use of concepts that cannot be explicated in any other way than through the use of some language. If we think about it, without concepts we would not be able to distinguish anything. This, of course, does not entail that there is nothing to distinguish, or put differently, to mirror more or less correctly, it does entail though that the nature of the reference is not attainable independently of the very notions spoken of as mere mirrors. Put differently, the fact that there is a difference between how Mount Everest appears to us, as a gigantic mountain, and what our image refers to, namely stone, minerals, perhaps patterns of atoms or relations among even smaller artifacts, is not problematic. But, the seeming opaqueness of the difference between the appearance of moral goodness and its possible denotations is problematic since whereas material or natural micro particles seem relevant for our image of Mount Everest, they are not similarly relevant for images of the morally right, good, or what in general ought to be the case. It is simply difficult to argue that rational adults, in the same manner as they see a mountain are able to see a normative layer of reality that somehow supervene on the common brute particles that our bodies, mountains, and all dust consists of. The simple point is that it is uncertain whether we should claim the existence of something that we cannot grasp.

To summarize, language can be seen as exhausting what moral beliefs are about, what they refer to. And, language can be seen as tools of communication that we use to refer to realities beyond itself and ourselves. Settling this issue is complicated and perhaps impossible. This is so since whether there is a moral reality beyond language cannot be determined by means of perception that is not simultaneously an interpretation, which is inseparable from the conceptual glasses worn by the interpreter. Therefore, it probably is wise to allow room for the possibility that there might be a moral reality beyond language. Still, assuming that there might be something is of limited use if we have no way of inter-subjectively redeeming claims about the nature of that reality. In the following, we shall return to how this alleged difficulty to reach outside language in order to grasp an external moral reality relates to moral epistemology.

Moral Epistemology

In epistemology, justified true belief constitutes the necessary and sufficient criteria for knowledge. According to this, we are entitled to claim that we know X, if our belief that X is the case, is justified and true. When we believe that Y is the case, but we have no justification for this and when its truth is uncertain, then we can say that we have the opinion that Y is the case, but that we do not know, at least not yet. Moral epistemology consequently concerns the conditions for moral knowledge. Simply put, a person has moral knowledge if at least one of her moral beliefs is supported by reasons that establish its truth.

Language relates to the criteria of knowledge in many different ways. Space does not allow for more than a short explication of the account preferred by the author of this entry. Let us begin by addressing the plausibility of writing about moral beliefs, and subsequently turn to the problem of justification. The issue of the relations between language and moral truth can unfortunately not be addressed here. It is believed though that a coherentist interpretation of moral truth can complement the subsequent brief account of moral justification. A coherentist account of moral truth states that moral truth is constituted by being part of a perfectly coherent system of beliefs. Put in other words, here moral truth is interpreted as similar to logical rather than empirical truth. Justification, on the other hand, consists of the reasons that establish the location of a certain belief in a coherent system of beliefs.

It is not obvious that moral words are used to articulate beliefs. Prominent philosophers such as Charles Stevenson have argued that this is not so. Some hold that it is more accurate to claim that moral utterances reflect subjective reactions to certain events. Such reactions consist of subjective emotions that lack cognitive content, i.e. they are not about anything, and there is nothing external to them that can make their arousal more or less accurate. There is only the plain naming of the presence or the absence of an exchangeable, pleasant, or not so pleasant feeling. There are many good reasons not to accept this account. The first is that the fact that people often have strong feelings about moral matters, we might feel disgust when reading a story involving torture for example, does not support the contention that feelings are all there is to it. The torture example shows that we can have feelings of disgust, and that they depend on both our ability to interpret certain external events as instances of torture, and that they relate to a general conviction that torture names a moral wrong. This conviction is difficult to separate from the ability to master the notion of torture. Understanding what torture is simply seems to entail grasping that it helps us to identify particular events as (very) wrong. The latter is not to be confused with claims saying that torture in some extreme circumstances can be permissible due to imagined catastrophic alternatives. Such claims take the general wrongness of torture for granted.

So far, we have looked at the language of subjective emotions as an alternative to the vocabulary of beliefs. There are additional alternatives. One in particular needs our attention, namely the terminology of moral judgments (Hare 1988; Lynch 2009). The idea here is that since morality relates to action, more particularly performing the right action, it makes more sense to talk about judgments than beliefs. Presumably, beliefs are about what is and is not the case, rather than about what to do. We may decide what to do but allegedly we do not believe what to do. Our decision can depend on beliefs, say concerning the probable effects of a particular bodily movement, but the decision itself is not a belief. Allegedly, moral justification therefore should be interpreted as being about good reasons for judgments, rather than reasons for beliefs.

Nevertheless, this is not a necessary conclusion. On the contrary. It coheres well with ordinary language to say: "I believe that sheltering refugees is the right thing to do." We might also think: "I believe torture is wrong!" Or write, "I strongly believe that intelligence services ought not to torture people." We can even say: "I know torture is wrong!" Thus, moral language can be used to express beliefs, about what ought to be the case, and it can be used to express claims about moral knowledge.

Is the belief-terminology preferable then? An either or situation is too simplistic. We obviously make moral judgments, primarily in the context of concrete action. We sometimes must judge among alternative actions. We might have many beliefs relevant for the case. We might believe that it is wrong to lie. We might have convictions about what it is about lying that makes it wrong. And, we might believe that it is right to save innocent life. In a concrete situation, a rescuer makes the judgment that it is right to lie in order to protect. This judgment can be scrutinized, and the ethicist can ask whether this was the right thing to do, given a particular mix of complex circumstances. We can also ponder on whether there are inter-subjectively valid reasons for believing that lying, when seen in isolation, is in fact wrong. The upshot is, if talk about moral belief is to the point, then one condition for moral knowledge is at hand.

However, merely having a belief is obviously not enough for knowledge. We cannot say that we know X just because we believe X. Many of our beliefs might be uncontroversial, and demanding justification for all of them might be implausible. But, some of our beliefs are prejudiced in a problematic way, and yet others might be controversial due to known counter arguments. Arguably, believing that mother earth is 8,000 years old, or that man-made global warming is not happening, belongs to the latter kind

of controversial beliefs. In globalized pluralistic societies it is also the case that beliefs about how we ought to live together are contested. Therefore, we need a justification, i.e. an account of how it can be shown that a particular moral belief is right. This is not to be confused with an explanation of why Donald believes X (Searle 2001, 110). It might be because he was manipulated to do so, or just because most of his friends and colleagues took believing X for granted. No, the interesting thing is whether and how Donald can explain the rightness of X. Searle (2001) writes: "The reasons that justify my action, and thus explain why it was the right action to perform, may not be the same as the reasons that explain why I in fact did it."

In summary, moral language has multiple usages. It has been shown that these need not exclude each other and that talk about moral beliefs is one example. It is an important example since it indicates that asking about the conditions for knowledge are as relevant within the sphere of morality as it is for beliefs about descriptive facts and predictions only.

Justification and Meaning

So how does language relate to the justification of moral beliefs? In the following, it is suggested that language relates to moral justification in two distinctive ways. The first concerns the plain fact that we need to know what exactly it is that we need to justify. We need to know what the belief is about. The second is that a process of explication of meaning plays a significant role in justifications of moral beliefs. This entails that the belief in the need for justification can be justified by showing that its meaning coheres with the articulated meaning of related moral notions. Justifying the beliefs like "it is important to respect the agency of vulnerable persons" can, according to this, be justified through an explication of how it relates to concepts of human dignity and the concept of being a subject as opposed to a mere thing.

The plain observation that the question, whether moral convictions can be justified, cannot be handled if we have no idea about what a moral conviction is, what its distinctive traits are, illustrates the first way language is relevant. Let us therefore reflect on important differences between moral beliefs and other kinds of beliefs. The belief that global warming actually happens can arguably be justified with the help of the empirical science of meteorology. The belief that we human beings *ought* to change our carbon dioxide generating way of living, however, cannot be justified in the same way. Some of us are both relatively old, and live privileged lives in cool and wealthy parts of the world. We will probably not suffer from the consequences of global warming. Things might even get better, with less snow in Sweden. Therefore, it might not be rational for all carbon dioxide producers to adjust their behavior, unless of course all have children, care for human beings in general, or for the whole planet. Thus, the belief that we human beings ought to change our climate related behavior, needs explication. It can mean, changing one's behavior is the most rational means toward the end of realizing what we care about. This can be supported by reasons stating that if all, or most, persons act upon the idea that "my individual action does not matter," and change nothing, then certain things that we really care about, such as a safe and healthy future for our children's children, will be jeopardized. Therefore, we ought to start making changes, to make sure that we did what we could in order to honor the importance of what we (happen to) care about. Thus far we have encountered the *ought* of instrumental rationality.

Interpreting the *ought* as moral in kind constitutes an interesting alternative. Though being different from the ought of rationality which essentially says "you ought to do it because it is rational," the distinctiveness of the moral has been given many interpretations. A straightforward example is formulated here. Basically, the justifying reasons relevant for a moral ought establish the correctness of thinking that adjusting one's behavior is the right thing to do. According to our suggested conception of moral justification, doing nothing about climate change is morally wrong by virtue of being incompatible with showing each and every human being equal concern and respect. The ethical egoist argues there is no stronger, moral duty than to satisfy one's own desires, because they are mine. One problem with this position is that it does not cohere well with ordinary language. Arguably, labeling someone "egoist" is different from calling her just or good. Supposedly, acting against climate change is a matter of treating oneself as an equal to others, friends, and strangers. Treating people as equals is outlined here as a normative idea. The point is not to say that people are equal, which appears descriptively false, but to state that all human beings ought to be treated *as equals*. Thus, the alleged point is, we ought to change our climate related ways of living because moral equality ought to be recognized (Kant 1991, 254). Kant wrote: "The respect that I have for others or that another can require from me (*observantia aliis praestanda*) is therefore recognition of a dignity (*dignitas*) in other men, that is, of a worth that has no price, no equivalent for which the object evaluated (*aestimii*) could be exchanged." Adjusting one's behavior to this moral ought, can be rational, if we care strongly about what we allegedly ought to care about. This, however, is not certain.

So far, we have looked at the importance of language for the delineation of what we need to justify, i.e. the distinguishing properties of the moral ought. The previous, however, also shows that an attempt to distinguish the defining characteristics of a *moral ought* will entail embarking on the endeavor of explicating the meaning of acting right, in terms of showing equal concern and respect, for example.

Furthermore, the reasons that explain why it is morally wrong to torture someone must not explain the particular strength or binding nature of the moral ought in the terms of some other ought, say of prudence or rationality. Accounts that utilize references to self-interest, claiming that it is in our own self-interest to uphold moral norms, might offer reasons for action given the creditability of certain assumptions, say that everyone benefits from acting in the right way and that people in general are more interested in themselves than in doing the right thing. Such an account does not justify moral beliefs, if successful, it merely establishes that acting on certain moral beliefs can be rational.

Given the soundness of these claims, the justification of moral convictions is best understood in self-referential terms (Sundman 2010, 70–79). On the linguistic constructivist view defended here, it arguably is the moral meanings internal to Koine Greek, and English, that serve as the necessary background to the explication of the meaning of being someone's neighbor that is achieved by the narrative of the good Samaritan. The narrative arguably conveys moral content that "[...] I acknowledge as constraining me and by that acknowledgement *make* into a normative *constraint* on me in the sense of opening myself up to normative *assessments* according to it [...]" (Brandom 2009, 64). Presumably, after hearing or reading the classic parable, many have asked themselves whether they really are a neighbor, and to whom. The explication of content is achieved by, among several narrative ingredients, putting the goodness of being someone's neighbor in the recognizable context of an exclusive *us* versus a despised *them*, and by utilizing a tacitly shared commitment to the praiseworthiness of recognizing the badly beaten stranger as worthy of our concern.

Furthermore, reasons for believing in the rightness of say a public policy aiming at making society more just, depend upon the concept we use to describe the characteristics of that very act, for example, fairness or in other cases torture. The fittingness of calling certain relations unjust is, according to this, not merely the only but the best reason there can be for believing that such relations are morally wrong.

To summarize, this entry has shown that an inevitable dependence on moral language is coherent with talk about justified moral belief. Moreover, it has been argued that, explication of moral meaning together with shown coherence, constitute the backbone of a promising linguistic constructivist account of the justification of moral beliefs.

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CHAPTER 7

Embodied Moral Inquiry

Kevin Schilbrack

The academic study of religious ethics, like the academy in general, has often operated with an unspoken mind/body dualism according to which inquiry is done by the mind which then directs an unthinking physical body. Ethicists who study moral inquiry, problem-solving, and reasoning have typically attributed these cognitive tasks to the mind, and the body has been either ignored or treated as the recalcitrant material that the ethical person, unfortunately, must manage. But over the course of twentieth-century philosophy, this mind/body dualism has been increasingly undermined. The question pursued in this entry therefore is: how might the body contribute to moral inquiry?

To focus on the contribution of the body in ethical thinking is part of the growing material "turn" in the academic study of religion, a turn, that is, from a primary focus on texts to an appreciation of the role played in religions by stones, water, hair, food, clothes, temples, mountains, and other aspects of the bio-social environment. In order to answer the question posed by this entry, however, it is crucial for scholars to distinguish between two general ways that one might include the body in one's theories. We might call the first "the body as object" and the second "the body as subject."

In the first way, one recognizes the body as a site of text-like inscription. As argued by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1991), whose work was influentially adopted for anthropology of religion by Clifford Geertz (1973), one can understand embodied actions on the model of a text and one can then "read" social practices and interpersonal gestures for their meanings, for what they "say." This would be a hermeneutical approach to the religious body. But even though it is the embodied person who engages in the practice or makes the gesture, it is often the case that the individual is not the conscious author of her or his actions. As argued by the philosopher Michel Foucault (1979), whose work was influentially adopted for anthropology of religion by Talal Asad (1993), one can understand regimes of discourse and power as an apparatus that acts on the body, disciplining it and "inscribing" or "imprinting" it with cultural messages. This would be a genealogical approach to the religious body.

These two approaches differ in that the hermeneutic approach treats persons as purposive subjects and therefore tends to interpret what the body communicates in terms of the embodied person's aims, whereas the genealogical approach focuses on the process of how subjects are constituted, and therefore eschews interpreting what agents mean in favor of explaining how the body is trained by mechanisms of social control. Whether the body/text is seen hermeneutically as a tool of the subject or genealogically as a tool of the society, however, it is conceived of as passive, merely "a depository of deferred thought," to use Pierre Bourdieu's phrase (1990, 69). On either approach, the body is a medium through which or on which

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thinking works, thinking that is done elsewhere. Both approaches make the material turn to consider the body significant and both approaches speak, in their different ways, of "the thoughtful body," but neither argues that the body itself contributes to inquiry, problem-solving, and reasoning. This is the second way that scholars might include the body in one's theories, namely the body as subject.

What does it mean to think of the inquiring person as an embodied subject? This entry makes two proposals for how one might answer this question and connects each proposal to moral inquiry in particular. The first proposal concerns the idea of embodied cognition, and the second concerns the idea of affordances.

Embodied Cognition

Embodied cognition takes the view that human thought is deeply and inescapably rooted in the nature of the body and its interactions with the world. Our cognitive processes are, at their core, sensorimotor, situated, and action-relevant. At least at present, embodied cognitive science as a movement is probably best grasped not as a single, unified theory but rather as a research program consisting of disparate and perhaps irreconcilable elements (Shapiro 2007). To see the relevance of those elements to moral inquiry, consider these three ideas: that the body often structures thought, that minds often offload mental work onto the physical environment, and that thinking is often divided and shared among a team of inquirers.

Cognition is embodied, first, in that moral inquiry often presupposes that the agent has a body. Of course, it is relatively uncontroversial to claim that a person cannot *be* ethical without a body. It is hard to wage a just war or care for the needy without arms and lungs and eyes. But the argument here is that not just moral action but moral inquiry – that is, the mental processes of weighing and deciding moral questions – are often structured by the kind of body one has and how one interacts with one's environment. In some cases, this is because the categories with which one thinks are developed from metaphors that draw their sense from concrete embodied experiences. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) have detailed, an enormous amount of mental work is possible only as thinkers recruit what are originally physical concepts (such as up/down, dark/light, or towards/away) to help conceptualize the abstract character of people, events, actions, and things. To categorize a greeting as "warm," one's mood to be "up," or a movie that "stinks," involves taking concepts first used for motion or for sensory experiences and stretching them for use as evaluative terms. Ethical categories are the same. To categorize someone's character as "upright," one's motives as "pure," or one's will as "strong," recasts embodied experiences in a way that structures how one conceives of what a person ought to be (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, Chapter 14 in particular). As Maxine Sheets-Johnstone says, in languages all around the world, the body is "a semantic template" used to map what is good and bad (2008, 12). Moreover, the mental processes of thinking, weighing, and deciding moral questions can also be structured by the nature of one's body and its interactions with the world without the mediation of metaphor. For example, some feel disgust when thinking of immoral behavior. In this way, a gustatory emotion that evolved to motivate people to avoid eating contaminated substances is co-opted to avoid social dangers such as moral transgressions (Strejcek and Zhong 2014, 223–224). The embodied response to the perception of rotten food and the perception of an action that is ethically rotten draw on the same neural patterns. Moral cognition conscripts capabilities shaped for the physical environment to a moral use. In both of these ways, it would be difficult even to think about moral issues without using metaphors drawn from the bodily domains of health, of freedom of movement, of strength, of cleanliness.

Cognition is also embodied, second, in that some aspects of a cognitive process can be "offloaded" onto one's material environment. For example, some problems get solved by manipulating physical things outside the brain. A person might count on her fingers or, moving beyond the body, use pencil and paper to multiply larger numbers. Though she cannot solve the equation "in her head," she can solve it when she uses the pencil and paper as cognitive prosthetics in a feedback loop between her brain and the steps that she takes on paper. People take advantage of cognitive prosthetics when solving moral problems as well. Think of religious iconography representing moral exemplars such as a statue of a half-lidded Buddha. As the Venerable Balangoda Ananda Maitreya, the Sri Lankan bhikkhu in *The Long Search* (1977), says, the statue wordlessly teaches restraint of one's eyes. Those struggling with self-restraint – even if they cannot read or have never heard a sermon – can emulate the statue's comportment and learn control of their mouths, hands, feet, the whole body: "there is the real dharma ... doctrine symbolized." One can return repeatedly to the statue as a role model for working on one's lack of restraint. Think too of the religious music that is used to create a musical space fashioned specifically to elicit and scaffold certain emotions, beliefs, memories, and behavior. The affective atmosphere created by a somber hymn at a funeral nudges listeners toward quiet grief and introspective remembrance, and it contrasts with the music at a New Orleans jazz funeral that might begin with mournful hymns but transition musically to a joyful celebration of the deceased's reunion with Christ, complete with shouting and dancing that spills out of the pews (Krueger 2018). The music is not separate from how a group of people come to memorialize a life. Think too of the cognitive prosthetics supplied by religious narratives of moral heroes and villains when these narratives are performed on stage, written in books, recited in song, or represented in art. What is the virtuous way to act when one is denied an inheritance, when oppressed by a tyrant, or when one comes into fortune? Such narratives are often presented by religious communities explicitly to structure the moral thinking of their members. In all these material, musical, and narrative ways, one's attempts to solve ethical problems are assisted by one's embodied religious practices and often in a pre-reflective mode.

Cognition is also embodied, third, in the sense that it can be socially distributed. Some cognitive problems are so complex that they require for their solution a division of labor. Edwin Hutchins, for example, famously argued that a navigation team that brings a large naval vessel into port can be seen as a cognitive and computational system. One might therefore make a "two-level" distinction between the cognitive properties of an individual and the cognitive properties of a system of which the individual is a part. More strongly, many of the cognitive processes in which an individual engages, such as interpreting and making a judgment, presuppose the existence of certain social arrangements or institutions. The individual's thinking is then undergirded, structured, and made possible by the cognitive work of others. Take the example of a decision made by a juror in a trial. The decision is not simply produced "in the context of" the legal system but rather presupposes prior collective agreements about what counts as evidence, about what questions can be asked, how, and by whom, and about the range of possible conclusions – all of which guide the way an individual juror thinks and decides but none of which is created or even chosen by her. In this way, one can see a family, a legal system, a scientific laboratory, a military base, a university, or other social arrangements as "mental institutions" in that they serve as social cognitive prosthetics, social extensions of the mind (Gallagher and Crisafi 2009). It is not hard to see religious institutions playing the same role when the members of religious communities make ethical interpretations and judgments. In this way, one's social world can

come to structure one's moral inquiries, both conceptually, as one thinks using the language game of a particular form of life, and physically, as social interactions gradually build dispositions describable as virtue into the individual's neural pathways.

In sum, then, cognition about ethics is embodied when one's thinking leaks out of the brain to involve bodily movements, cultural artifacts, and coordinated teams of problem solvers. There is a debate among cognitive scientists and philosophers of mind today whether scholars should adopt *the embedded mind thesis* that considers these movements, artifacts, and allies as tools with which the mind reasons, that is, as contributing sources of information needed for the mind to do its reasoning, or whether one should adopt *the extended mind thesis* that revolutionizes the traditional concept of the mind so that these thinking aids come to be recognized as constituent parts of the mind itself. On the former view, the mind is embedded in yet remains distinct from the social and material environment it uses but, on the latter view, the boundary that limits the mind to the brain is blurred and what counts as "the mind" extends into the body and perhaps also outside the embodied person into her social and material environment. The debate in religious ethics would be whether we would speak of, say, a monk's posture during meditation, his mudras, the spiritual discipline of his begging, as well as the iconography and architecture of the monastery, and the hierarchy of the monastic order itself as enabling conditions for his moral inquiry or as actually constitutive elements of it. For the purposes of this entry, we do not need to settle this question since, however that question about the metaphysis of the mind is decided, both interpretations support the view that religious bodies play a crucial role in moral inquiry.

Ethical Affordances

Here is the second proposal for how one might see the body as itself the inquiring subject. This way draws on the notion of "affordances," a concept introduced by the psychologist James Gibson (1979) in what he called an ecological approach to perception. Gibson's proposal opposes most contemporary ways of thinking of perception, since he treats the senses not as passive receivers of sense data which the mind then assembles and uses to make inferences about the "external world," but rather as active, tentacle-like grabbers that evolved in order to extract information from the organism's environment about dangers and benefits (Gibson 1966). His approach is "ecological" in that it embeds the perceiving animal in surrounding value-laden information as gravity pulls it in one direction, light reflects off various surfaces, and sounds, smells, and temperatures are picked up.

Gibson introduces the term "affordances" to name opportunities for action that an organism can perceive in its environment. The structure of one's environment affords (or solicits or invites) action. Some of these affordances are physical: the more gradual slope affords an easier climb than the steeper one; the sunrise affords better visibility; the tree branch affords climbing. Human animals would share many of these physical affordances with nonhuman animals. But one can develop Gibson's idea to recognize that some affordances are social, created by convention or collective agreement. For example, the lull in the conversation lets the bystander join the group; the loophole in the law permits a break in taxes for the corporation. Moreover, some of these social affordances are also ethical, taught by a given community as opportunities for actions that are morally virtuous or even morally obligatory. Injustice, they say, calls out for remedy. Seeing a hungry person provides one with an opportunity for benevolence. One can speak therefore of the perception of ethical affordances, that is, opportunities for moral action, provided

by one's natural and social environment (Keane 2016). An affordance-based way of thinking of the body as contributing to moral inquiry, then, will focus on the community member's limited or skillful ability to perceive the opportunities for ethical action that exist in the world.

The affordances that exist for a given agent depend on the agent's embodied abilities, on what one physically can do. A tree branch exists as an affordance for sitting for a bird but not for a human, for instance. But affordances do not depend for their existence on being perceived. The affordance is there in one's field of action even if one fails to see it. Though the ontology of affordances is debated, perhaps the best way to understand affordances is as relational properties. That is, just as the fact that X is taller than Y is a relational property of X that is not independent of Y's height, the fact that A affords an opportunity for B to act in a certain way would be a relational property of A that is not independent of B's bodily structure and capacities. Relational properties do not exist independent of their relata, but they do exist independent of being perceived.

Moreover, an organism's relation to its environment is not static: if one grows in one's embodied abilities, more affordances appear. If one becomes stronger or faster, one can discover or create new opportunities for successful action. The possibility of discovering or creating more opportunities for action is just as true for social affordances: as the lawyer learns the intricacies of the law, she becomes better able to find the loopholes. As the introvert becomes more adept at social exchanges, he finds more chances to introduce himself to strangers. In this way, one becomes better able to perceive the opportunities that exist in one's environment. Whether one is learning a more mobile activity like driving a car or a more cerebral activity like playing chess, as one achieves higher levels of skill, one's ability to recognize and discriminate between the particular solicitations offered by a concrete setting of action increases (Dreyfus 2014). This improvement in one's ability to perceive affordances often requires a teacher and training of the relevant kind. But the existence of the affordance is not subjective: the possibility of avoiding a car accident is there on the highway and the possibility of checkmating one's opponent is there on the chessboard, whether or not the person realizes it.

The same is true of ethical affordances. As one participates in social practices, perhaps with a teacher and training, one becomes better able to recognize the opportunities for ethical action taught by one's community and present in one's environment. As a consequence, scholars of religious ethics can come to see practices, rituals, and spiritual disciplines not merely as inscribing on religious bodies the marks of moral purity, adult status, proper deference, or some other culturally sanctioned message, as in the genealogical approach mentioned above, but also as developing the participants' abilities in ethical perception. Ethical perception involves a response to solicitations from one's surroundings and so it presupposes the cultivation of one's moral sensibilities. Think for example of the Confucian teachings that encourage practitioners to develop filial piety and humaneness. For these Confucians, a tremendous opportunity for ethical behavior, which one should not overlook, arises in the death of one's parents. Think of the Buddhist teachings that encourage practitioners to cultivate detachment and loving kindness. For these Buddhists, an opportunity for ethical behavior is present, if one can see it, when one finds oneself provided with an abundance of food. Think of the Christian teachings that encourage practitioners to cultivate charity and courage. For these Christians, an opportunity for ethical behavior exists in the needs of orphans, widows, and prisoners. Given the concept of ethical affordances, one can see that moral inquiry is not separate from participants' ability to perceive the ethical dangers and ethical

opportunities that exist in violence, food, sex, money, family, and so on. In these ways, a religious practice, ritual, or spiritual discipline not only serves as an apparatus that works on a passive body, treating the body as a site of inscription, and not only as a text through which the practitioner communicates, but also as a school for virtue, treating the body and the senses of the participant as a learning subject. On this approach, the spiritual life and moral inquiry are realized in terms of how one takes hold of and attends to the sensory world as religious concepts enter into and shape the phenomenology of everyday experience. And this concept of the perception of opportunities for moral action in one's environment lends itself easily to the distinction in a given community between those who are ethical novices and those who are ethical experts, and how to move from one to the other.

Since ethical affordances are opportunities for action whose existence depends on what one is able to do, one should expect to see religious practices, rituals, and spiritual disciplines not simply teaching doctrine developed elsewhere but working directly on participants' embodied capacities. In this light, it is not surprising how often the Biblical Book of Proverbs teaches one to turn one's eyes and ears away from the honey-dripping words of seductive women and the appeals of wine to attend instead to the teachings of the sage and to the poor person's pleas for help (Goering 2015). In these ways, a religious community seeks to educate the senses and to instill the skills that constitute "a sapiential habitus" (Goering 2015, 257). One could rightly speak of ritual participation, in Foucault's terms, as a process of subjection. But insofar as the subjects are moral agents, it would be misleading to describe ritual practices as forming subjects in the way that a factory produces widgets. Religious participation may teach one how to perceive ethical affordances, but affordances merely solicit action; they do not determine what the agent will do. Insofar as the aim of a given religious practice is to form subjects who are virtuous, therefore, they involve the cultivation of powers of perception, discrimination, and choice.

Conclusion

When one engages in moral inquiry, one develops and tests hypotheses, applies categories, and makes evaluations. This entry has explored a holistic view according to which cognitive activities like these are best understood as performed not simply by minds but by embodied persons. In closing, it is worth noting two implications of this holism for the study of religious ethics, one methodological and one metaphysical.

First, adopting the concept of embodied moral inquiry helps us see the extent to which moral inquiry pervades any given social group. The point is not only that moral questions are often raised and settled without conscious reflection. The point, rather, is that most moral inquiry is done in the course of everyday activities whenever people argue with themselves and others about what does and does not feel right, morally speaking, and most of these people have never read philosophy or theology. They are not "ethicists." In this way, to break down the mind/body dualism of moral inquiry implies a breakdown of the theory/practice divide according to which moral theorizing is done only by those, typically male and leisured, with the appropriate training and others simply put that thought into practice. Insofar as moral inquiry is embodied, it will be found in the marketplace, the workplace, and the home. Insofar as scholars of ethics recognize the ubiquity of embodied moral inquiry, they will need to move beyond the study of

texts to engage with historians, anthropologists, and other scholars who observe the quotidian social practices where that inquiry is constantly taking place.

Second, the concept of embodied moral inquiry raises questions about the nature of personhood. This entry argued that moral inquiry, typically understood as a mental activity, is better seen as a process of embodied cognition, and this entry presented that idea in a way that one might accept it while continuing to hold a dualism of mind and body. That is, one might adopt a holistic view of moral inquiry without giving up the idea that a person is essentially a mind or soul only accidentally in a body. But this entry also removes some of the reasons that motivated that dualism. This entry's claim that thinking – including thinking about ethics – is rooted in the body fits easily with the monistic view that human persons are entirely physical beings without nonphysical souls or minds. When that view is adopted, the metaphysical debate becomes that between those reductive physicalists who hold that the behavior of human persons is not different in kind from that of chemical reactions or, say, falling apples, and those non-reductive physicalists who hold that human persons have emergent cognitive properties that have "top-down" effects of their own. A reductive physicalism would presumably make the notion of a spiritual or moral life impossible, but the same is not true of a non-reductive physicalism. If this is right, then embodied moral inquiry strengthens the idea of bodies as subjects.

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CHAPTER 8

Reason, Emotion, Ethics

Elena Namli

What is moral knowledge? Is there moral *knowledge*? When dealing with these perennial questions, philosophers and theologians utilize several fundamental categories. Reason is the most important category, time and again constructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed by thinkers of different cultures and traditions. How should reason and moral reasoning be understood? How does reason relate to other instruments and dimensions of morality? What is the relationship between reason and emotions? What is the role of emotions in moral reasoning and how should we deal with the challenge they pose to rationalist theories of moral judgment?

Upon entering the discussion, we immediately find ourselves in the domain of ethical theory; i.e. enquiry about the function and ontological status of moral language and moral judgment, as well as about whether and how moral judgments can be justified. While normative ethics deals with theories about the right actions, moral principles, or different visions of the good society and the virtuous person, the focus of ethical theory is a meta-analysis of the very phenomenon of moral judgment. Therefore, the first section of this essay offers a short overview of the most important, albeit generalized, positions in ethical theory with regard to the issue of the character of moral judgment. The differences between cognitivism and non-cognitivism are presented and discussed in the second part of the essay.

In the third section, the issue of justification is our main concern. Different theories of the justification of judgments about obligations and values are elaborated upon. Scrutinizing several forms of rationalism and critiques of it, it will be argued that reason, as a universal capacity for justification and critique of moral conventions, can be understood and constructed in several ways. Emotions, as well as other resources of moral insight, are part of different constructions of the meaning of practical reason. The position defended here is that moral judgment should be a matter of rational deliberation, which does not demand cognitivism as its foundation.

Ethical Theory

In the center of ethical theory is the question of how to explain the phenomenon of conflicting moral judgments. There are two general forms of such a conflict – one is the case of contradicting judgments about the same issue made by different subjects, and another is contradicting judgments about the same issue that appear equally plausible to the same subject. Hare (1981, 26) starts his *Moral Thinking* by highlighting the importance of the conflict of the latter type: "[...] it is sometimes the case that a person thinks

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

that he ought to do A, and also thinks that he ought to do B, but cannot do both." In order to resolve the dilemma, Hare introduces and develops his theory about the critical (level of) moral thinking. Another, possibly more urgent, form of conflicting reasoning is that of different subjects offering justifications of conflicting moral judgments. Is it justified to grant a right to asylum even if it brings serious challenges to the societies that asylum seekers try to enter? Are there rational arguments that support the idea that the values of the traditional heterosexual family justify some forms of gender inequality? The nature of conflicting reasoning about these kinds of moral judgments is the ultimate subject of ethical theory. Therefore, when we evaluate different framings of such a theory, their capacity or incapacity to address and deal with the issue of conflicting moral judgments should be the most important criterion.

To address the phenomenon of conflicting moral judgments, we need to answer three interrelated sets of questions. The first one is whether moral values have some kind of objective status. Are there moral facts? Is there such a thing as the right to enter a safe social space? Or is it, possibly, a matter of social convention that differs with contextual factors? The second question is about the character of moral judgment. Are moral judgments descriptive propositions which can be either true or false? Suppose that Anna believes that gender equality demands similar settings of rights for both men and women, but Maria claims that gender equality can include different sets of rights and duties. Is one of these two beliefs true and another false? The third basic issue of ethical theory is whether moral judgments can be inter-subjectively evaluated and rationally justified. If Anna and Maria disagree on important moral issues, are there tools and criteria that enable a rational dialog between them?

To make the situation even more complicated, theological perspectives add further dimensions to all these questions. What does it mean for moral reasoning if Anna in our scenario is a Catholic and Maria is a Muslim? What if Anna is also a feminist and Maria is a neo-Marxist?

In the following, we will mainly focus on the second and third areas of ethical theory; namely, questions about the character and justification of moral judgments. However, we must keep in mind that the philosophical and theological positions within these spheres are combined with either realism or non-realism. Realists argue that there are moral facts independent of moral judgment, and non-realists reject the existence of moral reality beyond moral evaluation. Non-realism usually takes a form of social constructivism that understands norms and values as products of social interaction.

Cognitivism and Non-cognitivism – Is There Moral Knowledge?

Let us start our deliberation on how ethical theory can help Anna and Maria by making a distinction between cognitivism and non-cognitivism. Cognitivism appears in different forms but always interprets moral judgments as propositions that can be either verified or falsified. It views moral beliefs as descriptive propositions similar to propositions of non-moral knowledge. Non-cognitivism rejects the idea of moral knowledge and views moral judgments as having practical functions; i.e. as expressions of emotions or volitional prescriptions.

Natural law theory is a classic example of cognitivism. Being a theological form of naturalism, this Christian tradition claims that a moral judgment is true when it adequately reflects natural law; i.e. the true order of being that is independent of human evaluation. In its religious setting, natural law is related to a belief in God as the creator of the universe and humanity. Reason is interpreted as the faculty that enables human beings to understand the given law of creation (*lex naturalis*). To utilize moral reason is

to understand the nature of creation and to act according to this nature. In the center of the cognitivism of natural law is the idea of universal human nature that can be recognized by reason both through and beyond moral conventions of a given society. If a moral or legal convention of a society contradicts a reasonable understanding of human nature, it can and should be questioned. Precisely this critical, universalist component of natural law is described by Jean Porter, one of the leading contemporary specialists on natural law, as its great appeal. She writes, "The great appeal of the official Catholic version of the natural law lies in its confidence in the moral capacities of the human race and its optimism about the possibilities for building a moral community among all persons of good will" (Porter 1999, 30).

Naturalistic cognitivism can be developed without theological connotations. Some philosophers claim that humans, regardless of their social and cultural contexts, are capable of understanding the essence of humanity and use it as a criterion for moral judgment. The most common current form of non-theological naturalism is the naturalism of human rights. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights famously stipulates, in Article 1, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." If interpreted literally, this article expresses the belief in a universal human nature that can be recognized and acted upon by means of reasoning. Some contemporary theorists of human rights reduce this capacity to negative recognition; i.e. reason's universal capacity to recognize norms and actions that violate human dignity and, therefore, must be globally prohibited (Miller 2012, 166).

In its different forms, cognitivism agrees that moral judgments are descriptive and, therefore, either true or false. One of the advantages of this position is its capacity to interpret and encourage moral reasoning as a critique of normative conventions, conventions that can be false. If we view the principle of equality as true, we can powerfully question conventional norms and practices that contradict it. Both Anna and Maria can strongly condemn different patriarchal norms and practices if they believe that patriarchal morality is false. Conversely, cognitivism implies the risk of overlooking the possibility of reasonable differences in moral judgment and, thus, become suppressive of the other. If Anna believes that her understanding of equality, which differs from Maria's, is true, she has little motivation to listen to Maria. Cognitivism in ethics can, and often does, justify "[...] the violent imposition of an order that is declared objective and natural and therefore cannot be violated and is no longer an object of discussion" (Vattimo 2007, 93).

Critics of cognitivism differ in many regards, but are united in their firm rejection of moral judgment as a form of descriptive knowledge about moral reality. Non-cognitivists claim that moral judgments are practical and, therefore, neither true nor false. They interpret moral judgments as either expressions of emotional attitudes (emotivism) or volitional prescriptions (prescriptivism). Although without logical necessity, these two positions often take different stances on the question of whether and how moral judgments can be rationally justified.

Emotivism understands moral judgments as expressions of emotional attitudes and claims that such judgments can be neither verified nor falsified. In the words of Alfred J. Ayer, "[...] the function of the relevant ethical word is purely 'emotive.' It is used to express feeling about certain objects, but not to make any assertion about them"(Ayer 1946, 108). A contemporary version of emotivism is expressivism, which states, "Questions of moral right and wrong, on this picture, will be questions of what to do, but with a particular kind of emotional flavor. [...] Moral questions [...] are questions of how to feel about things, where the feelings in questions are the moral sentiments" (Gibbard 2006, 117f).

When Anna states that equality demands similar settings of rights and duties for both men and women, she is expressing her positive emotion about these settings and simultaneously trying to evoke the same

emotion from Maria. Emotivism is plausible in that it captures the practical character of moral judgment and, of course, the importance that emotions have for moral judgment and moral action. In other words, emotivism captures the intimate relationship between moral judgment and moral action. For most of us, it is intuitively evident that emotions "color" attitudes and indicate a special kind of seriousness of moral positioning. Thus, emotivism challenges rationalistic theories of moral judgment and rightly emphasizes the role of emotions within morality.

Further, emotivism counteracts the lack of tolerance that often follows moral cognitivism. If a moral judgment is neither true nor false, no one can legitimately use it in order to silence the other. In our example, Maria can try to tell Anna about her experiences of being a Muslim feminist and change Anna's emotions about different forms of gender relations.

However, the reduction of moral judgments to emotional attitudes is problematic in many regards. In the description of emotivism, as well as in the summary of the critique against it, the Swedish ethicist Carl-Henric Grenholm (Grenholm 2014, 54–68) is followed. The most important objection to emotivism reminds us that moral judgment is not just about the expression of emotional attitudes. Crucial for moral judgment are volitional prescriptions such as "Do this!" and "Do not act like that!". Further, critics of emotivism are rightly concerned about the fact that emotivism underestimates the human capacity to reason about moral issues. Emotivism leads naturally to a strong relativism on moral issues. It lacks the tools for discriminating between justified and unjustified moral attitudes. Such strong relativism contradicts the fundamentally social character of morality. Moral norms and values guide the coexistence of human beings and of societies and, therefore, demand a substantial amount of agreement. While we can and should live with some moral disagreements, there are many disagreements that must be resolved.

A theoretical position that modifies non-cognitivism in order to avoid emotivism's reduction of moral judgments to emotional attitudes, as well as its tendency toward strong relativism, is prescriptivism. Let us recall the abovementioned classical version of prescriptivism, that of Hare. Hare argues that moral judgments have two fundamental logical properties; namely, universalizability and prescriptivity. The proper usage of "ought" logically demands a prescription that includes universalizability. It is further demanded that moral judgments be strong and override other judgments and concerns (Hare 1981, 21–24). It is of crucial importance, for Hare, that universality does not mean a higher level of generality; rather contrary, moral judgments are judgments of particular situations – but only judgments that equally bind all subjects in similar situations. Hare writes: "If a person says 'I ought to act in a certain way, but nobody else ought to act in that way in relevantly similar circumstances,' then [...] he is abusing the word 'ought'" (Hare 1963, 32).

The main advantage of Hare's and other similar prescriptive theories is the combination of the demand for universalizability and the practical understanding of moral judgments. This kind of theory does not support naturalism; instead, it is compatible with the belief that norms and values are social constructions, which explains the existence of reasonable variations between norms and values. However, it is still possible to approach norms and values critically by means of the criterion of universalizability. In our example, Anna and Maria disagree about what we ought to do in regards to gender equality. Prescriptivism can help them to handle the disagreement by, firstly, removing the burden of truth and, secondly, by asking both to argue within the frame of universalizability.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to offer a more nuanced analysis of the positions presented above. However, if we can agree that a legitimate metaethical position must constructively address the issue of

conflicting moral judgments, non-cognitivism combined with a clearly articulated view of how moral reasoning should be justified appears to be a plausible position.

Reason, Emotions, and Justification

Thus, it is argued that a tenable ethical theory both rejects cognitivism and offers an instrument for a rational approach to conflicting moral judgments. Such an instrument is a theory of justification that does not view moral judgments as descriptive propositions. How, then, should we justify moral judgments if they lack truth value? What role does reason play in such a justification? How does practical reason relate to traditions, religious as well as secular? Are emotions of any value, or do they constitute an obstacle for the project of justification? How should we approach the challenge to rationalistic ethics posed by emotion-based theory of moral judgment?

As already stated, the great advantage of rationalism is its claim of universality – in our case, the claim that a proper justification of a practical judgment must be valid for any subject in similar circumstances. In the most famous formulation of rationalism, the categorical imperative of Kant, we read, "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (G 4:421).

In original Kant, it is reason in its pure form that decides whether judgments pass the test of universality. Two important objections against this rationalism have furthered the development of Kantian ethics. One objection highlights the fact that even when trying to reason with the aim of universalizability, we reason differently. Another one states that Kant's practical reason is, in fact, too abstract in that it disregards the very foundation of morality, its social and relational character. If Anna and Maria are to find a solution to their disagreement, they cannot remain in the sphere of pure reason. They should engage themselves in a dialog with each other, rather than in Kantian theoretical inquiry, a critic would say. Informed by such critique, contemporary Kantians such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas have introduced modified forms of rationalism that seek to overcome the challenge of differences as well as that of the sociality of practical reason.

Rawls famously believes that the core idea of Kant's theory of justification is, in fact, the normative ideal of personal autonomy and equality. Rawls writes, "Kant held, I believe, that a person is acting autonomously when the principles of his action are chosen by him as the most adequate possible expression of his nature as a free and equal rational being" (Rawls 1971, 252). Therefore, Rawls offers a theory of justification in terms of a contractarian "original position" that demands fundamental equality when social principles are elaborated upon – "all have the same right in the procedure for choosing principles; each can make proposals, submit reasons for their acceptance, and so on" (Rawls 1971, 19). Rawls argues that the human capacity to reason freely is fundamental to the existence of any legitimate social contract; i.e. the fundamental principles of social morality.

While Rawls's reason remains a "monological" and theoretical construction, communicative ethics as developed by Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Benhabib offers a theory of justification, which positions reasoning in the practical social deliberations of agents with contextually formed interests. In other words, the fundamental idea of the communicative theory of justification is that norms should be proven by means of actual discourse that involves all those affected by the proposed norms (Habermas 1990).

If Anna and Maria would adhere to this kind of theory, they would not try to reason from outside of concrete social and political positions. What they should do, however, is organize the very deliberation in such a way that both of them have an equal opportunity and reciprocal duty to explain their view to the other. A justified view of gender equality is, thus, a view that both Anna and Maria accept within the framework of a just dialog.

Despite the many differences, all the Kantian positions presented above are variations on rationalism. Justification of moral judgment is explicitly linked to the exercise of reason. This rationalism is challenged by those who believe that moral deliberation, be it individual or social, is and should be conducted with attention paid to the emotional dimensions of moral judgment and moral action.

Defense of emotions as a tool for moral judgment and moral action can be developed in several different ways. Most philosophers, as well as most moral theologians, recognize the importance of moral emotions. According to Jesse Prinz, there are mostly two meanings of such a term. It can refer to either emotions as a dimension of moral judgment or emotions as a dimension of motivation (Prinz 2010, 520). The view that emotions are involved in motivating moral behavior is relatively uncontested. How, then, can emotions be understood as an instrument for moral judgment and moral justification?

We have already discussed two positions – emotivism and expressivism – that interpret emotions and sentiments as constitutive for moral judgment. In her *Upheavals of Thought* Martha Nussbaum offers another approach, a neo-Stoic account of emotions as an instrument for moral judgment. Nussbaum's position should be interpreted as a critique of the rationalistic ethic. This ethic, according to Nussbaum, underestimates what she calls the personal dimension of moral judgment. Contrarily to such a rationalism, "[...] emotions look at the world from the subject's own viewpoint, mapping events onto the subject's own sense of personal importance or value" (Nussbaum 2001, 35). Additionally, Nussbaum believes that a Stoic interpretation of emotions as "evaluative appraisal of the world" is plausible in that it does not view humans as strangers in the animal world. Rather it can include non-human animals into moral considerations (Nussbaum 2001, 125).

At the same time, Nussbaum understands emotions as a kind of reasoning, a dimension of practical reason (Nussbaum 2001, 3). In order to grasp this dimension, she engages in an enquiry of European literature and argues that moral emotions include not just a cognitive component, but also can be critically approached and developed. How is it possible to critically approach different emotions in a social space? If emotional judgment is based on unique points of view of different subjects, how can we discuss their plausibility? Nussbaum seems to regard pluralistic societies as granting all citizens basic entitlements of opportunities for functioning (capabilities), which offers a platform for such a critical evaluation. The belief that capabilities should be secured is, in her view, the core of morality. Emotions help us to understand that a loss of capabilities would be a tragic loss of humanity.

Nussbaum's theory of emotions as a crucial dimension of moral judgment is thought-provoking. It rightly emphasizes that moral judgment is related to such points of view that involve our personalities – on the mental as well as the bodily level.

However, it's believed that, like emotivism and expressivism, it lacks tools for dealing with substantial moral disagreements. The main challenge to emotion-based theories of practical reasoning is the fact that normative differences, if expressed in terms of emotions, are highly contextual, even personal, and difficult to scrutinize. Emotions, such as anger, empathy, or disgust are not entirely conscious, they are related to contingent personal conditions, and difficult to approach in a transparent way. Even

in a pluralistic society with a high level of tolerance, there are important moral disagreements that demand a procedure for moral judgment that are transparently interpersonal.

Moreover, it has been questioned whether there are emotions that can be classified as "moral emotions." We agree with Jesse Prinz who argues that "[m]oral emotions seem either to serve additional functions that are not moral or derive from emotions that are not moral" (Prinz 2010, 535). If Anna in our scenario gets angry at Maria's take on equality, what is it that makes her anger moral? It is believed that it is the object of the emotion rather than some inherent component of it that deserves to be described as moral. This "object" brings us back to a more traditional view of practical reason. In order to deal with the very moral judgment about the meaning of equality, Anna and Maria need to engage in a process of justification – exchange reasonable and inter-subjective arguments. Emotions can or even should be present in such an exchange. However, they cannot replace it.

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CHAPTER 9

Feminist Epistemologies

Morny Joy

Introduction

Since its beginnings in Greek philosophy, epistemology has had a strong influence on much of the Western world's reflective exercises. Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge, insofar as it examines aspects of human thought, especially reflections that involve the scope, methods, and implications of human reasoning. The relation of reason to human activities is of prime importance, especially because of its strong influence on ethical ideals and conduct. The Greek legacy also includes virtue ethics with its emphasis on the fostering of a good life. Traditionally, morality has been more concerned with issues of behavior, regulating the approbation and implementation of human actions.

In recent years, however, epistemic issues have become a topic of heated debate. Since the second wave of feminism, women have realized that, over the centuries, they have not been accorded due respect and/or equal status with men in matters of philosophy, religion, and politics. Many women have contested the accepted disparity in the relationships of men and women. The resultant feminist activism has inspired the development of feminist epistemologies. This entry will focus principally on the work of such feminist scholars as they introduced unanticipated changes in both philosophy and religion.

It will provide a short overview of recent developments in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries when feminists undertook to challenge the disregard and even belittlement with which their contributions to philosophy, philosophy of religion, and theology have been treated. Traditional values and morals have since come under severe scrutiny with the evaluation of long-held attitudes and beliefs. At this stage, a basic definition that distinguished ethics from morals would describe ethics as initiating a teleological aim, for example, an aspiration to live a good life. In turn, however, according to societal rules, such an ambition needs to be assessed according to a moral norm. However, women have come to realize that such ideals and practices have not been particularly propitious for them. The impact of the term "gender" employed in both ethics and morals has also had ground-breaking consequences. Formerly, it had simply been used as a grammatical attribution, but now women scholars, such as Joan Scott ([1988] 1999) began to employ "gender" to disassemble the basic meaning of the term.

The first female protesters in the late 1960s and early 1970s began to confront the disparaging attitudes displayed by male philosophers in their rebuttals of women's attempts to be recognized as proficient scholars in their disciplines. Astute women began to identify themselves as feminists in the study of religion, philosophy of religion, and theology. Feminist scholars of religion, such as Mary Daly ([1968]1985);

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Rosemary Radford Ruether (1967); and later Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1983) all expressed their dissatisfaction with the major role that religion had played, with its hierarchical structures and dismissive fiats, in the debasement of women. These women's thorough research exposed the injustice that women had suffered, though they did not expressly address what today is named "epistemic issues." This is a term that refers to whether our perceptions might possibly be fallible. These women were more concerned with investigating the dynamics of power and control that had excluded them rather than debating empirical problems about potential irregularities.

The publication of a volume, *Feminist Epistemologies* (Alcoff and Potter 1993), introduced an in-depth examination of the then most recent philosophical developments. It also marked the naming of a number of feminist epistemologies: feminist standpoint theory, feminist empiricism, and feminist postmodernism, though their respective approaches were not necessarily compatible. Only in the last twenty years have terms such as "epistemic responsibility" and "epistemic ignorance" been admitted into the lexicon of terms that identify epistemological misconceptions that were responsible for the dismissal of women. In 1998, Pamela Sue Anderson's book, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion* appeared, providing a rigorous analysis of the situation at that time, including a request for a much-needed overhaul of dogmatism in both philosophy of religion and theology. Anderson's own work had also been influenced by the writings of feminist philosophers, most especially Miranda Fricker. It is such foundational treatises that first need to be acknowledged. Anderson's later recommendations for further innovative reforms in philosophy of religion will then be considered.

One of the more interesting facets of the early investigations of epistemology was the lack of the term "morality," and any in-depth analysis of its effects on women among secular feminists. Many feminists were convinced then that such discussions as morality did not belong in philosophical circles because of their traditionally restrictive rules for women. Religiously oriented women were also initially reticent because they feared harsh retribution. Nevertheless, later volumes did begin to appear such as: *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Noddings 1984); *Moral Boundaries* (Tronto 1993); and *Feminist Moral Philosophy* (Brennan 2002). In a number of these books, ethics and morality were understood as being mutually interactive.

Epistemic Interventions

One of the first philosophical books to alert contemporary women of their inferior status in philosophy was Genevieve Lloyd's *The Man of Reason: Male and Female in Western Philosophy* ([1984] 1993). Lloyd was one of the first women philosophers to introduce what could be regarded as a form of epistemological criticism that questioned the strong connection of rationality with modalities of masculinity. In the Preface to the second edition of *The Man of Reason*, Lloyd focused on the relationship between minds and bodies and their connections to symbolic representations of men and women (Lloyd 1993, xii–xv). In investigating this link, Lloyd undertook a philosophical journey that extended from Plato and Aristotle to Spinoza, Bacon, and Descartes, reviewing their attitudes toward women. Lloyd's initial reflections on the Cartesian division of mind and body that also symbolized the distinction between reason and its opposites were crucial (Lloyd 1993, 39–52). Her concern continued with further explorations of the views of Hume, Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel. These results revealed similar divisions between male and female anatomy that presumed women as deficient in reason, thereby relegating them to a subordinate role.

Lloyd's own diagnosis was that male domination had led to the standardization of reason. Such standardization effectively sanctioned philosophy as being a product entirely supervised by men (Lloyd 1993, 108). This was indeed a striking indictment, and Lloyd then suggested a number of remedies that could assist in amending such an imbalance. One of these proposals appeared near the end of the first edition of *The Man of Reason*. Lloyd remarked that if a wide diversity of human behavioral patterns, which encompassed both private and public spheres, were to be made accessible to everyone, sexual difference would no longer be held responsible for the harmful stereotypes that have damaged both men and women (Lloyd 1993, 106–107). Lloyd also indicated that such a move would help to mitigate the stark binary division that had informed the requisite conduct expected of both men and women.

In her Preface to the second edition of *The Man of Reason* (1993), Lloyd further expanded her observations in response to criticisms of her views in the first edition. While Lloyd conceded that the metaphor of "maleness" still remained entrenched as a hallmark of reason, she deliberated how to reform "the male-female distinction" (Lloyd 1993, x). She was adamant that she did not equate men literally with rationality; rather, it was basically a metaphorical association. Lloyd also made it clear that her intention was not to idealize or essentialize women. In addition, Lloyd also rejected the separation of "sex" and "gender," which she viewed as simply another format of Cartesian dualism.

It was quite obvious that Lloyd was more interested in exploring the dynamics of the symbolic influences of maleness and femaleness that had become implicated in philosophical works from Plato to the present. Her explorations have helped discern how such symbolic effects can influence the way that human beings identify themselves as male or female (1993, xi). In making such a move, Lloyd's work raised many important issues that were vital for the early stages of feminist philosophy. As a pioneer in feminist philosophy, Lloyd can be credited as laying the foundations for what would, in time, develop into feminist epistemological criticism.

Another important feminist advocate was Canadian philosopher Lorraine Code, whose earliest publication was an article, "Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?" (Code 1981). This article was described by Code herself as an "outrageous question at the time" (Code n.d., 1). The responses she received were mixed. Nevertheless, Code pursued her query, which later featured in what was perhaps her most influential book, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Code 1991).

Code also reports that another early publication, *Epistemic Responsibility* (1987), had an extremely negative reception and soon went out of print; it has since been reprinted. Yet Code does not hesitate to state that "epistemic responsibility" has been a central element, even if tacitly, in all her work (Code n.d., 2). Code states that this concept introduced crucial ethical and epistemological issues. She also affirms that it supports the focal elements of her own work: epistemology, ontology, ethics, and politics, in addition to what she terms "everyday life" (Code n.d., 2).

Code appraised the orientation of her work from 1981 to 1991 in a retrospective article, "Ignorance, Injustice, and the Politics of Knowledge" (Code 2014). Here she conceds that, while feminist philosophy evolved slowly, definite progress had been made, including quite radical and innovative ideas. Subsequently, these developments helped to remove many of what Code regards as the sexist, racist, and classist obstacles that had previously impeded many potential women knowers. Nonetheless, Code admits that she has become seriously concerned about the recent reassertion of the political right, which aims to reintroduce its own brand of androcentricity.

In this context, it is telling that one of the topics that has preoccupied Code throughout her work is what she terms the "S" word, as in the statement "S-knows-that-P." She is particularly concerned that

what she describes as "S's subjectivity" continues to be accepted as a staid white male (Code 2014, 150). At the same time, any attempt to introduce "S" as a female, identifying details such as her sex, gender, or location, is regarded as a perilous fall into subjectivism, thereby canceling out any chance of objective knowledge. Code worries that the dominance of objectivity still surfaces in Anglo-American philosophy with its focus on individualism. Such a stance, according to Code, would indicate a severe case of what she names "epistemic ignorance." Her graphic depiction of this bias emphasizes its negative applications, where it is regarded, not simply as a deficiency, but as defining a position that is unequivocal in its rejection of knowledge itself (Code 2014, 154).

Code extolls the appearance of social anthropology as a mode of studying cultural behaviors. It came to the rescue when, in her early career, there had appeared to be no conceptual means available for her to articulate and discuss "epistemic responsibility." Code also praises Helen Longino's *Fate of Knowledge* (2002) for providing an approach that helped her to incorporate social elements at the same time as allowing that rationality could maintain its deliberative faculty (Code 2014, 151). Such support helped Code to explain the meaning of an "epistemology of ignorance" as well as issues of "epistemic injustice" in her teaching. Another positive impression that Code acknowledges is the progress made by both moral philosophy and psychology. By introducing such difficult issues, involving gender, race, sex, and location, Code's work stimulated a deepening awareness that specific subjects, especially those connected to immutable moral judgments, needed a thorough re-evaluation (Code n.d., 3). Many of the issues that Code had raised over the years, together with her delineation of their epistemic effects, have helped to disassemble the barriers that had separated epistemology from ethical, moral, and political interchanges. Code also helped to establish a model of human knowledge that could accommodate both ethics and politics. Further advances in epistemic inquiries ensued. Ever vigilant herself, however, Code recommended remaining alert so as to prevent threatening incipient movements with their hostile and fallacious intentions.

Amanda Fricker and Epistemic Injustice

In her 2014 article, Code introduced the work of British philosopher Miranda Fricker, whose book, *Epistemic Injustice*: *Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (2007), further advanced the epistemic conversation. Code praises Fricker's own careful analysis of "epistemic ignorance," acclaiming it as a major breakthrough. Fricker explains her motivation for enlarging on this concept. In reflecting on what she calls "epistemic pluralism" and its relation to the social world, Fricker states that she determined if one social group's epistemic position is defeated by another group who exercises greater strength, it is patently obvious that an act of injustice has been committed (Fricker in Dieleman 2012, 254). Such an observation indicates that Fricker is intensely engaged with the dynamics of power and its negative disjunctions.

At their core, Fricker's explorations are concerned with "dysfunctional" issues, especially those that illustrate a spectrum of deprivations experienced by human beings. The consequences of such experiences can be damaging for both mind and body. Fricker cites ethnic minorities and women as groups that are particularly vulnerable. She admits her dismay at the various repercussions of epistemic injustice, and recommends a concerted effort be undertaken to help heal those who have been ignored and left in distress. Fricker's own suggestion, in addition to exploring the effects of the two main categories of "epistemic injustice," which she names, respectively, "testimonial injustice" and "hermeneutic injustice," is

an appeal to a restorative Aristotelian mode of virtue ethics. She proposes that such a practice would be undertaken principally by those who have caused the distress, though it also has wider intimations.

In explaining the first category of epistemic injustice, "testimonial injustice," Fricker views it as happening on a personal level, when people, who are in need of help from others, are rejected as a result of prejudicial or discriminatory classifications (Fricker in Dieleman 2012, 257). The second category, "hermeneutic injustice," applies to structural impediments that can compromise a person's articulation of a problem. In this instance, Fricker describes the graphic example of a woman who has been sexually assaulted and is incapable of describing her experience. The woman's lack of words reflects the fact that her experience occurred at a time when the term "sexual harassment" had not been recognized as a concept (Fricker in Dieleman 2012, 257).

In keeping with her recommendation of Aristotelian virtue, Fricker states that such virtuous cultivation can help restore balance. Yet there are scholars who have registered concern about this move. While Rae Langton's review of Fricker's book *Epistemic Injustice* (Langton 2010) confirms Fricker's observation that epistemological virtues can be just as necessary and effective for moral virtue as they are for ethics in a more restrictive sense, she remained troubled. It is not as if Langton rejected either ethical or moral virtues *per se*, as she did not have any trouble in admitting her respect for Aristotelian virtue ethics. Langton's concern is whether such a mode of virtue as "testimonial justice" is sufficiently robust to heal what has been a traumatic experience (Langton 2010, 462). She describes the experience of a woman who has been "epistemologically damaged" and suffers "a credibility deficit" (Langton, 461) as virtually incapable of the refined moral insight and perceptiveness that Fricker recommends for such a task. Langton's immediate question to Fricker is whether the two categories of epistemic injustice can be successfully healed by the application of the two epistemic virtues.

Fricker does respond, admitting that she had initially determined to concentrate on the complications of the ethical when it interacts with epistemic categories. However, Fricker has since become aware that any such explications would also need to include political engagements in addition to ethical elements. Conceding that she is a newcomer to political philosophy, Fricker declares that these matters will be subject to investigation in her future writings (Fricker in Dieleman 2012, 259). This development, however, is beyond the scope of the present project.

Fricker's continued work on "epistemic injustice" has inspired many other scholars, including female scholars of religion, such as the late Pamela Sue Anderson. Anderson elaborated on Fricker's foundational position on the need for epistemic justice. She also endeavored to incorporate certain innovative developments about "epistemic ignorance" in the study of religion and morals. Anderson's reflections, with its epistemic ethical ideals, introduced an innovative dimension of reflection to their connection with religion.

Pamela Sue Anderson on Love and Morality

In one of the chapters in her book, *Re-visioning Gender in Philosophy of Religion*: *Reason, Love and Epistemic Locatedness* (2017a), entitled "Gendering Love in Philosophy of Religion," Pamela Sue Anderson reflects on the proposition that "the identities of women and men have been shaped sexually, socially, spiritually and ethically by philosophical conceptions of love and morality" (2017a, 89). This observation leads her to examine her own views on these topics, given their development during the

course of her academic career. Anderson deliberates about love and morality as they are regarded currently, where they still exert a strong influence on theory and practice. Yet, in such changing times, there are many other issues to address that can render any such reflections and debates especially controversial. Given Anderson's status as a leading feminist philosopher of religion, it is not surprising that she states that most philosophical reasoning is not particularly effective when it comes to making decisions about topics that involve religion, sexuality, gender, race, and ethnicity (2017a, 89). Anderson has contributed many impressive judgments on the status of women in religion and on the obstacles that they have encountered. As a result, it is particularly instructive to undertake a review of Anderson's own considerations, both negative and constructive, on certain of these issues.

It was during the early stages of her teaching career in both the United States and the United Kingdom, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, that Anderson became aware of the difficult situation of women who taught philosophy of religion. Although they were well-qualified, many found it very difficult to find and hold teaching appointments. Anderson then determined to focus on the areas of ethics and feminism in philosophy, including the epistemological issues. She was also passionately interested in certain topics that queried the rationality of religious belief. Anderson's concern in this connection was that the gender-neutral language and constructions of rationality totally excluded women's issues.

As a result of Anderson's numerous publications and presentations in this area, she was invited to publish her ground-breaking volume, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (1998). In its *Introduction*, Anderson cautions the reader not to expect that she will present a new doctrine or belief, nor will she make a defensive move in support of a single god, or even celebrate a gathering of goddesses. Instead, Anderson's intention is to offer what she has called a "philosophical framework which can generate less biased, less partial, and so less false beliefs" (1998, 20). A tall order. Yet Anderson was living at a time when extraordinary changes were being implemented both by and for women in philosophy of religion, not to mention other disciplines. These innovations allowed Anderson and other women scholars to gain a deeper awareness of their ambitions. It also enabled them to question unjust or degrading experiences that had prevented them from attaining their goals. It is a formidable task to begin detailing Anderson's many contributions to the development of feminist philosophy of religion. The task at hand is to acknowledge a selective number of her achievements.

One of the more interesting explorations during the middle period of her work was Anderson's evaluation of contemporary morals. It made its first appearance in an essay entitled, "The Case for a Feminist Philosophy of Religion," where she observed the "deeply gendered – often sexist and racist – nature of our social and physical locations" (*Ars Disputandi* 2002, 4). In response to such a charge, Anderson began to implement a transformative mode of philosophizing in religion. This, she believed, would help to encourage an appreciation of the notions of sex/gender as well as the diversities of race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. However, Anderson understood that this demanding task, with its goal of "epistemic justice," would not be able to be achieved without a definite epistemological strategy. This would involve "thinking from the lives of others, and reinventing ourselves as other" (2002, 3).

An early influence on Anderson's work was that of Sandra Harding and her approach of standpoint theory which strongly influenced Anderson to form her own understanding of a "feminist standpoint theory." Harding herself argues that "objectivity is maximized not by excluding social factors but precisely by 'starting' the process of inquiry from an explicitly social location: the lived experience of those persons who have traditionally been excluded from knowledge production (for example, women)" (1995, 193). Anderson qualified her understanding of Harding's theory by stating that one does not simply achieve this position by virtue

of being born a woman, nor by merely experiencing life from a woman's perspective. Instead, Anderson defined her own position as one that was an "epistemically informed perspective" that resulted from thinking about other peoples' lives. In adapting Harding's theory, Anderson formulated a specific understanding of "otherness." Anderson does not solely restrict standpoint theory to women but expands her range to embrace all, though her own particular focus is that of women. In this connection, Anderson also observes that women may also have been oppressed by harmful rules of rigid doctrine (2002, 6).

Anderson, however, had other aspirations that were wide-ranging. Her attention was directed to alleviating people's suffering resulting from what she regarded as imposed strict moralistic rules and doctrinaire intrusions. In a 2003 article entitled "Autonomy, Vulnerability, and Gender," Anderson declared her intention was to resist what she regarded as a severe form of utilitarian ethics that had prevailed in recent moral theory. She also suggested that feminist ethics should undertake a serious re-reading of modern moral philosophy and critically address its defects. Another recommendation Anderson introduced was a gendering of autonomy. Such a task did not imply separate gendered roles or total independence. It was an indication that Anderson regarded Kant's view of autonomy as being only partially correct. In its place, Anderson would support Paul Ricoeur's construct of narrative identity as supplying a form of "fragile coherence" (2003, 153).

In 2004, however, another article by Anderson appeared, entitled: "'Moralizing' Love in Philosophy of Religion." (It was later revised and republished as Chapter 5 in Anderson's final book, *Re-visioning Gender in Philosophy of Religion*: *Reason, Love and Epistemic Locatedness* (2017a). However it then appeared with a different title: "Gendering Love in Philosophy of Religion.") There were a number of differences between the two essays but, the most crucial items in both articles were "love" and "morality." These terms would guide Anderson in a new direction. In the initial essay, there was a definite negative quality associated with what Anderson had termed the "moralization of love" (2004, 227). Anderson explains how she understood this term: "Moralizing can imply an imposition of moral judgment onto a non-moral phenomenon, or the intrusion of moral concerns where they do not rightfully belong" (2004, 227). She also questioned if feminist philosophers were to make a moral judgment or simply suggest a problematic issue about a moral topic, for example, love in philosophy, could they also be accused of moralization? In time, Anderson would respond more fully to these subject matters. Her central concern at this stage was that certain philosophers had declined to foster love as part of becoming "fully embodied human beings" (2004, 228).

Anderson then added another personal insight, stating that, when pure reason is associated with "moralization," it could lead philosophers astray. In fact, "the moralization of love" implied that reason would take control of emotions, instead of approving of emotions such as love. Other results Anderson mentioned were also not reassuring. She tried to question such resistance by asking: "What would be the relevance of 'moralizing' love and personal pledges in contemporary philosophy of religion?" At that period, there were obviously no clear-cut responses. Anderson herself stated that human love can indeed be messy and that its unpredictable episodes had probably instigated the call for control or "moralization." While Anderson was well aware that other attempts at integration of the two entities love and philosophy had failed, she still intended to introduce such an approach to the study of women and religion. This is because Anderson had realized that strict Enlightenment reasoning need not be automatically approved as supplying solutions for problematic cases, including religious disputes. Anderson was aware that other approaches, such as that of vulnerability, also provided constructive insights that needed to be explored.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, Anderson's life was cut short and she did not have time to complete her other exploratory ventures in great detail, principally that of "vulnerability." Her final article, "Arguing for 'Ethical' Vulnerability: Towards a Politics of Care" (2017b), revealed a number of Anderson's most recent discernments, addressing the seemingly unattainable reunion of love and morality. Anderson also divulged a number of her thoughts about the impasses that continued to trouble her. Both of these declarations witness to the difficulties that would have lain in wait ahead of her intended undertakings. The following paragraphs constitute a short overview of Anderson's proposals that she hoped could transform the divisiveness between philosophy of religion and a reanimated understanding of morality. These proposals represent a challenging addition to the projects informing Anderson's final research, where vulnerability and an ethics of care had become a central part of her philosophical and religious interests.

In explaining her views in these supplemental statements, Anderson nevertheless still appeared somewhat perturbed. Her own revisiting of "moralization," disclosed its continued "excessive moral demandingness" and also its connection with a form of "moral invulnerability," which she previously rejected (2017b, 149). In distinguishing "moralization" from "ethical," Anderson declared that she still had reservations about "moral" as potentially having an "unethical meaning" (2017b, 151). This suspicion can be traced to her earlier understanding of "moralization" as being a control mechanism, that can mislead people's attitudes toward marginal and vulnerable human beings. Nevertheless, morals, presented in a non-pejorative sense, would be something that she would welcome, if it were presented as a non-dogmatic and non-controlling element.

Anderson, however, does not depart on a pessimistic note. She affirms a revised meaning of "ethical vulnerability" as a positive introduction toward others. The result is that vulnerability can co-operate with an "ethics of care" and an "ethics of justice" to help diminish the fragility of human beings. At the same time, Anderson attests that "ethical vulnerability" can also provide a space that has a restorative influence on those who have been wrongly excluded. Finally, Anderson's expansive orientation allows that care, epistemic justice, and love could prevail.

These concluding remarks about Pamela Sue Anderson's work are in keeping with the other powerful women who are philosophical pioneers, Genevieve Lloyd, Lorraine Code, and Miranda Fricker. They have all contributed their own wisdom and concern to help establish a form of feminist epistemological knowledge. These women have proposed advanced new ways of insight. As a result, women have gained acceptance and respect that encourages them to continue their pursuit of wisdom unimpeded.

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CHAPTER 10

Natural Law

Elisabeth Rain Kincaid, Ebenezer Akesseh, and David A. Clairmont

Introduction

Philosophers and religious thinkers concerned with moral theory have long been interested in the moral significance of nature. From ancient times, people have wondered about the relationship between human life and the rest of the natural world. Does the natural world hold some useful knowledge that can, if accessed and used appropriately, help people to live a good and fulfilling human life? What exactly is our human nature, how can we know it, and what if anything does it teach us about leading a good and fulfilling life? Does the human capacity to reason mean that we are basically freed from the constraints imposed on us by our animal natures? Through reason might we be able to discern our true nature and purpose and act in accordance with it or are we free to determine our own natures and purposes through reason? Do nature and reason have any role to play in organizing human societies and establishing appropriate rules and forms of governance? These and other questions are at the heart of debates in moral theory but these questions also are deeply religious questions. Is the world random or purposeful? What if anything establishes that purpose? Are we free to select our own purpose or is that purpose, and the particular choices we make to fulfill that purpose, governed by some source other than ourselves?

Natural law is one approach to thinking about the moral life that offers answers to these questions. Although one finds a diversity of interpretations about the meaning of natural law and the extent to which it offers specific guidance for making moral decisions, natural law approaches agree that there exist at least provisional answers to these questions which establish some meaningful connection between human nature, the wider natural order, and the use of human reason to guide the moral life. Natural law is a deeply interdisciplinary topic, rooted in philosophy, theology, and law but also in the natural and human sciences, affecting discussions in the fields of politics, economics, and comparative religion among many others.

Natural Law and Moral Theory

Natural law approaches to ethics stress the power of human reason to discern naturally existing (so called "pre-rational") goods that all human beings share and to examine how those particular goods relate to the proximate and ultimate purposes of human life. Jean Porter has offered a useful summary of what natural law approaches have in common. She writes that "There have been many forms of natural law morality,

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including both moralities that stress the intrinsic moral significance of pre-rational natural processes, and those that ground it in the exigencies of reason. What these have in common, however, is a view of morality which grounds it in intrinsic, ordered structures of being, in contrast to approaches that emphasize authoritative will" (Porter 2005, 229). Natural law approaches to ethics affirm that the natural world and human beings as a part of the animal order are intelligible, that living ethically involves at least some knowledge of those intelligible structures and a resolve to live in fitting response to them, and that it is more or less reasonable to speak of basic goods and purposes of human life as such. Different kinds of creatures have different purposes and these purposes may be known inductively through the study of the kinds of capacities that characterize each kind of creature and the ability of each creature to reach a certain level of flourishing to the extent that its basic capacities are actualized.

In discussions about moral theory, natural law has traditionally been classified as a kind of moral realism. As Maria Antonaccio explains, "In its strongest (traditional) form, moral realism holds that moral facts exist independently of our beliefs and theories about morality. . .that is, independently of our "mental machinery" or our cognitive frameworks" (Antonaccio 2005, 29). As one version of moral realism, natural law theories hold that what is real, what is natural, and what is moral are somehow related. One topic of debate among natural law theorists is exactly how these three aspects of reality, nature, and morality are related. To give one example, those who would affirm some religious basis for natural law must reconcile potentially contradictory claims that a creator god who instilled in human beings a power to reason and therefore to know something about what constitutes their own basic goods and the fullness of their flourishing could in theory command something that is against that good. Yet this traditional opposition between divine command and natural law approaches can be reconciled in a number of ways. As Neil Arner explains, "some philosophical theologians are turning to natural law theory to handle the objection that the typical Protestant approach to ethics – some form of divine command theory – makes morality arbitrary. According to standard divine command theory, it is God's prescribing humans to act in a discrete manner that constitutes the rightness of the behaviour enjoined. Critics of this theory, who are often advocates of a natural law alterative, object that God's commands bear no necessary connection to the wellbeing of humans" (Arner 2016, 377). As Arner goes on to explain, some who might otherwise worry that natural law does not sufficiently guard against eroding the sovereignty of a divine creator and lawgiver, are still open to "an account of natural moral goods that provides a criterion according to which humans can ascertain the goodness promoted by obedience to divine commands" (Arner 2016, 378). Yet there exist both religious and non-religious forms of naturalism in ethics. Those who reject a religious perspective from which to evaluate the moral status of the natural, for example in some versions of utilitarianism and virtue ethics, still look for ways to link the natural with the moral in ways that do not assume that what occurs naturally is itself moral. Whether through rational utility maximization of naturally occurring goods or judgments of self-interest (Singer 2000), or in developing human capacities to pursue characteristic forms of human excellence through rational ordering of premoral goods (Nussbaum 1986), the ethical significance of the human connection to the natural world remains.

Natural Law – A Short History

Both Plato and Aristotle ground much of their philosophical speculation in a clear sense of some type of ordering principle of reason governing the universe. Although both of them use the phrase "natural law" itself only in a few scattered instances, this conception of ordering principles of reason appears

throughout their works. Plato establishes a relationship between the form of the good and order in the universe in the *Republic*. In a similar way, Aristotle identifies natural standards of justice, which are applicable everywhere and not established by human decisions, as opposed to legal justice which is established by local practices and only applies in a specific community (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 5.7). Aristotle's naturalistic theory of the human good and happiness in accord with human nature would also have an important impact upon the development of natural law theory. In early East Asian philosophy, Confucius shows a similar conception in his discussions of social harmony. In the Hebrew Bible, the creation narrative in Genesis, ending with God's evaluation of creation as "very good" provides a more explicitly theological description of the principles of good and order within the universe. The creation of humans in God's own image, usually interpreted to include the capacity for reason and seeking the truth, demonstrates the human capacity for engagement with God's ordering of the universe. In the book of Wisdom, wisdom as "a breath of the power of God" is described as a spirit which "pervades and penetrates all things" again conveying a sense of the intrinsic order of the universe, grounded in God's creative activity but intrinsically good in and of itself (Levering 2012, 63).

However, the explicit theorization of a "natural law" did not develop until the philosophy of the Stoics. In *De Republica*, Cicero provides a Platonically influenced analogy comparing the universe to a commonwealth, and describing natural law as the "one eternal and unchangeable law," transcending time and the same "at Rome and at Athens" (Cicero 2006, *De Republica*). Philo provides a similar description. Both Cicero and Philo ground this natural law in a theory of transcendent divine reason, in short a divine law giver. In Philo, we see an explicit connection between the development of this concept and the Hebrew Bible, especially the creation narratives in Genesis and the laws of Moses, which, while not always identical with natural law are always complementary and harmonious (Sterling 2016). While the historical assumption, dating back to Ernst Troeltsch, has been that the Greek concept of natural law had a greater influence than the Hebrew Bible on the development of a more explicit theory in the Pauline corpus, recent scholarship has indicated a development of the natural law theory within the Mediterranean world that consisted of a cross-fertilization between Jewish and Greek sources in discussing natural law (Horsley 1978). In St. Paul's reference to the law of the Gentiles in Romans 2:15, he argues for God's justice by claiming that the Gentiles have a law within themselves "by nature" which guides them in discerning in their conscience whether their actions should be condemned.

Most significantly in the patristic period, Augustine engages with St. Paul's theory of natural law to argue that Paul means that natural law provides every person with some access to a natural understanding of morality. This common moral knowledge is not even over-ridden by the different orientations and different loves which Augustine identifies as governing the true city. The natural law can still perceive the goods of society which direct even in an incomplete way to the earthly peace which both the heavenly and earthly city share. Thus, Augustine viewed the natural law both as an intrinsic principle of order as well as an order given by the divine creator and ruler, God's eternal law springing from God's wisdom and will (Augustine 1998). In the medieval period, Aquinas brought together scripture, Aristotle, and Augustine in a grand synthesis which set the terms for the discussion until the present day. His contributions are notable for his emphasis on the rationalist rather than voluntary establishment of natural law, as well as his emphasis on the role of natural instincts and the goal of establishing natural happiness (Porter 2005).

In contrast, Duns Scotus (1997) presents a more restricted view about humans' epistemological access to the natural law and how it relates to the will of God than Aquinas. Whereas Aquinas argues that all the of the precepts of the Decalogue are encompassed in the natural law, Scotus argues that they are

simply aspects of divine positive law, which follow from the principles of the natural law but are not required by it. This means that God can grant exceptions to them, or in fact make them non-binding. According to Scotus, "God can act otherwise than is prescribed not only by a particular order, but also by a universal order or law of justice, and in so doing he could still act ordainedly, because what God could do by his absolute power that is either beyond or runs counter to the present order, he could do ordainedly" (Ord. 1.44). This also is related to Scotus' voluntarist claims, which ground God's issuance of the natural law in God's will and total freedom, rather than in God's determination about what is best. Ockham develops the claims of Scotus further to argue that God's establishment of right reason which undergirds the natural law could have been otherwise, in fact it is completely dependent on God's will and God could change what constitutes a human's good, despite the imperatives of human nature. Out of this nominalist/naturalist debate arose important questions about the nature of obligation and law which were to inform later natural law theory. Is there such a thing as intrinsic moral rightness and order which is expressed in natural law or does natural law's authority depend upon only the command of an authoritative legislator?

In the early modern period, natural law theory was developed in several different important directions. The scholars of the School of Salamanca, such as Vitoria, de Soto, and Suárez used natural law theory to oppose the abuses promulgated by the Spanish Empire in the New World. Francisco Suárez also developed a theory of natural law which upheld the concept of intrinsic goodness while also emphasizing the importance of the legislator. Many theologians of the Reformation did not abandon natural law theory, but also continued to engage with the scholastic questions stemming from Aquinas and Scotus related to natural law. Looking across the Reformation traditions, Calvin, Melanchthon, and Hooker reject the extreme voluntarist positions and return, in various degrees, to emphasizing the intrinsic principles of order of the natural law, along with God's legislative action in establishing it (Irwin 2011). Calvin, for example, incorporated natural law in his theory of the three uses of the law.

However, later developments of natural law were characterized by a shift, whether intentionally or not, away from the divine basis of natural law and the Aristotelian naturalism which characterized the Thomistic approach to a more secular understanding grounded purely on the capacities of reason. Both Thomas Hobbes and Hugo Grotius describe natural law in more secular terms, as not necessarily dependent upon God but rather natural functioning and determined through reason alone. Grotius develops this account to provide a grounding for a theory of international law and rules governing conduct on warfare, all of which he hoped could contribute to peace in a warring Europe. In addition, Grotius is also often credited with the most decisive shift and development from a theory of natural law as an objective standard to a subjective approach based on a concept of individual rights. Hobbes was also motivated by a desire for peace. However, where Grotius's natural law theory was more aligned with theories of political liberalism, Hobbes turned instead, in *Leviathan*, to natural law theory to underlie the theory of the autocratic government he felt necessary to preserve peace. He describes two tranches of natural law, the first to seek peace and the second self-defense. In seeking peace, a person may surrender her liberty or even natural law right of self-defense to a supreme ruler, the Leviathan, capable of keeping peace in the kingdom (Hobbes 1996, Ch. 14). For both of these authors, the natural law is no longer about seeking a vision of the common good but simply avoiding injury to others.

"Modern" natural law theory is often described as building upon this secularization instituted by Hobbes and Grotius, and exemplified in the work of Samuel Pufendorf and John Locke. Both Pufendorf and Locke separated further obligation from natural instincts and concepts of natural or supernatural

fulfillment. Both completed the voluntarist turn to argue that morality depended only upon law imposed as a command and emphasized the relationship between law and rational nature (Finnis 2004). According to some estimates, this turn to a purely rationalist and rule grounded theory of natural law reached its apex (or nadir) in the claims by Immanuel Kant in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* where Kant attempts to reduce "all moral rationality to logic, but with the obligation imposed not by the will of God, but by ourselves" (Finnis 2004). A complete theological rejection of natural law followed a few centuries later, with Karl Barth's resounding "Nein!" to a theological principle which, along with natural theology, he saw as grounded in idolatry.

However, the last seventy years have seen a resurgence of interest in a more classical Thomistic natural law theory, among secular thinkers as well as Protestants and Catholics. For example, the work of Jacques Maritain and others involved in the Thomistic renewal had a great impact upon the formation of secular doctrines of natural rights following World War II. Debates between neo-Thomists, proponents of the new natural law theory, and Thomists who take a more historical retrieval approach, have continued to generate literature and debate as well as reclaiming the original theological grounding of natural law theory. Protestants as well have sought to reclaim the Calvinist theories of natural law. In addition, revisions of Thomistic natural law in philosophical circles, as reintroduced by philosophers such as Elizabeth Anscombe, Peter Geach, Philippa Foot, and Alasdair MacIntyre have expanded the discourse and questions to bring in new audiences even from outside theological perspectives.

The history of the natural law must also account for how communities in the West have applied the natural law to their historical and social problems in the past and how the natural law tradition still offers ways of addressing the present conundrums that those communities face. Lloyd has argued for the relevance of what he refers to as black natural law in solving the manifestations of racial inequality faced by blacks in North America. He also proposes the method as useful for other communities which are riddled with various forms of injustices. In explaining the contours of black natural law Lloyd states, "Black natural law most centrally entails: ideology critique and social movement organizing. These are the responses that necessarily follow from proper reflection on human nature and its distortions" (Lloyd 2016, 146). Lloyd further notes that "Black natural law is embodied in African American tradition; it is the style of political engagement characteristic of that tradition. It is self-evident to poor black people that they are not who they are told they are on a daily basis, that the wisdom of the world is wrong" (Lloyd 2016, 159). In explaining the method of black natural law, Lloyd emphasizes that "black natural law has a distinctive way of identifying and prioritizing what counts as a social problem" (Lloyd 2016, 153). The process begins with "reflecting on how human nature is distorted by institutions, laws, and social norms" (Lloyd 2016, 146). It then critiques those institutions and norms using the natural law tradition. He also emphasizes the importance of practical wisdom and patience in constructions and implementation of black natural law (Lloyd 2016, 147–148).

Natural Law and Religious Ethics

Although natural law's contribution to moral theory originated in the classical Western tradition and was developed with special urgency among medieval Christian thinkers, correlates both structural and substantial may be found in other religious traditions as well. Here we explore two: Buddhism in the Southeast Asian Theravāda tradition and African Traditional Religions (ATR) in the tradition of the Akan of Ghana.

While Buddhist scholars are, for the most part, reluctant to classify Buddhist moral thinking according to standard classifications in Western moral theory (Hallisey and Hansen, 1996), there are certain features of Buddhist thought and practice that suggest at least initially useful comparisons. For example, some have argued that Buddhist thought most closely resembles a form of utilitarianism while others suggest that Buddhism most closely resembles an Aristotelian virtue ethic (Keown 1992, 14–23; Harvey 2000, 40–46). Damian Keown offers a helpful interpretation of Buddhist approaches to ethics broadly understood in light of a number of issues in moral theory, noting that "Buddhist ethics is altruistic, a form of qualified absolutism, objectivist, naturalist, and teleological (but not consequentialist)" (Keown 1992, 23). Others, such as Sallie King, have suggested that we can offer additional comparisons if we select individual Buddhist thinkers whose ethical writings reflect some of the basic commitments of some rather than the full range of Buddhist writers.

Discussing the writings of the Thai Theravāda monks Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Phra Prayyudh Payutto, King suggests that we find "elements that express a natural law type of thinking" in their Buddhism, not to say that this is the only kind of ethical thinking to be found in the work of Buddhadasa and Payutto. According to King, "The idea of natural law is 'the view that there is an unchanging normative order that is a part of the natural world'. . .contrary to the view that ethics are merely the invention of human beings, and contrary to the view that ethics derive from a supernatural source, God, natural law theory holds that ethics ultimately derive from the natural world. Thus, on this view, ethics are not arbitrary, nor conventional, nor culturally relative; they are part and parcel of the structure of the cosmos, hence universal and objective" (King 2002, 276). In this Buddhist view, the cosmos and all things within it exhibit three basic characteristics: they are impermanent (*anicca*), without an unchanging essence or self (*anatta*), and ultimately unsatisfactory (*dukkha*). As King puts it, "Rather than declaring that the natural world contains within itself a normative moral law, they instead see the natural world as containing within itself certain features that, when we understand the nature of sentient beings, mandate for us a set of ethical behaviors. Thus. . .while 'good' and 'bad' are not part of the structure of the universe, 'skillful' and 'unskillful' are certainly part of the human response to the way the universe is, and in this skillfulness and lack thereof lies morality" (King 2002, 277).

Like their Buddhist counterparts, some African scholars such as Bujo are also cautious of strict classifications of African ethics along Western categories. Odozor has argued that "African ethical method tends to be a mixture of many things: deontologist on some issues, teleological on others, and pragmatist when it matters" (Odozor 2014, 240). Akan understanding of natural law emphasizes the goodness of nature and the capacity of human beings to know the truth. As would be evident in the discussion below, the processes through which Akans come to know and live by the truth privileges creation and community, as two important interrelated themes which serve as foundational blocks for thinking through constructions of normative standards of what constitutes formulations of the good.

The Akan, like other African societies, believe in the Supreme Being as the creator of all that is. The notion that the universe is created and ordered by God guides how people relate to one another and to the created order. The Akan also affirm that human beings have a divine spark, the soul, given them by God. Hagan notes that the idea that "the individual is endowed with some essence, personality or identity derived from beyond community . . . is institutionalized in the Akan day names called *kradzin* (the soul name)" (Hagan 2010, 36, 43). This belief which implies that each person has an intrinsic worth that must be respected at all times has moral relevance both for the individual and the community (Gyekye 1996, 150).

Among the Akans, the community plays an important role in prescribing and proscribing what constitutes the good by taking into account what humans share with the natural world and what is proper to human beings. The members of the communities are required to preserve and protect life as well as refrain from acts that destroy life. Community members are also expected to understand that their flourishing is bound to the flourishing of their communities and their environment. The community helps the individuals to appreciate their roles by inculcating in them virtuous practices that respect the good which ought to be accomplished and the evil which should be avoided.

The relationship between creation and community is exemplified in the Akan understanding of justice. The word "justice" translated in Akan as *atɛnterenee* is made up of the words, *atɛn* which means judgment and *terenee* which means right and straight (Kotey 2007, 244). Majeed identifies another pair of words, *pɛ yɛ*, which explain the concept of justice. "*Pɛ*" means, equal and "*yɛ*" means, "to be" (Majeed 2014, 104). From the etymological considerations, the Akan concept of justice hinges on the notion of fairness or rendering others their due as demonstrated in right relations. This idea is rooted in the understanding that all humans created by God have an inherent dignity and, therefore, must treat others fairly and be treated equally and fairly. The standards of equity and fairness are laid down by the community with the good of both the community and the individual in mind and the individual through the processes of rational deliberation is expected to observe what is fair and just.

Conclusion

Natural law presents an approach to moral theory that is especially amenable to both multi-disciplinary and inter-religious inquiry. Natural law is not, as we have seen, coterminous with a description of the laws of nature although various religious and non-religious accounts do consider what, if anything, constitutes nature's moral significance. As a version of both moral realism and moral naturalism, natural law seeks to understand not only the intelligible structures of human life and respond appropriately to them, it also seeks to understand the meaning and significance of widely shared social conventions and the history of the many culturally specific forms of legal, political, economic, and social-familial organization, insofar as these have contributed to or interfered with the authentic flourishing of human communities. As a religious approach to ethics, natural law seeks to understand how religious accounts of creation and cosmic order, redemption and suffering, relate to the human capacity for self-understanding and reflexive moral action and the trans-historical and intercultural quest for the human good, individually and in community with others.

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CHAPTER 11

Divine Command Theories of Moral Obligations

J. Harrison Lee and C. Stephen Evans

A divine command theory of moral obligations, or DCT, maintains that moral obligations are caused by, constituted by, or identical to, divine commands. Although this view of moral obligations has historically been influential, since morality has seemed, to many, to have a "law-like" character, it has been widely rejected by modern philosophers and even theologians. The main reason for this is that the theory is often identified with "theological voluntarism," the doctrine that God's will determines all moral truths. Such voluntarism is often thought to imply that moral truths have an arbitrary character, a view incompatible with the seeming necessity of moral obligations.

Divine command theory has recently been revived and defended by such philosophers as Phillip Quinn, Robert Adams, John Hare, and C. Stephen Evans. The latter three have argued that it is a mistake to equate a DCT with theological voluntarism. These philosophers argue that God's commands might be constrained by prior considerations about what is good – but not yet obligatory – for us to pursue. This view clearly rejects voluntarism, since it presupposes that there are truths about the good that do not depend on the divine will, and it allows them to respond to the charge that a DCT makes moral obligations objectionably arbitrary.

This entry surveys the present state of the debate surrounding the DCT, focusing especially on how it has been impacted by the aforementioned attempts to distinguish the theory from theological voluntarism. We will begin by exploring R. M. Adams' "social theory of obligations," an attempt to show that obligations in general – not just the moral ones – are grounded in relations between persons. Next, we will outline four central *desiderata* for theories of moral obligation and the ways in which a DCT arguably fulfills them. Finally, we will conclude by discussing several important objections to the DCT and looking at the strengths and weaknesses of replies to those objections.

The Special Character of Obligations: The Social Theory of Obligations

As already noted, a DCT differs from general theological voluntarism by denying that God's will determines all normative truths. Instead, a DCT claims that God's commands (God's will insofar as that will is expressed or communicated) is the ground of one type of normative truth, those expressing moral obligations. For this to be plausible, there must be something special about moral obligation as a normative category.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Robert Adams has argued that all obligations, including moral ones, do have a distinctive character, and he has claimed that this special character requires us to understand obligations as linked to social relationships and institutions (Adams 1999, 231–248). For Adams' defense of this social theory of obligations, see his *Finite and Infinite Goods*. Moral obligations is only one species of obligation. There are legal obligations, family obligations, and the obligations connected to joining a club, as well as many obligations linked to specific social roles and offices that people may occupy. A baseball umpire, for example, is obligated to call balls and strikes in a way that conforms to the rules of the game of baseball, a social institution.

Obligations in all these contexts have a special character. Semantically, as Adams argues, the concept of an obligation is linked to social responses. When I do not do what I am obligated to do, others may rightly blame me for my failure. They may reproach me or even desire that I be punished. Thus, a social theory of obligation holds that "having an obligation to do something consists in being required (in a certain way, under certain circumstances or conditions), by another person or a group of persons to do it" (Adams 1999, 242). This account of obligations also provides an explanation of why we have reasons to do what we are obligated to do, even if keeping the obligation does not lead to the best possible results. We should fulfill our obligations because of the value we place on the social relations that undergird those obligations. I ought to obey the laws of the state if I value being a citizen of the state. I ought to fulfill my duties as a husband or parent if I value those familial roles.

Of course, not all human obligations are moral obligations. Some obligations are in fact immoral in nature. For example, there are youth gangs that require members to carry out gratuitous violent acts against perfect strangers. Obviously, a government or private club or even a family might have systems of social requirements that go against morality at points. A person living in Nazi Germany might have had a legal obligation to discriminate against Jews, even though such discrimination is morally forbidden. The point is that obligations in general seem to be grounded in social relations in which people make demands of a certain sort on each other. If this is the case for other types of obligations, it seems plausible to think that it will be true of moral obligations as well.

If this is right, then what social relation or institution might be the basis of *moral* obligations? One might think that the moral demands made on a person simply are those made by other human persons. Perhaps, for example, to say that an act is morally forbidden is simply to say that it is one that other people will condemn me for doing. However, it surely cannot be the case that the judgments of just anyone will suffice. If I live in a racist society, and I am condemned by my peers for not being a racist, I am not violating my moral duties. In response, one might say that what matters would be the judgments of an ideal person, an "ideal observer," who is completely good. However, if this "ideal observer" does not exist, it is not clear why the "demands" made by such an individual should have any force. A purely hypothetical being who does not exist cannot really make any demands, and it is not obvious why anyone should care about the judgments such a being *would* make, if that being existed.

The appeal of a divine command theory of moral obligation can now be seen. Briefly, such a view says that moral obligations are grounded in the demands made by God, understood as a necessarily good being who is the creator of the universe. Since God is actual, not hypothetical, he can require things of humans. Since God is completely good, his requirements, unlike the requirements of a human politician or gang leader, will always be for the good. Theists from the Abrahamic faiths typically believe that God, as the creator, has given humans every good they have, and thus humans owe God an enormous debt of gratitude. Theists usually believe as well that God desires to have a relation with humans that makes it possible

for them to enjoy eternal life and happiness. It seems then that humans would have very good reasons to value a relation with God, and thus reason to care about God's requirements for such a relationship.

The Case for a Divine Command Account of Moral Obligations

The Desiderata

One of the appealing features of the DCT is its ability to persuasively satisfy four central *desiderata* for any theory of moral obligation: objectivity, authority, motivation, and universality. Defenders of a DCT typically argue that a DCT offers a better explanation of how and why morality has these features than do rival theories. Our discussion of the desiderata for theories of moral obligation and how the DCT fulfills them draws heavily on Evans (2013, 29–32).

Objectivity

Moral obligations are traditionally regarded as objective. On this understanding, whether we are morally obligated to perform an action is not a function of whether we believe or desire ourselves to be so obligated. Rather, our moral obligations come as it were "from the outside." Thus, we have many moral obligations regardless whether we believe in them and regardless whether we want to comply with them. For example, under ordinary circumstances, a father is morally obligated to take care of his children whether he recognizes it or not and whether he wants to or not. And, according to a common way of developing this traditional, "objectivist" outlook, everyone is obligated to refrain from certain "intrinsically evil" actions like murder, theft, and adultery, regardless our subjective attitudes towards these types of actions.

Authority

Moral obligations provide authoritative reasons for action. Once an agent has realized he has a moral obligation to perform an action, it is no longer reasonable for him to consider refraining from performing that action. For example, if a father recognizes that he has a moral obligation to watch over his son for the evening, it is not reasonable for him to consider pursuing other plans, whatever the merits of those plans may be. For, at least as long as we remain capable of fulfilling our moral obligations, they can be overridden only by other, more fundamental moral obligations. And if a more fundamental moral obligation overrides the father's obligation to watch over his son, then contrary to our stipulation, he does not recognize that he has a moral obligation to watch over his son for the evening because he has no such obligation! In this way, we are never exempt from moral obligation as such, but only from particular moral obligations. By contrast, a man living in an unjust regime may be exempt from all of his legal obligations, since the dictates of his moral conscience may override them.

Motivation

Moral obligations bind not only our actions, but also our passions; a morally virtuous person feels motivated to fulfill his obligations. Hence, the father who fulfills his duty to watch over his son, but only

begrudgingly, is less virtuous than the father who carries out the same duty with a joyful disposition. The desires and attitudes of virtuous agents do not conflict with dutiful behavior but support it.

Universality

Moral obligations are universal in a twofold sense. First, at a certain level, they apply equally to everyone. No agent is exempt from moral obligation in virtue of social, political, familial, or legal status. To be sure, different social and political roles might bring with them different moral obligations. A schoolteacher plausibly has various moral obligations to her students and their parents including showing up to work on time and equipping her students with the knowledge they need to succeed academically among other ways. On the other hand, the president of her country does not share these same obligations to these segments of the population. But not even the most powerful king is exempt from moral obligation as such. Hence, we ordinarily think of tyrants as morally vicious people who violate their moral obligations toward their citizenry. Indeed, from this perspective it emerges that those in positions of political authority have moral obligations of leadership and stewardship not shared by the rest of the population.

Second, our obligations bear on our behavior toward all human beings, regardless of their particular identity and circumstances, and regardless of their relation to us. We have at least some obligations to all humans we might encounter, regardless of whether or not they are family members or members of our own social group. We are obligated to refrain from deliberately killing innocent persons regardless of their race, religion, and nationality. Positively, we are obligated to will the good of others by respecting their basic rights and dignity.

The Desiderata and the DCT

Objectivity

The DCT offers a straightforward explanation of why moral obligations are objective. Whether God has commanded Jones to ϕ does not depend upon whether Jones believes that he has a moral obligation to ϕ. For example, God might command Jones to take care of his children regardless whether Jones believes he is obligated to do so. Similarly, God might command Jones to refrain from murder, theft, and adultery regardless whether Jones believes he is obligated to refrain from these sorts of actions, and regardless whether he wants to refrain from them. Thus, on the DCT, Jones' beliefs and desires can conflict with his moral obligations for the simple reason that they can conflict with what God has commanded of him. Therefore, it is easy to see why moral obligations are objective if they are divine commands.

Authority

Divine commands can also ground the authority of moral obligations. There are several alternative views a proponent of a DCT might give for why God has this authority. First, one might think that God as the creator of all things that exist other than himself simply is the rightful ruler of the universe. It is his universe since he created it. Or, the proponent of a DCT might appeal to the principle of gratitude noted above. A giver of good gifts is owed gratitude by the recipient. However, every good a human person

enjoys, including every gift given by other humans, is ultimately a gift from God. Hence the debt of gratitude humans owe God is immeasurably greater than what is owed to any human benefactor. Living in accordance with God's requests would be one way of recognizing this debt and responding appropriately to God.

Motivation

If God exists, then it is plausible that the highest good of human existence can be enjoyed only within the context of a friendship with God. For any agent to enjoy a friendship with God, however, that agent's will must be aligned with God's will. This requirement falls out of the more general principle that for any two friends to have a perfect friendship, their wills must be aligned at least in essential respects. For major disagreements diminish the strength of a friendship. Divine commands, however, are nothing other than manifestations of the divine will to humans. Therefore, one could plausibly argue that if God exists, and if he issues us commands, then humans have very good reasons to obey God's commands, since we must follow them in order to attain our highest good.

Many philosophers hold that if we have good reasons to act in a certain way, then we should be motivated to act in that way. However, even if one doubts that good reasons are inherently motivating, there would be motivation for obeying God if we want to be his friends. For a perfect friendship requires not only harmony of the will but also harmony of the passions. This constraint explains why a husband who begrudges his duty to supervise his son while his wife enjoys a night out damages his relationship with his wife. Even if he fulfills the relevant duty, his disordered passions detract from the joy of their marital friendship. In the same way, a perfect friendship with God requires not only that we follow his commands, but that we delight in doing so, knowing that we are pursuing the greatest good available to us.

Universality

If God's authority is grounded in his role as a creator, then that authority must be universal, since all humans are his creatures. Similarly, if his authority is grounded in the debt humans owe him for the goods he has given us, then this authority will apply to everyone. Moreover, if God exists, it is very plausible that one must be friends with God in order to possess the highest good attainable to him or her as a human being, as we noted above. It follows from this assumption that, if God exists, one has good reason to do whatever is necessary to attain such a friendship. So, plausibly, if one must follow God's commands in order to have a friendship with him, as we have argued, all humans have good reasons to obey God's commands.

Moreover, theologians working within Judeo-Christian traditions maintain that human beings, as creatures who aspire to knowledge through reason, are made in the image and likeness of God who is perfectly wise. Therefore, these theologians argue, God has ample reason to command us to will the good of all other human beings, respecting their dignity as a reflection of his dignity. Christian scriptures moreover maintain that God has done this, commanding us to love our neighbors as ourselves, with all humans counting as neighbors, even enemies. So, the DCT works in both directions; it explains not only why every human being might have moral obligations, but also why moral obligations might govern our behavior toward every human being.

Rival Metaethical Theories

Of course, the fact that a DCT seems to satisfy these *desiderata* does not prove that it is correct, although it does show that it is a view that deserves consideration. It is possible that other moral theories can explain them equally well, so a comprehensive case for a DCT requires an examination of rival metaethical theories. An entry of this length cannot possibly undertake such a task in a comprehensive manner. For a start at the task, see Evans (2013, 118–154).

However, we will briefly point out some obvious weaknesses on the part of some rival theories. For example, many philosophers embrace "anti-realist" accounts of morality, which simply deny that there are statements of moral obligation that express objective truths. According to such views, moral claims do not express propositions that can be true or false, but rather express emotions, or imperatives, or projections onto the world of subjective attitudes. Such views deny and therefore cannot explain the objectivity of morality.

There are also some obvious problems with "social contract theories," which view morality as a kind of bargain or agreement that humans make with each other. The idea is that a person affirms the proposition, "I agree to abide by certain rules (the ones we call morality) *if* others do the same." One problem is that it is not clear why humans should keep (or even make) such an agreement, given that many others do not abide by the rules of morality. The "if" in the agreement is problematic. A second problem concerns whether the agreement is actual or hypothetical. If it is only hypothetical, it is not clear why it is binding on actual persons who have not made any such agreement. However, if the agreement is actual, it is not clear who the parties to the agreement are or what the terms of the agreement are. Some philosophers who defend such a view have thus embraced the idea that morality is relative, since there are many possible agreements made by different groups with different rules. See Harman (2005, 3–77).

There are of course other moral theories, and there is more to be said about even the ones briefly discussed here. However, we have here tried to show why a DCT appears superior to at least some of its competitors. There are of course also criticisms that have been made against a DCT, and it is to those that we now turn.

Objections and Replies

In this section, we will briefly explain some of the main objections that have been made to a DCT and sketch the outlines of a response to each.

The "Horrible Acts" Objection

It is often argued that if the DCT is true, then no acts are good or bad before God commands them, so God has no reason to command us to perform or avoid any actions. This leads to two problems. One is that it seems to imply that if God commanded us to kill innocent people, then this would become our moral obligation. The second problem is that it seems to imply that God's commands would then be arbitrary in nature.

This kind of objection is often discussed by philosophers as what is called the "Euthyphro objection," named for a Platonic dialogue in which Socrates offers arguments against the view that "piety" is grounded in divine attitudes. In the dialogue, Socrates argues that if the gods love what is pious because

it is pious, then piety must be something independent of the gods' love. However, if something is pious simply because the gods love it, then the gods' love would seem to be arbitrary. Many philosophers have thought that a parallel argument could be given against a divine command account of morality.

However, this kind of objection will not work against a DCT of the type we have explained. The objection simply rests on a misunderstanding of a DCT. A proponent of a DCT agrees that acts are good or bad prior to God's commands. Far from this being a problem, a DCT requires an independent account of the good. God is himself essentially good, and his commands are guided by his knowledge of the good. Thus, God's commands are not arbitrary. The criticism would have force against general theological voluntarism, which holds that all moral properties are determined by God's will. God would on that view have no reason to command any action rather than another, but a DCT is entirely different.

On the DCT we have outlined, it is only moral *obligations* that are grounded in God's will. A DCT presupposes some view of the good that must be in place to guide God's actions. Possible accounts of the good include Platonic-type views that identify the good with God himself, and/or Aristotelian views that see the good in terms of the created natures of things, which have natural ends or purposes. Since God is necessarily good, his actions must be directed to the good and are therefore not arbitrary.

Does this allow God some discretion in what he wills? Here the proponents of a DCT disagree. Many follow Duns Scotus and Robert Adams in holding that, although God must will the good, at least sometimes there are alternatives that are equally good, and in those cases, God might choose one alternative rather than another. Others hold that God's knowledge of the good completely determines his commands. In both cases it is clear that actions will be good or bad independent of God's commands. However, when God issues a command, then the object of the command (such as an act-type) takes on a new moral quality. The act was already good or bad, independent of the command. However, the command means that the action is now also *required* or *forbidden*. It is good or bad in a new way, since violating God's will harms one's relation to God.

The Promulgation Objection

Some philosophers have also objected to the DCT by arguing that God does not communicate his will to everyone. Although he might communicate his will to members of particular religious traditions through sacred texts or other forms of supernatural revelation, he does not communicate his will to everyone through these sources, since not everyone belongs to any given religious tradition. So, if God does communicate his will to everyone, he must do so apart from supernatural revelation – which is to say, through a natural revelation of some sort. According to some philosophers, however, it is not clear how God would communicate his will to us through nature, and at any rate we do not observe him doing so. Furthermore, everyone, save perhaps a few exceptions that we can safely ignore, has moral obligations. It follows that some people have moral obligations even though God has not given them any commands. So, the objection concludes, the DCT is false.

Further strength has been lent to the promulgation objection by the following analogy brought forth by Erik Wielenberg (2005, 60–62). If your friend Dave has done you a favor and wants you to repay him by loaning him your car for an evening, you may be obligated to loan it to him. If, however, he leaves you an anonymous note requesting the car, you would not have any obligation to leave the keys out for him. In order to have an obligation, you need to know not only that it is somebody's desire to borrow your car, but that it is *Dave's* desire.

In the same way, Wielenberg argues, "[I]f God is to impose moral obligations on humans by way of his divine commands, he must get his intended audience to recognize that the commands are coming from him" (Wielenberg 2005, 61). That is, even if we owe God an infinite debt of gratitude, his commands mean nothing to us if we do not know they are coming from him. Wielenberg contends that it appears as though God does not communicate his commands in this way to everyone who has moral obligations. Most conspicuously, God does not let atheists know that he is commanding them of anything, but atheists have moral obligations. So, the objection concludes, the DCT is false.

Some philosophers have responded to this objection by arguing that we need not be able to understand *why* we have moral obligations in order to understand *that* we have them. Since, moreover, the DCT is a theory about why we have moral obligations, we need not understand that it is true in order to understand that we have moral obligations. The general principle here is surely sound. For example, we know through scientific observation that the corona of the sun is hotter than its surface, but we do not yet know why. In a similar manner, proponents of this response argue, perhaps our conscience or some similar faculty allows us to directly perceive our moral obligations even if we do not know they come from God.

At any rate, most people do experience strong emotional indications of the rightness or wrongness of actions. For example, we tend to be pleased by the thought of morally good actions and disgusted by their opposites. We also tend to feel proud when we have fulfilled our moral obligations and ashamed when we have not done so. It could be argued that these features of our emotional lives inform us of what our moral obligations are without necessarily letting us know their source. For example, the discomfort we tend to experience when we have done wrong discourages us from performing the same action again in the future, presenting it to us under the aspect of something evil or shameful. It is open to the proponent of a DCT to argue, however, that this discomfort does not present to the agent a complete explanation of why his or her action is evil or shameful.

A DCT does not claim that a person must understand that an action is commanded by God in order to know that it is wrong. It is a metaphysical thesis about the source of moral obligations, not an epistemological thesis about how we gain our moral knowledge. Perhaps God can communicate to us a moral principle *as having authority* without necessarily communicating to us the basis of that authority. A DCT provides an attractive explanation of why moral obligations have authority, but some philosophers have argued that it is not necessary for a person to know how to explain morality in order to recognize moral obligations as authoritative.

The proponent of a DCT can then respond to Wielenberg's analogy by affirming that, unlike someone writing an anonymous note requesting to borrow your car, God can make it clear to humans that they have moral obligations even though they may be unclear about the source of those obligations. Many theologians have in fact thought that God may have good reasons for not making his reality irresistibly obvious. If God's existence was completely obvious, then humans might well feel coerced to obey God, since God is both all-powerful and all-knowing. If God wishes humans to serve him freely out of love, that situation would be undesirable, so it makes sense that God might communicate his will to humans *as having* authority, even if God does not make it fully clear to all that he is in fact the source of that authority. What is essential is that God has the rightful authority to issue commands, and that he successfully communicates (through conscience and other means) the content of those commands as requirements.

The Prior Obligations Objection

The "prior obligations objection" tries to show that even if divine commands are sufficient to establish moral obligations, they are not necessary. Perhaps we are obligated to obey God's commands. However, this objection holds that not all of our moral obligations are grounded in divine commands. For example, a natural law ethicist may hold that what is good and bad rests on the natures of things. What fulfills the nature of something is good, and what thwarts such fulfillment is bad. Moreover, it is self-evident that we should seek what is good and try to avoid what is bad. The natural law ethicist might conclude on the basis of these premises that we are morally obligated to seek the good and avoid the bad, and thus that some moral obligations hold regardless of what commands God gives.

Another version of the objection might simply begin from the premise that we have a moral obligation to obey God's commands. It would be circular, however, to say that we should obey God simply because God commands us to obey him. So, there is at least one moral obligation that holds prior to God's commands. This objection gains some force from the fact that the proponent of a DCT agrees that there are normative truths, such as truths about the good and the bad, that do not depend on God's will. If there are normative truths that do not depend on God's will, why should this not be true for some normative truths about moral obligations?

The response of a proponent of a DCT to this type of objection must be to point again to the special character of moral obligations. The DCT proponent agrees with the critic that there are normative truths that do not depend on God's expressed will, and also that some of those normative truths will include statements about how people ought to behave. If it is good for a person to be healthy, and if smoking tobacco impairs a person's health, then there is a perfectly straightforward sense in which a person ought not to smoke. Smoking seems irrational, and one might naturally say that it is "wrong" to smoke. Nonetheless, the proponent of a DCT will argue that *this* kind of wrongness, being grounded entirely in natural normativity, does not amount to a genuine moral obligation.

To say that an act is a moral obligation is to say that it is an act that someone can rightly expect or require of me, and that a failure to perform the act rightly calls for sanctions and disapproval, if not outright punishment. According to a DCT, this social dimension of morality is not fully captured or explained by natural law theories, or indeed by any account of what is good and bad. For an act to be morally required or forbidden, it is not enough that it be good or bad. There must also be some being who has the authority to require or forbid the action. The DCT says that God is the most plausible candidate to fulfill this role. Of course, God's commands according to a DCT are aimed at the good. If what is commanded is good, and it is reasonable to pursue the good, then one would have reason to act in accordance with the command, even apart from the command. However, when God commands an act, it takes on a new dimension of value: it becomes required of us as subjects of God's legitimate authority.

The proponent of a DCT will agree with the critic that humans ought to obey God's commands, and that this is true prior to God's giving any commands. For example, one can say that we ought to obey God because our relation to God and our ultimate happiness depends on our doing so. This is essentially to give a natural law type explanation of the "ought" in this case. However, as G. E. M. Anscombe pointed out, this "ought" does not have to be understood as a moral obligation. It could be described as an "Aristotelian ought," where an "Aristotelian ought" is an "ought" that is grounded entirely in what is required for something to function well. Just as automobiles need oil to function well, humans may need

to behave in certain ways to function well and achieve their ultimate destiny. Anscombe acknowledges the possibility that humans ought to fulfill their moral obligations for these kinds of reasons. However, as Anscombe contends, that kind of "ought" seems different from the "ought" that is embedded in a statement of moral obligation. It is worth noting moreover that Anscombe defends this conclusion in a manner consistent with the social theory of obligations discussed above in connection with Robert Adams, namely, by arguing that one cannot be obligated in any way without being obligated to someone in a position of authority (Anscombe 1981).

At least, this is how things seem to the proponent of a DCT. In the end, the acceptability of a DCT may depend on semantics. A proponent of a DCT accepts that there are actions that one ought to do or not do independently of God's commands but thinks that the "oughts" in this case are not the "oughts" of moral obligation. The DCT proponent holds that God's commands create a new and rich moral quality. Now an act that would already have been good or bad is required or forbidden; it is good or bad in a new way. The proponent of a DCT thinks that our language of moral obligation is what enables us to mark out this new moral quality.

A DCT has many strengths. It is congruent with the parsimonious theory that moral obligations must be, like all other obligations, grounded in social relations or social institutions. Moreover, there are very plausible reasons to believe that divine commands would generate obligations with all, or at least many, of the central features of moral obligations. It is also attractive for theological reasons. For example, a DCT explains why all wrong-doing is *sin,* an offense against God, even if the wrong-doing is directed against persons other than God. For Christians, a DCT also fits well with the prominent role that law and divine commands play in the Christian Scriptures. To be sure, a DCT does face problems, as we have seen, and some will see those problems as serious enough to reject the view. However, the proponent of a DCT does have plausible answers to these, and thus it is an account that certainly merits continued discussion and consideration, at least for those who are theists.

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2 Moral Formation

CHAPTER 12

Authority and Religious Experience

Darrell J. Fasching

Ethics and Authority: The Twentieth-Century Crisis

The question of the relationship between ethics and authority is as old as civilization, but the events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seem to have raised our consciousness of it to a new level and in ways that make us sensitive to issues of cultural diversity. For the nineteenth century brought the colonial conquest of the globe in the name of Western religious and cultural "superiority" and was followed by the twentieth century, which brought us the global tragedy of two world wars, culminating in the attempted Nazi genocide of the Jews and numerous lesser wars since, intent on "ethnic cleansing." Fascism, Nazism, colonialism, racism, sexism, and religious prejudice are part and parcel of the human journey through these centuries.

What was learned from the Nuremberg trials after World War II is emblematic of these centuries, namely, that morality can be dangerous. For the crimes of war perpetrated in the death camps and elsewhere were too often "crimes of obedience." These were crimes in which the humanity of others was violated in the name of a morality of unquestioning obedience to higher authority that defined its victims as less than human and not worthy of life. In the aftermath of World War II, reacting to these crimes, the nations of the world took the unprecedented step of establishing a covenant of nations pledged to an ethic of human dignity and human rights – an ethic that makes a claim to be binding on persons of all religions and cultures. The founding of the United Nations in 1946 and the creation of the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 were major milestones in the global history of human morality, marking an ethical revolution that declared limits on all authority, especially political authority.

In the aftermath of World War II, a microcosm of this global revolution in religion and ethics took place in the United States. A community of ethical revolutionaries inspired by the example of Mahatma Gandhi and led by M. L. King, Jr., Abraham Joshua Heschel, Thich Nhat Hanh, and others of the Civil Rights/Vietnam War era demonstrated that it was possible for persons of diverse religions and cultures to share a common ethic of human dignity, human rights, and human liberation. It was an ethic not of unquestioning obedience to authority, but of disobedience – civil disobedience in defense of our common humanity across religious, cultural, and racial divisions. What such social activists from diverse religious traditions have demonstrated is that there can be ethical cooperation while sustaining religious diversity and that the essence of the ethical life lies in challenging authority in order to promote justice and compassion for all. What is striking is that each could find precedents for this understanding of the essence

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

of ethics not only in their own traditions (in figures like the Buddha and Abraham) but also in each other's traditions, and all found inspiration in the life and death of Socrates. The story of the trial and execution of Socrates attracted these social activists because it offered them an ancient and authoritative example of the ethical life as a challenge to authority.

Our words "morality" and "ethics" are derived from Latin (*mos*, *mores*) and Greek (*ethos*, *ethike*) terms which originally meant the "customs" of the people – the sacred customs. It was Socrates who gave new meaning to the term "ethics," for his religious experiences led him to practice philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom through the questioning of such customs. Although the terms "ethics" and "morality" are often used interchangeably, I find it useful to give privileged status to the Socratic usage for the term "ethics" while reserving for the term "morality" the pre-Socratic meaning of "sacred customs." Thus we shall understand sacred customs as the traditional morality of a community and ethics precisely as the questioning of that morality.

Ethics as the Religious Compulsion to Question Sacred Morality

If, as is likely, the Latin root (*religio*) for our word "religion" comes from *religare* (to tie or bind), it is because the Romans used the term to refer to their sense of being "tied" or "bound" in relations of ritual obligation to those powers they believed governed their destiny. In their case these were the gods and goddesses who ruled the forces of nature.

Just what powers (or power) a people believe themselves to be "tied and bound" to, and what these powers expect of them, is defined through the myths (stories) and rituals (obligatory actions) passed from one generation to the next. Religion is always about a sacred way of life. Humans tend to treat as sacred whatever power or powers they believe govern their destiny and the way of life these powers originate. In primal societies, the right way to live is the rite way. And in all societies myth and ritual deeply influence the customs or way of life that ties and binds a people to its sacred ancestors and/or gods. Through myths and rituals such sacred powers speak with authority and are taken with utmost seriousness.

To speak with authority, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is to speak with a "godlike manner" – a manner which is commanding, imperial, perhaps even dictatorial. To speak with authority is to speak as (or for) the author, the originator. In the beginning were the ancestors, the spirits, and the gods who authored a sacred way of life and provided an originating model of how things ought to be.

Since the beginning of recorded history there has been an intimate connection between religion and authority. In primal cultures authority seems to be primarily tied and bound up with stories and rituals of creation or originating power. The gods and the sacred ancestors speak with authority because they defeated the forces of chaos and death and created the sacred order of the cosmos that makes life possible. Priests and shamans mediate that authority. There is a taboo that surrounds the sacred that forbids all questioning. The way things are, as reflected in the sacred customs of the people, mirrors their sacred origins. Consequently, the hierarchy of status, power, and authority in a society is given and not open to debate. One cannot argue with "the way things are." The way things are is the way they ought to be (Is = Ought). In such societies we have morality but not yet ethics.

Throughout the history of the use of the term "authority" there has been an ambivalent tension between the "authoritative" and "authoritarian" as aspects of its meaning. Authoritative power, we could

say, is that power which commands through the spontaneous respect it elicits from others, whereas authoritarian power is that power which commands through raw force, even at the price of respect. This distinction has led to the common contrast of authority with power (as coercion). From this perspective, authoritarianism as a resort to power is really the reaction of one who has lost authority and so is no longer accepted spontaneously by others as worthy of respect. In such cases, respect is replaced by fear as the motivation for taking a command seriously.

Socrates, however, insisted that no one could be ethical who succumbs to the final fear – the threat of death. For Socrates, ethics involved questioning the authority of Athenian sacred customs by asking: Is what people call "good" really the good? Socrates was put on trial and executed for "impiety towards the gods" and "corrupting the youth" because he dared to question and teach others to question the sacred way of life of Athenian society.

Socrates' goal was not to demean the Athenian way of life but to raise it to a higher level. The paradox of Socrates' criticism of the sacred morality of Athenian society was that it was rooted in religious experience – an alternative form of religious experience to that which had shaped Athenian society. Responding to his accusers, Socrates insisted that he was neither irreligious nor an atheist. On the contrary, he said he was commanded to doubt and to question the Athenian way of life by his own "daimon." This God, he said, sent him as a "gadfly" to the citizens of Athens to teach them to lead virtuous lives and seek justice. To doubt, and to teach others to doubt and to question, he says, "is what my God commands; and it is my belief that no greater good has ever befallen you in this city than my service to my God" (Plato 1969, 62).

The trial of Socrates represents an important moment in the history of Western religious ethics in relation to the question of authority. Socrates' challenge to the religiously grounded polity of Athenian society presents one of the first recorded acts of civil disobedience. Here, the sacred law and order of Athenian society was called into question in the name of a type of religious experience that claimed the authority to *transcend* (in the literal sense of "going beyond") a given sacred way of life and offer a "higher" vision of the good life. In the Socratic model "the way things are" is challenged in the name of the way they ought to be (Ought vs. Is), where the "ought" appeals to an authority that transcends sacred order – namely, the god who compels him to question. Socrates suggests that the authoritativeness of this divine compulsion is testified to by his poverty – that he was willing to sacrifice personal advantage (even his life) to respond to this call.

Model Ethical Activists

It is significant that the social activists of the mid-twentieth century, the spiritual children of Gandhi from diverse religious religions and cultures, who challenged the authoritarian systems of their time, cited Socrates as a model. But Socrates was not the only such model, nor the earliest. They also had other examples of the religious challenge to sacred authority available to them from both East and West. Martin Luther King, Jr., cited Jesus and the prophets. Abraham Joshua Heschel cited not only the prophets but especially the biblical patriarch Abraham as a model for challenging the authority of President Lyndon Johnson to conduct the Vietnam War. When Abraham fears that God will slay the innocent along with the guilty in the city of Sodom, he has the audacity to say: "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Genesis 18:23, 25). If Abraham did not shrink from challenging God in the name of justice then the president, said Heschel, was hardly

above questioning. For Abraham and for Heschel, authority is authoritative only when it meets the requirements of justice.

Gandhi and Thich Nhat Hanh could also find inspiration in the life of the Buddha, who insisted that even his own teachings be questioned by his followers: "Just as the experts test gold by burning it, cutting it and applying it on a touchstone, my statements should be accepted only after critical examination and not out of respect for me" (Unno 1988, 129–147; quoting *Tattvasamgraha* 1926, 3588). The internal structure of the Buddha's monastic community took the form of a democracy in which each monk had an equal vote. This community expressed the Buddhist consciousness of the equality of all selves (for all selves are empty) and stood in stark contrast to the hierarchy of the caste-structured sacred society of India. The authoritativeness of the Buddha's teaching is attested to by his refusal to be authoritarian.

All religious communities (indeed, all human communities) embody a morality, but the emergence of an ethic requires a further step. The relation to authority is not just a problem for ethics to solve, it goes to the heart of what ethics is. Ethics involves the transcendence of morality through the questioning of the authority upon which that morality is founded. As with the story of Socrates, so with those of Jesus, Abraham, and Siddhartha: ethics begins with a type of religious experience that questions sacred authority and its expression in traditional morality. Ethics, so conceived, is paradoxically both a religious and an impious desacralizing activity at the same time. In my work (Fasching 1993; Fasching and deChant 2001) I have called this category of religious experiences, experiences of the holy in contrast to the experiences of the sacred.

Following a suggestion made by French sociologist Jacques Ellul (1975) in his analysis of the social dynamics of religion, the terms "sacred" and "holy" are used here as antonyms rather than synonyms. This deliberately goes against the common practice of using the two terms interchangeably. Separating the uses of "sacred" and "holy," and in a parallel manner "morality" and "ethics," in this way makes it clear that the collection of social behaviors that are generally labeled "religious" are not all religious in the same way. As Max Weber pointed out, religious experience has the power to sacralize but also to desacralize. Giving separate meanings to terms that have been used interchangeably accents these different functions of religion.

In a sacred order the way things are (as established by sacred origins) is the way they ought to be and so persons are defined by and confined to their place in the sacred hierarchy of society as legitimated by myth and ritual. Religious experiences fit the category of the holy when they prompt the questioning of the authority of such sacred ways of life. The difference between the sacred and the holy is not a difference to be found between religions, as if some were pure models of one and some pure models of the other. The sacred and the holy should be seen as opposing tendencies, or ways of experiencing life, to be found in all persons and all communities. Every actual culture and religion is likely to embody aspects of both the sacred and the holy in a complex and sometimes self-contradictory way of life.

Ethical Consciousness: Authoritative or Authoritarian?

Wherever ethical consciousness emerges, sacred order is called into question. It is legitimate to ask "by what authority" is existing sacred authority questioned? The answer, of course, can hardly be found by appealing to some "authority," but only by appealing to the authoritativeness of ethical experience itself. Wherever ethical consciousness emerges, the authority of sacred order will come to be seen as authoritarian if it is not modified by the authoritative ideal of selfless compassion. It is selfless compassion which authoritatively puts sacred order/authority in question. A good society must be more than the

"cosmos writ small" providing an orderly world in which to dwell; it must also provide an order that is just and compassionate for all its members.

Nathan's challenge to King David's authority

A story of the ethical confrontation with authority of comparable importance to that of Socrates is found in 2 Samuel 11 of the Tanach, the Jewish Bible (later incorporated into Christianity as the Old Testament). It is the story of how David, King of Israel (ca. 1000 BCE) lusted after Bathsheba, the wife of one of his soldiers, Uriah. David had Uriah sent to the front lines of battle so that he would be killed, allowing David to take Bathsheba for himself. According to the story, the God of Israel then sent the prophet Nathan to confront David by telling him a story about a rich man who owned a very large herd of sheep. But when a guest came he took the only lamb of a poor man (for whom the lamb was as if a member of the family, loved like one of his own children), slaughtered it, and fed it to his guest. When David heard the story his anger flared and he said: "'As God lives, the man who did this deserves to die. He must make fourfold restitution for the lamb, for doing such a thing and showing no compassion.' Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man'" (2 Samuel 12:5–7).

Because the story Nathan tells David is a "story" – either fictive or at least about someone else – it disarms David. It places David in the situation philosophers would typically identify as the ethical point of view, that of the "disinterested observer" who can be objective because he is not personally involved. From this perspective, David sees immediately that an injustice has been done. But then, in a second step, the story quickly moves David emotionally from disinterestedness to empathy. That is, it creates in him a sense of identification with the victim which outrages him and compels him to act. Only then is David prepared to reason "objectively" about what is good and what is evil and unwittingly stand in judgment of himself. For Nathan's abrupt turning of the story into an allegory for David's own situation forces David to confront his own actions. Ethical insight occurs when David identifies with the pain of another. Genuine ethical insight occurs when we see and judge our own actions through the eyes of the one who will be affected by our actions, as if we were that person. This is what Nathan's story enables David to do.

As king, David had the power to impose his own morality on the situation and yet he is unable to excuse his own actions with either the authoritarian claim that the king decides what is right and wrong, or with the libertarian claim that every individual has a right to make their own rules, deciding for themselves what is right and what is wrong. He tried that and failed. He failed because the story seduced him into identifying with the victim of his actions, which enabled him to see the injustice of his actions by enabling him to empathically identify with the victim's experience of injustice – of being wrongfully violated. The ethical point of view induced in David by Nathan's story transcends both authoritarianism and libertarianism and speaks authoritatively. As such it leads David to condemn himself in spite of himself. When David identifies with the victim, he realizes that what he has violated is not a rule or a principle but another person like himself. He recognizes the humanity of the stranger and the authoritative claim that humanity makes on his own conscience.

Ethical Consciousness as Authoritative

What separates religious ethics from purely philosophical ethics is the notion that our ordinary state of consciousness is distorted and disoriented by deeply (unconscious) selfish emotions. Therefore, until the self has undergone a profound spiritual transformation of personality, it is not capable of seeing, under-

standing, and reasoning correctly. Thus, unlike philosophical ethics, religious ethics usually entails engagement in rituals and spiritual practices in combination with powerful orienting stories (stories of saints and heroes, parables of ethical insight, etc.) intended to bring about such a reorienting transformation through which the individual, like David under the influence of Nathan's story, comes to identify with the pain and suffering of the other.

That kind of awakening of ethical compassion is not unique to any one religious tradition. It is, for instance, described in Mahāyāna Buddhism as "becoming the other." According to the *Bodhicharyavatara* of Santideva: "All have the same sorrows, the same joys as I ... so likewise this manifold universe has its sorrow and its joy in common ... Why should I not conceive my fellow's body as my own self? ... I will cease to live as self, and will take as my self my fellow-creatures" (Burtt 1955, 139–140). A similar sense is expressed in the writings of Paul in Christianity, when he says that in Christ the whole of creation forms one body and the faithful community are those who are aware that all are "members of one another" such that if one experiences pain, so do all and likewise with joy (1 Corinthians 12).

Gandhi's Challenge to Authority: A Model of Ethical Consciousness

Finally, nowhere is the link between such compassion and ethics as the challenging of authority clearer than in the teachings of Gandhi on the *Bhagavad Gītā* and nonviolence. The *Gītā* tells the story of Arjuna and his brothers, who are about to enter into battle against their cousins who attempted to cheat them out of their fair share of their deceased father's kingdom. As the *Gītā* opens, Arjuna is on the battlefield in his chariot with his driver, Kṛṣṇa, awaiting the beginning of the battle. Arjuna confesses to Kṛṣṇa that he has no taste for the fight. He wishes neither to kill nor be killed. Much of the *Gītā* is then taken up with Kṛṣṇa attempting to persuade Arjuna that it is his caste duty to fight and even kill. Killing another, he is instructed, will not lead to negative karma or moral culpability, if he does so out of selfless duty rather than attachment to personal gain. Then in Chapter 11 Kṛṣṇa reveals his true identity as the all highest deity, Viṣṇu, lord of life and death. In a rather violent vision he is shown that not he (Arjuna) but Viṣṇu decides who lives and who dies. By the time the *Gītā* reaches its conclusion, Arjuna is ready to stand up and fight in obedience to the authority of the all highest power, Viṣṇu.

A literal reading of the *Gītā* seems to lead to a morality of unquestioning obedience. What is astonishing is that Gandhi found authorization for just the opposite, the questioning of authority and the practice of non-violent civil disobedience. He accomplished this through a three-point strategy. First, he insisted that the *Gītā* must be read spiritually rather than literally. It was, he said, an allegory of the struggle of good and evil within the self. Second, he argued that the spiritual essence of the *Gītā*'s teaching (and of Hinduism) is the "oneness" of all humanity. His practice of *satyagraha* was a spiritual clinging to the truth of this oneness. Such a clinging gives birth to compassionate identification with the suffering of all others and leads to *ahīsā* or non-violence. Non-violence, here, does not mean a passive surrender to suffering and injustice, but an active transformative mode of civil disobedience as a strategy for alleviating them. Third, he argued that the test of all authority, including sacred scripture, was ethics derived from authoritative experiential insight. He recognized that there were other interpretations of the *Gītā*, but argued that forty years of putting his life on the line, endeavoring to live by the deep truths of the *Gītā*, gave him the authority to call more superficial or literal readings into question.

Like Socrates, Gandhi offered his own life of poverty and self-sacrifice (*brahmacharya*) as an authoritative justification of his challenge to all authority (whether of sacred Hindu scriptures or of British

political domination). In this way Gandhi offers us our final dramatic example of religious ethics as the power of ethical consciousness, through identification with the other (becoming the other), as the authoritative basis for challenging authority.

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CHAPTER 13

Ideas of Ethical Excellence

Lee Yearley

Humor, much less humility, may not be central to most ideas of ethical excellence, but they surely must inform the efforts of anyone who attempts to write briefly about the subject. One reason is that dramatically diverse practices have been taken to exemplify such excellence; for example, the purported excellences of celibacy and of parenthood. Another is that a significant if perhaps less dramatic diversity attends theoretical accounts of what excellence consists in and how, therefore, it is to be attained; for example, by the dogged nurture of inchoate capacities or by the abandonment of all dogged activities. Further, no single person can grasp well all the various kinds of human excellence that humans have displayed in their practices and manifested in their theories. (The ignorance of this writer about areas other than East Asia and the West is vast enough to make his only imperfect knowledge of those two areas seem substantial.)

To emphasize the diversity of the phenomenon and the necessity of ignorance ought not, however, lead the reader to query the worth, or even viability, of an endeavor like this one. Not only can some things be said with reasonable assurance, but the subject is also, to my mind, as important a topic of inquiry as we have. The character of the subject, however, means that any treatment of it must contain a normative dimension. It must not just describe what people have thought about human excellence. It must also examine what those thoughts may mean for us today, however slippery is any idea of a single "today." An examination of those normative considerations will appear in due time, but let us now turn to a few general observations about human excellence, focusing on how the notion of virtue and those subjects that follow in its wake, most notably conceptions of the self, help us to understand it.

Features of Human Excellence

The specific features of human excellence can best be described as virtues: perfections of discrete human functionings that manifest the distinctive aspects of the laudatory state. The notion of virtue has, of course, a specific set of meanings inside the Western tradition, but all traditions or groups of which I know have terms that resemble, sometimes closely, Western uses of the term. To treat fully such specific excellences we must also, and more controversially, speak not only about ordinary virtues but also about religious virtues. We need, therefore, to differentiate the sphere of virtues into two realms, realms that share some characteristics and have others that sharply divide them. But let us begin with what is shared (Yearley 1990, 2011).

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

In virtually all cultures, those specific features that exemplify human excellence could fit within a list of virtues that is ordered in a hierarchical fashion. The list defines what qualities are virtues, are instances of human excellence, and by implication what qualities are not. The list tells us, for instance, that courage is a human excellence and cowardliness is not. The hierarchical rank helps a person determine in which situations one or another virtue should be manifested. It allows a person to know, for example, that being patient rather than assertive, ironic rather than flamboyant, is the correct behavior when you are told a friend has been slandered. Grasping how the hierarchy operates and manifesting that grasp fluently can be a difficult task – especially for a beginner – but it is often fairly easy for members of the culture and is crucial to the full expression of human excellence.

Even granting all this, we must also realize that for many today the word virtue has an even more archaic ring than does the notion of ethical excellence. It often seems to be associated with problematic ideas like priggish scrupulosity; or to be restricted to narrow areas like sexual activity; or to reflect fixed unjust social hierarchies like the ones found in virtually all traditional societies. (The old saying puts such concerns pungently: "When they begin to talk about virtue it's time to emigrate.") Nevertheless, the idea has the significance it does because virtues seem to be necessary if humans are to operate well in the various areas in which human excellence must function. It is unsurprising, given this, that we find certain virtues in the lists of many cultures. Individuals need qualities such as courage or self-control if they are to thrive, and probably even survive; societies need people to have them if they are to survive, much less thrive.

This illustrates how many, perhaps even all virtues, and thus notions of human excellence, can productively be thought of as being *corrective*. Ideas of virtue, and thus of human excellence, rest on pictures of human weakness and need. Virtues correct some difficulty thought to be natural to human beings, some temptation that needs to be resisted or some motivation that needs to be made good. Industry, for example, corrects a propensity to idleness; perseverance a tendency to give up before it is necessary to do so; and courage the inclination to be dissuaded by fear from doing what should be done. Virtues, to put it more abstractly, display some characteristic pattern of desire and motivation, some disposition toward action. They are not simple thoughts that occur and pass. I do not manifest a virtue if I think how compassionate it would be to invite those lonely people to dinner as I walk on past them. Nor are they emotional states that pass quickly. I am not virtuous if I feel very strongly that I should at least talk to my troubled relative but realize the game is about to start and leave.

A virtue, then, is a human excellence or an example of human flourishing. It is a permanent addition to the self, part of what makes people who they are, a feature of what we call character. Unlike some character traits, however, there must be evidence of what we can call "thought and will" if a quality is to count as a virtue, even within perspectives that emphasize the problems that beset ordinary thinking and willing and therefore often favor more literary accounts. Almost all agree, of course, that the processes may not be conscious; "to think a little and then act" is an absurd picture of human behavior even if we are talking only about academics. Nevertheless, judgment or thinking occurs in the sense that, at minimum, I can explain (at some point, in some fashion) to myself or another person why I do something or value some trait. A virtue, then, is a disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment.

Motives and Models

Virtuous activity also involves choosing virtue for itself. I do not possess the virtue of generosity, but a semblance (or even counterfeit) of it if I act because of some ulterior motive such as that if I help specific people now they will think well of me, or help me later, or convince their rich relatives to give me money. Indeed, the differences between *semblances* of virtue and true virtue are crucial in almost all theories of human excellence because semblances generate activities that resemble the activities of real virtue but lack important elements in it. People who manifest semblances do a virtuous act not for its own sake but for consequences that a non-virtuous person would desire. Or they choose it not for their own reasons but because of some secondhand support such as custom, unexamined authority, or the inertia provided by accepted, routine reactions.

This difference also illustrates how virtuous activity involves choosing specific virtues in light of some justifiable life plan. I believe, for example, the best kind of human life involves generosity not selfishness, giving not just taking and possessing. I have a general view, and good reasons (of some sort) for it, that lead me to think that kind of life is better than one that lacks it. The significance of such an overall view of life underlies our last theoretical comment about those features of human excellence we call virtues: virtuous behavior has not only *acquisitive* but also *expressive* motives.

People choose a virtuous action not only because it contributes to goods they want to acquire, but also because it expresses their conception of human excellence. (The latter motive, as we will see, especially underlies many forms of religious virtue.) The essential characteristic of expressive virtue, then, is its response to one basic question: Why might, or even should, people embrace an ideal of excellence if they have severe doubts that it will have the kind of effects in the world they hope it will? The answer is that the best kind of human excellence simply demands such activity; no further questions about its contributions to the agent's or anyone else's happiness need therefore to be raised. This does not mean such choices are made recklessly; indeed, they must be well considered or grounded if they are to be fully expressive. Nevertheless, it is not the good benefits received or given but the good expressed that is the crucial motivating force.

These common features in ideas about virtue and thus human excellence ought not to mask the fact that the substantive variety we mentioned earlier is also present. We have already noted some dramatic differences in practice, but here I want to consider two significantly different theories about human excellence. One rests on a *developmental* model, the other on a *discovery* model. Each model defines the end of a continuum and the several variants in the middle of the continuum *mix* some qualities from each model.

The developmental model is common in many traditions and can have either religious or non-religious forms. In this model, human nature has an innate constitution that manifests itself in processes of growth and culminates in specifiable forms. That fulfillment occurs, however, only if the organism is both uninjured and properly nurtured. The basic conceptual model is, then, relatively simple and it draws on a naturalistic framework. A basic set of capacities exists and their unhindered, nurtured development generates qualities that lead to specifiable actions or characteristic forms. Those, in turn, provide the standard that allows an observer to determine a being's nature and to judge whether any specific action represents its nature in normal, exemplary, or defective fashion.

A discovery model differs fundamentally; somewhat less common, it also rests squarely within a religious framework. That framework is "monistic" in its purest form and "theistic" in its more mixed or

muted forms. (An inordinately rich thicket of questions and distinctions appears with any investigation of especially the extreme instance of the monistic and theistic forms, but I will avoid them lest they derail our main inquiry.) In a discovery model, true human nature contains a permanent set of dispositions that is coextensive, in some way, with a sacred being. Those dispositions are obscured by ordinary human qualities, but they may be discovered and then contacted in a fashion that allows them to animate a person. People do not, as in a developmental model, cultivate inchoate capacities. Rather, they discover a hidden ontological reality with sacred characteristics that truly defines them, whatever may be the apparently defining, regnant social ideas about human excellence.

The two models differ, then, both in the character of the ontological and religious ideas they rely on and in the ways in which their notions of human perfection depend on those ideas. The ideas of human excellence in a discovery model, for instance, are much more deeply embedded in specific ontological and religious ideas than are those in a developmental model. Further, that fact is of special importance today given that many moderns find it difficult to imagine a discovery model either generating a lively notion of pluralism or really separating itself from specific, and questionable, cultural guidelines – such as those concerning gender – about what human excellence is.

Either model generates different answers to an important question – to some people the most important question – to be asked about general notions of human excellence: What kind of training or cultivation, either by other people or by the individual, can best help people achieve such excellence? Specific answers to that question are multiple but each reflects the general contours of the model. Most important here, whatever may be the exact answers, they affect the character of many of the most significant social institutions (like schools or families), and therefore these models directly influence people's ordinary lives.

Religious Excellences and Normal Human Excellences

The distinctions between these two models highlight the difference that religious notions can make when we consider human excellence. That difference is also highlighted, and in a more concrete way, when we consider the role *normal* ideas of human functioning play in understandings of excellence. ("Normal" here means those kinds of ideas most people in a society would accept without much thought; for example, possessing some material goods; feeling acute emotions at certain kinds of loss or failure; participating both in a family and in many aspects of a culture's social life.) Religious ideas of human excellence, in contrast, often manifest a perspective in which such normal ideals appear to be either insignificant or relatively unimportant. These perspectives, for example, contain ideals like voluntary poverty, complete equanimity, and celibate withdrawal from society. Indeed, the disjunction can be pronounced enough to generate the normative criticism that such religious perspectives may manifest excellences but they are the excellences of a species other than the human species. Such criticisms are made both by those who oppose all religious perspectives and by those who defend one religion, say Confucianism, against another, say Buddhism.

These criticisms are reflected obliquely in a number of academic treatments. They argue that distinguishing between religious and ordinary virtues is either problematic or wrong-headed because those distinctions are not explicitly made by many traditions or groups. Some treatments, in fact, even argue that a few traditions' general conceptual frameworks not only do *not* lead to, but also literally *could* not allow for what in, say, Christianity, are called natural and supernatural virtues.

The issues here are as complex and vexing as they are important, if only because most traditions manifest, even if inchoately, the belief that some virtues have special characteristics that would seem to point to their inclusion in the category of the "religious." These virtues produce actions and attitudes that both differ from normal virtues and change a range of normal actions in profoundly important ways. Sharp distinctions are made, for instance, among the kinds of objects pursued; among the goals of the intentions manifested; among the precise forms of behavior produced; and among the kinds of empowerment displayed. This also means, however, that such virtues cannot draw on too many normal presumptions and arguments (about the importance of, say, possessions, family, or a minimal concern for others) to defend or even to make plausible the virtue lest it cease to be a "religious" virtue. Nonetheless, they cannot simply disregard normal presumptions lest the virtue cease to be a human virtue, and thus a plausible human option.

Adopting the delicate balancing needed here seems to occur fairly effortlessly when most people think about topics like the significance of possessions, family, or a minimal concern for others. But more pronounced difficulties appear with the subject of the possible effect of some religious beliefs on the idea of human excellence. An especially significant example of this effect appears with the question of whether considerations of human excellence need to take account of the past or future lives that a person either may have lived or may live after a "natural" death. In thinking about the human excellence of a person must we attend closely not just to the features of the, say, 85-year life Sally lives, but also to the features of her past or future lives?

Proponents of the strongest version of the view that we must attend to those other lives argue that Sally's excellence can be adequately judged only by focusing on them. They argue her excellences either were caused by acts she performed before her present appearance or can be truly evaluated only from the perspective of the life she will live after her "natural" death. Adopting the strong version of this position involves, of course, a robust claim about what people can know with assurance, namely, that Sally's future life will be of a certain sort or that her past lives were not only of a certain sort but also formed her present life. Nonetheless, some religious people have not shied away from making such claims. Others, however, who still firmly believe in the idea of past or future lives, have thought a lack of clarity about the exact characteristics of those past or future states (and perhaps the causal links among them) meant that ideas about human excellence are not be much affected.

Excellence and Identity

More could, of course, be said about the implications of distinctions among religious and normal kinds of human excellence. But let me end by considering a crucial normative issue (at least for many moderns) raised by the very notion of human excellence: What genuine variety of excellences can such a notion allow? It seems clear that a muted recognition of diverse kinds of excellences (even if they are ranked hierarchically) will accompany a few of a culture or group's notion. Most common and benign is the calibration of excellence to stages in life; for example, praiseworthy judgment will differ in a 5-year old, in a 25-year old, and in a 50-year old. Also common is the calibration of excellence to temperament or character, qualities that may in turn be said to manifest a person's role specific virtues or even "class". The excellences of the warrior, the teacher, and the religious recluse may indeed all be excellences yet still differ considerably, with the differences reflecting the distinctions inherent in the grounds from

which the excellences spring, grounds that may include the effects of a person's past lives. This remains true even if some general excellences, such as courage, appear in each.

This last kind of calibration with its notion that a person is, say, a "warrior" reflects the ideas that people have what can be called *necessary identities*, and that those identities control the kind and level of excellence available to them. The notion of necessary identities usually combines with two other ideas: first, that very few people have an identity that allows them to reach the highest excellence, and, second, that most groups cannot reach the most valuable excellence. The former notion is clearly defensible only in the sense that it reflects the obvious fact that very few people actually do attain to certain especially valuable states. Even granting that, however, we can still doubt both that the ability to attain such states is the privilege of just one group and that the usual causal accounts employed to explain people's capacities are adequate.

In fact, the notion that significant groups have severely limited abilities seems to be indefensible if only because, in almost all cases, one very large group with such purported limits has been women. This situation can lead people, as it has led many moderns, to question the whole notion of human excellence. Put one way, it brings that notion under the purview of ideas about justice and then, further, analyzes how and why specific instances function as they do. A telling analysis, for example, argues that *models of the self* and ideas about human excellence relate closely, and that such models are problematic. They distinguish and order opaque or inherently disorderly phenomena that provide neither decisive tests nor impartially collected evidence. People cannot, of course, invent any model of the self they might happen to want due to the constraints presented by some "natural facts" and current webs of belief.

Nevertheless, the models can best be seen as theoretical inventions, constructions made in order to achieve specific goals. This becomes especially clear when we attend to how both the distinctions among human powers and the hierarchical arrangement of them (matters crucial to the idea of human excellence) usually match the prevailing social structure and its justifying ideology. Perhaps the most striking example of this phenomenon is the traditional Western model of the subordination of raw desire to reason, the most familiar and notorious instance of which occurs in Aristotle. For Aristotle, reason should control other elements in the self, and it will if a person is a full human being who has been well formed by a proper upbringing. To lack reason's control means never being able to attain real human excellence and that unfortunate group includes three subgroups: those who completely lack the capacity to reason, such as natural slaves; those who lack the full capacity to reason, such as women; and those whose capacities were undeveloped by proper upbringing, such as most other people in the society.

Examples like Aristotle's draw on what can be called the *fallacy of false fixity*. Fixed features of the self are seen as part of the nature of things; they cannot be other than they are. These features limit human deliberation because sensible people do not attempt to deliberate about what cannot be changed; they think in terms of them. They do not think about them. Human history is, of course, littered with examples of false fixities, ideas that in retrospect appear to be social myths that protected specific ways of life. Our present thinking, however, is no less liable to be formed by them and searching them out is an essential if painful part of examining ideas of human excellence. In fact, the need to identify them is a major reason why it is helpful, perhaps even necessary, for any such examination to have both historical depth and comparative range.

The Current Demand

All this means, I think, that religious ethics must critically question and then develop traditional notions of human excellence if they are to be applicable today. Crucial to this development is a process that involves two enterprises: *elaboration* and *emendation*. Each of these enterprises draws on the results of modern scholarship and reflection, but they differ in noteworthy ways.

Elaboration, often a relatively benign activity, utilizes modern historical and textual scholarship to understand in context the language of texts and practices. It is especially important with examples of human excellence that appear in forms that either make them easily misunderstood or allow their challenge to be too easily overlooked.

Emendation, a complicated and possibly dangerous activity, utilizes modern theoretical analyses to clarify, test, and reformulate those traditional ideas and practices relevant to human excellence. It must reformulate these ideas and practices in a way that is appropriate to, shows appreciative fidelity toward, their meanings as judged by the most basic norms found in the tradition. But it must also reformulate them in a way that is credible to (meets the conditions of plausibility found in) our common contemporary experience, informed as that experience is by modern scientific explanations, historical consciousness, and ideas about the rights of all humans. Meeting both demands is difficult, and it may in some cases be impossible. It is, however, what is needed if most notions of human excellence are to remain truly alive.

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CHAPTER 14

Agents and Moral Formation

Thomas W. Ogletree

Accounts of moral agency usually address three subjects: (1) a primal *disposition* to live a moral life; (2) the *capacity* to act morally; and (3) sound *moral judgment*. I will focus on classic Christian and Western philosophical treatments of these subjects, though there are corollaries in other religions and cultures. I will then note contemporary resources that enrich the classic traditions.

Classical Accounts of Agency

Classic Christian discussions of moral agency follow two major trajectories. The first employs a theory of natural law for articulating the moral requisites of human flourishing. Drawing upon Aristotle's work, Thomas Aquinas (1966) gave this approach its definitive theological expression. His thought remains pivotal in Roman Catholic moral theology. The second trajectory stresses the intrinsic authority of the moral law. Protestant reformers Martin Luther (1966) and John Calvin (1957) exemplify this trajectory in tradition-dependent forms, focusing on biblical accounts of divine commands. Immanuel Kant (1996, 1998) offered a philosophical parallel, stressing the human capacity to formulate universally binding moral principles. His inquiries have influenced Reformed Judaism and Protestant Christianity. Augustine's (1955a, 1955b) ideas are manifest in both trajectories, especially his attention to original sin, and to the human aspiration for union with God.

Moral Disposition

Interest in a *primal moral disposition* presumes that moral responsibility is integral to human life. Thomas Aquinas linked this disposition to natural human desires for happiness. We achieve happiness, he argued, when we live in accord with natural law principles that exemplify the kinds of beings we are. The first principle, *synderesis* or "conscience," founds moral agency. It is the human disposition to do what is right and to refuse to do what is wrong.

Aquinas embraced Augustine's earlier contention that the quest for happiness, though rooted in the goodness of creation, has been corrupted by humanity's lapse into sin. We seek happiness, but we no longer know what truly brings happiness, so we grasp after ephemeral pleasures that are finally worthless. It is by loving God for God's own sake, and by loving all creatures in conjunction with our love for

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God, that we know blessedness. "Thou hast made us for Thyself," Augustine confessed, "and our souls are restless until they find their rest in Thee" (1955a). In conjunction with this vision of ultimate fulfillment, Aquinas emphasized as well the role "natural" human dispositions play in moral formation. Augustine qualified his own sweeping dismissals of the illusory quest for earthly happiness. The human need for social order and for meaningful participation in community, he conceded, does require worldly approximations of "justice" and "peoplehood." Still, his primary concern was to contrast the "justice" of this world with true justice, where all things are ordered according to God's purposes.

Luther and Calvin traced the human disposition to do what is right and good to the goodness of creation, in particular, the creation of human beings in the image of God. They too stressed the broken state of humanity. Only fragments of God's righteous decrees survived the "fall" into sin. Yet these fragments suffice to hold us accountable for our wickedness. In Paul's words, we are "without excuse." The good news is that God renews our hunger to do what is right and good.

Immanuel Kant sought to demonstrate the authority of the moral law in the context of the European Enlightenment. He saw no possibility of basing the moral law upon the "happiness principle." This principle is the "death of morals!" It highlights human drives to satisfy bodily needs and to gratify selfish desires. Such behavior is in no case free. Kant stressed the "freedom principle" instead. Free acts require rational beings who can formulate the moral law for themselves. We act freely when we resolve to do what the moral law requires, not because we must or because of some advantage we might gain, but out of respect for its intrinsic rightness. Kant described the *supreme maxim* of the moral life as an agent's *resolve* to subject all actions to the dictates of the moral law. This maxim is equivalent to Aquinas' notion of *synderesis*. Kant lifted up the promise of a transcendent version of happiness, not as a foundation for the moral life, but as an affective accompaniment of moral virtue. Though we cannot prove God's existence, moral awareness gives us grounds for "postulating" God's existence, and for affirming a congruence between God's will and the moral law. These beliefs awaken hope that moral virtue will lead to blessedness.

Moral Capacity

To function as moral agents, we need more than good intentions. We require strength to implement our intentions in practice. All human capabilities are relevant to the moral life: physical vitality, the ability to communicate, cognitive capacities, artistic gifts. Kant argued that we are morally obliged to develop our "powers" so that we can manage our lives. With regard to *moral* capabilities, classic sources stressed control over bodily appetites: hunger, thirst, sexual desire, combative energy. These appetites, which are common to all animals, are perfectly natural, and they have positive import for human well-being. Hunger and thirst impel us to secure the food and drink we need for survival. Sexual desire assures the propagation of the species. Combative impulses equip us to defend ourselves against assaults, or perhaps to escape our attackers. The same appetites can also be destructive. Hunger can lead to gluttony; thirst, to drunkenness. Erotic desires can drive us to promiscuity, adultery, rape. Combative impulses can unleash explosive fits of temper or unjustified acts of violence. Aristotle stressed a balanced response to bodily appetites. Guided by wise mentors, we adopt practices that form habits. These habits become a "second nature," enduring over a lifetime. Good habits are "virtues." They represent a "golden mean" between excess and defect. They channel bodily appetites in morally sound ways while constraining their destructive tendencies. Bad habits are "vices." They manifest the extremes: a lack of control over the appetites, or their suppression, until they can no longer energize action.

Aquinas applied Aristotle's model to the four "cardinal" virtues: temperance, courage, justice, and prudence. Temperance is the golden mean with regard to bodily desires, especially for food, drink, and sexual gratification; courage is the golden mean with regard to our combative impulses. Justice and prudence are virtues governed by reason. Justice is the readiness to give each person what he or she is due, recognizing the dignity of all human beings. Prudence is the employment of practical reason in exercising moral judgments. Justice and prudence presuppose temperance and courage. Without these latter virtues, we cannot discern what is right and good.

Aquinas then subordinated the natural virtues to supernatural virtues infused in us by divine grace: faith, hope, and love. Faith is cognitive assent to church teaching. It marks the starting point in the human quest for understanding. Hope expresses confidence that God's purposes will be realized. Love is human aspiration toward union with God. We can properly love others and ourselves only in relation to our love for God. Supernatural virtues alone qualify as genuine virtues, and they have no limits. They can even override the "balance" of natural virtues, calling for times of fasting, for lifelong commitments to celibacy, for a readiness to suffer and die for Christ's sake. Yet they bestow qualified significance on the natural virtues as well.

Protestant thinkers, following Luther and Calvin, stressed the primacy of the will and volitional control over the passions. They did not believe that human sin resided in the passions, still less in malformed habits that Aristotle labeled vices. The root of sin is a disobedient will, the refusal to do what God commands. Because of our rebellion, our passions spin out of control, becoming destructive "works of the flesh." The result is the "bondage of the will," rendering us incapable of doing God's will. Our hope rests in God alone, who forgives us and empowers us to do his will. Luther spoke of how God's love flows through us and moves outward toward our neighbors, enabling us to love them truly. Calvin stressed growth in faith, which transforms our hearts. A new heart is the mark of God's healing presence.

Kant's account of moral virtue also centered in volitional control, the resolve to obey the moral law for its own sake. Only the good will, he argued, is good without qualification. Yet a good will must still contend with passions. The underlying problem is that natural inclinations get a head start over rational capabilities. Inclinations are present from birth, but we require time to develop practical reason. In *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant (1996) acknowledges that some emotions, which he calls moral dispositions, can furnish the *subjective conditions* of our receptiveness to duty. He cites good feelings that accompany actions consistent with duty, and bad feelings that follow violations of duty. He portrays love as a caring feeling for fellow human beings. We are obliged to help our fellow human beings achieve happiness whether we love them or not. Where love is present, however, our obligations become more bearable. Kant also mentions self-esteem, a positive feeling about oneself. Self-esteem invigorates duties to self, such as the duty to preserve one's life. Kant does not believe we are obliged to cultivate moral feelings, though they can support a good will. True virtue is solely my ability to do my duty. I acquire virtue by exalting the moral law and consistently doing my duty.

Moral Judgment

Classic traditions stress the human capacity to exercise sound moral judgment. For Aquinas, we first consider the things we have in common with other creatures; we then examine our distinctive qualities. Based on these reflections, we determine principles of natural law that will sustain conditions necessary for human well-being. Ideally, laws of the state will reinforce these principles. Laws revealed in scripture

supplement and correct deficiencies in natural law reasoning. Luther and Calvin begin with scripture, focusing on the Ten Commandments and the summary commands to love God and neighbor. Neither was content merely to apply the "letter of the law" to particular human practices. They sought deeper meanings in the commandments. Thus, the prohibition of stealing stimulates reflection on the significance of personal property within God's providential care for human life. It leads the faithful to claim their obligations toward others, especially the poor and the marginal, so that all might have resources to live in decency. Recognizing the social necessity of holding sin in check, Luther and Calvin urged magistrates to construct human laws informed by biblical wisdom. Calvin stressed growth toward righteousness through reflections on the divine commands. Our ultimate destiny is to glorify God and to enjoy God forever.

Kant called for formulations of moral imperatives that are universally binding upon all rational beings. He distinguished "strict" and "broad" imperatives. The former prohibit inherently contradictory acts, such as lying or suicide. The latter state broad obligations, though with few specifics (e.g. to develop one's capacities, and to promote the happiness of others). Broad imperatives have affinities with Aquinas' account of natural law (i.e. obligations that foster human flourishing). Kant offered the "principle of humanity" as an all-encompassing "secondary formulation" of the moral law: "Act so as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, as an end in itself, never as a means only." This formulation facilitated a shift in moral discourse from the classic focus on duty to the modern interest in human rights. Broad imperatives can in principle be elaborated in rules that govern more particular social practices. The Protestant theologian Paul Ramsey (1965) pressed for "exceptionless moral rules" for applying the commandment of neighbor love to particular practices. Kant's method furnished a useful model for his reflections.

Recurring ethical controversies involve disputes about concrete applications of basic moral principles. Aquinas addressed this problem directly. The closer we move to particulars, he acknowledged, the more inexact our judgments become. Why? Natural laws address specific facets of human life, while concrete cases often involve multiple considerations that cannot be combined under a single principle. Aquinas gives many examples. We are normally obliged, for example, to return lost property to its owner, *unless* the property is a dangerous weapon, and the owner an enemy invader. Aquinas' reflections have been expanded as *casuistry* and *proportionalism*. Casuistry involves the examination of particular cases in light of accumulated experiences in dealing with similar cases. Proportionalism stresses the quest for optimal balance in ordering competing values in concrete situations. Critics resist both strategies. They press for strict applications of natural law principles to concrete cases, lest the authority of the moral law be undermined by flawed reasoning.

Challenges to Classic Understandings of Agency

Contemporary additions to the classic traditions involve reflections on human sociality: the import of interpersonal relationships, established social structures, and prevailing cultural values for moral formation. The human sciences have made substantial contributions: ego psychology, object-relations theory, socialization theory. Contemporary theologians and philosophers also place greater emphasis on the relational composition of human persons.

Psychology and Identity Formation

Classic accounts of moral formation focused on basic human faculties: the will, practical reason, bodily appetites. Contemporary psychological studies direct attention to the self, and to relational processes that facilitate an emerging sense of personal identity. These studies suggest that the human disposition to do what is good and right cannot be derived simply from a general desire for happiness, or from a basic capacity for rational judgment. Instead, these dispositions arise from a child's feelings of "secure attachment" to an attentive caregiver, usually the mother, during the first months of life (Ainsworth et al. 1978; Bowlby 1982). Securely attached children begin to create a "coherent, enduring self-narrative" by the age of five. Simultaneously, their sensitivity to the feelings of others and their recognition of the "reciprocal nature of relational transactions" expands significantly (Thompson 2000).

Adolescence marks the turning point in the formation of identity (Erikson 1963, 1968). A stable personal identity is essential for purposive action and for critical moral judgment. It is only when we know who we are and what we stand for that we can act on our own. The primary threat to adolescent identity is "role confusion," not knowing who you are or how you fit into the world. Notions of "the will" or of "virtuous habits" are not obsolete, but they can no longer be abstracted from the complex processes that give rise to personal identity. In Erikson's theory, the attainment of identity positions young adults to form intimate relationships, and to establish homes of their own. Here the threat is isolation and loneliness. To flourish, human beings require highly personal, life-sustaining relationships. Nancy Chodorow's (1999) studies of adolescent girls disclose a complex interplay between an emerging sense of self and growing sensitivity to the feelings of others. She attributes this dynamic to the fact that females differentiate themselves from their mothers while also continuing to identify with them strongly. In contrast, boys tend to differentiate themselves from their mothers while competing with their fathers. Gender differences in studies of moral formation largely reflect times when mothers were the primary caregivers for infants, children, and even youths. One can anticipate changes in those patterns in a world of working mothers where fathers frequently play more active parenting roles.

These studies all give prominence to feelings: trust, attachment, self-confidence, empathy, self-esteem. Just as passions remind us that we are embodied selves, so feelings and affections bear witness to our social composition. Because feelings are closely bound to human relationships, they cannot be treated merely as secondary reinforcements of moral volition. Attitudes of respect and acts of beneficence toward others are cold and heartless if they are devoid of feeling. They can even be undermined by negative or ambivalent feelings that contradict their intended purposes: resentment, envy, disdain, contempt. Classic Christian theological perspectives took note of feelings: remorse, release from guilt, a new heart, hunger for God, blessedness. Such feelings were taken as signs of God's presence. Virtually exclusive attention was given, however, to the God relation, with little thought for the place of human relationships in moral formation. Yet caring human relationships are integral to the moral life, and they can serve as media for the redemptive purposes of God.

Cognitive Development

Studies of *cognitive* moral development parallel accounts of identity formation. Using hypothetical moral dilemmas to stimulate conversations, Lawrence Kohlberg (1971) charted the patterns of moral reasoning that children and youth employ at various ages. His results reflect Kant's view of moral

reasoning. In early childhood, children talk about avoiding pain and securing pleasure. In the middle years, they speak of conventional expectations for proper behavior. Adolescents and young adults stress mutual agreements, and a few appeal to principles of justice. For Kohlberg, the last response marks the highest stage of moral reasoning, a level males appeared more likely to attain than females. Carol Gilligan (1982) expanded Kohlberg's work by focusing on female subjects. She too found that females do not typically assess moral dilemmas by abstract appeals to justice. Instead, they strive to negotiate new arrangements that will overcome problems posed by the dilemmas. The moral reasoning of females, she suggested, is driven by "care" rather than justice, and it involves the give and take of discourse. Care presumes justice. Persons are to be given what they are due. Yet care moves beyond formal respect toward collaborative human relationships. Seyla Benhabib (1992) stresses principles of mutual respect that make discourse possible. Discourse enables us to honor human differences, even to cultivate shared understandings that reach across differences. In pluralistic societies, care and discourse are indispensable for civility.

In Erikson's theory, human development finally moves toward "ego integrity," where a maturing self gathers the experiences, insights, and discoveries of a lifetime into a more coherent whole. At this stage, the ultimate threat is "despair," where life appears empty and without meaning. Erikson's account of ego integrity calls to mind Augustine's portrait of the faith pilgrimage. God's eternity, Augustine reminded us, is not timelessness, but timefulness. God is able to encompass all of the moments and details of our lives, bestowing value upon them all. Our evil acts, our virtuous deeds, our sinful impulses, our spiritual hungers, our experiences of pain and loss, our moments of joy and fulfillment: all play roles in our formation as unique, irreplaceable individuals. Alfred North Whitehead (1929) elegantly captures Augustine's vision: "God is a tender care that nothing be lost."

Social Theory and Cultural Values

Socialization theory displays the transmission from generation to generation of established cultural values and institutionalized social practices. We internalize these values and practices through our interactions with parents, teachers, and mentors, until they become self-evident "givens" in our own perceptions of the world. This theory raises cautions about human claims to grasp moral standards that are absolute and universal in import. Our moral and religious convictions are inevitably filtered through taken-for-granted beliefs that reside in familiar social practices. Deeply entrenched racial, ethnic, religious, and gender prejudices can distort our moral judgments, though without our awareness.

In democratic societies, our lives are no longer framed by an encompassing, cohesive culture grounded in a religious establishment. We have a political culture that privileges individual freedoms and an economy that celebrates personal preferences. Beyond these common values, we live amid a rich plurality of communities and associations offering diverse, even conflicting, visions of human well-being. For many people, this new order has been liberating, opening the way for social mobility, and for bold new experiments in the quest for human fulfillment. It has facilitated movement beyond the racism of the past, and opened new opportunities for women to employ their capabilities in a wider social world. The same circumstances have also been destabilizing, weakening communal bonds that are essential for moral formation: strong families, close neighborhoods, vital religious communities, and overlapping associations that compose civil society.

A world of diversity and change has inspired renewed interest in substantive moral traditions. Alastair MacIntyre (1984) has given philosophical attention to the importance of tradition, narrative, and stable social practices for cultivating moral virtue. Stanley Hauerwas (1981) has emphasized a common faith narrative and shared communal practices in the formation of Christian character. The option of living in a closed, self-subsisting community is open to few. We normally participate in multiple social arenas, interacting daily with fellow human beings whose personal convictions and value priorities cover a wide spectrum of possibilities. The challenge is to uphold with integrity our own deepest convictions while honoring others who hold different views; it is to rebuild and renew our particular moral communities, while fostering broad social commitments to the common good.

Emmanuel Levinas (1969) traces the roots of moral formation to the "gracious face" of the feminine. At the same time, he contends that the full realization of moral responsibility requires the "radical face" of "the Other," the stranger who exposes our prejudices, and jolts our confidence that we have all the right answers. The radical Other is also vulnerable, a person who cannot get a hearing unless we are prepared to listen. Openness to the Other becomes a pivotal feature of moral responsibility. It corrects our arrogant attempts to construct comprehensive views that render all things intelligible. It expresses our openness to the ultimate mystery of God, in whom all beings realize their destiny. Levinas displays moral maturity as a combination of personal integrity and respect for human plurality.

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CHAPTER 15

Moral Development

Don S. Browning[†]

The phrase "moral development" suggests to many educated people the field of moral psychology that this is the academic discipline that is often thought to have the most profound insight into the processes of moral formation. Others, however, think of traditional religion; religious communities, they think, are the primary carriers of the ethical truths and processes of socialization needed to create moral people. Immediately, then, the term moral development raises the specter of the conflict between religion and science. Psychology, it is thought, is a science; religion, it is held, is about our relation to the ultimate about which science, some believe, can tell us very little.

Science versus Tradition

Behind the conflict between science and religion on the moral development of persons is the deeper philosophical conflict between what is generally called "foundationalism" and "non-foundationalism." This is a conflict about how genuine knowledge, both moral and scientific, should be acquired. Foundationalists believe that it comes from rejecting or bracketing tradition and building knowledge on the basis of objective sense data, scientific experiment, or certain irrefutable *a priori* ideas. The foundationalists believe that true knowledge about the moral development of persons will be discovered scientifically, most likely from the various fields of psychology, whether psychoanalytic, humanistic, cognitive, or evolutionary psychological. Non-foundationalists believe that cultural and religious traditions are the carriers of reliable knowledge and that, at best, science or *a priori* intuitions add only certain minor clarifications to what our traditions already tell us (Bernstein 1983, 1–20). They believe that our religious and cultural traditions have already discovered both what moral persons are and how to form them. This chapter argues that the non-foundationalists are right, but only if they acknowledge the important role the sciences can play in the criticism, refinement, and appropriation of the moral wisdom of our traditions. This opens new directions for work in religious ethics.

Modern Psychology and Moral Development

Most of the modern psychologies of moral development have been foundationalist to the core. They have aspired to find an objective, value free, and tradition-free way of talking about moral development. Because of its scientific aspirations toward objectivity, much modern psychological research is now

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thought to have been incomplete. It did its research with inadequate prescientific models of what mature moral action and reflection are really like. For instance, Sigmund Freud believed that his psychoanalytic insights into moral development were scientific and value free. Morality is formed, he taught, by infants and children emotionally identifying with powerful parental figures in their lives, especially the father. In order to retain the father's love, children identify with the negative prohibitions of the father and internalize them into their inner psychological lives, what Freud called the superego (1957, 34–53). But this made moral development primarily an unconscious process of internalizing the values – and often the prejudices – of parents. It gave us no account of how mature persons learn to evaluate their parents' morality in light of classical moral insights found either in their cultural traditions or in recognized philosophical moral principles.

Humanistic psychology also wanted to find a ground for moral development that was scientific and liberated from religious and cultural traditions (Browning 1987; van der Ven 1998, 235). It is an approach to personality development and psychotherapy that held moral development of persons was a matter of learning how to listen to, reflect on, and evaluate one's own organismic experience and capacity for self-actualization (Rogers 1951; Maslow 1954; Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman 1951). Religious and cultural traditions – whether mediated by parents or local communities – were at best advisory to the final center of authority found in the biologically grounded self-actualization tendencies of the individual person. Only gradually did it become apparent that this view of morality was a form of "ethical egoism"; morality was what satisfied and fulfilled the individual (Browning 1987, 72). This implicit moral principle lacked the main feature of genuine morality: the capacity to mediate conflicts between the needs and desires of the individual and the needs and desires of others. In spite of this striking inadequacy, humanistic psychology has influenced the images of health and human fulfillment of much of modern psychotherapy and even the program in moral education called "values clarification" – an approach widely used in schools, prisons, and churches throughout the United States and in other countries as well (see, for example, Simon, Howe, and Kirchenbaum 1971).

The humanistic psychologies, with their biologistic understanding of moral development, have affinities with the more recent claims of evolutionary psychology. This school of psychology believes that moral values are embedded in the biological processes of sexual selection (kin altruism, inclusive fitness, and natural selection). Kin altruism is the primate inclination to protect, care for, and even empathize with those beings (principally offspring and relatives) who carry and extend his or her genes (see Wright 1994, 158–161). The concept of inclusive fitness claims that creatures that procreate through sexual selection are concerned about the survival and well-being of not only their own genes but also the offspring and relatives that carry their genes. This is not just a selfish process. It can also be seen as the ground of sympathy and identification with others (see de Waal 1996, 78–83; cf. Dawkins 1976). The processes of natural selection, the theory goes, have tended to retain creatures with these sympathetic capacities because of their adaptive qualities for themselves and their genetic family line. James Q. Wilson in *The Moral Sense* (1993) has developed a link between evolutionary psychology and the moral sentiment theories of Scottish philosophers Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith. Kin altruism and inclusive fitness give rise to moral sentiments that can become elaborated into an adult sense of sympathy, fairness, self-control, and even duty (1993, 29–120). These sentiments develop and mature within the context of the deep investments of family life, but can gradually be analogically extended and universalized to others outside the family (1993, 192–200).

Evolutionary psychology and humanistic psychology are doubtless correct in holding that our organismic experience or deep inclinations toward gene immortality, kin altruism, and inclusive fitness *under*

certain conditions contribute to morally relevant inclinations and sentiments. However, neither school of moral development understands the difference between such premoral inclinations and more properly moral inclinations, sentiments, and values. They do not understand the social, cultural, and hermeneutic conditions under which morally relevant (yet still premoral) biological inclinations are selected, nourished, and enhanced and inclinations and sentiments are channeled, sometimes suppressed, but finally redirected toward morally worthy ends.

The most powerful contemporary psychological perspective on moral development can be found in the cognitive theories of Lawrence Kohlberg. Along with the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, Kohlberg believed that moral development employed in the realm of moral conflict and deliberation used the same cognitive capacities as in science and mathematics (Piaget 1965; Kohlberg 1981). Kohlberg was stimulated to do his work because of accumulating evidence that moral training of the kinds associated with Boy Scout merit badges and Sunday School moral instruction did not help young people learn to cope with moral conflict and new moral dilemmas. He realized that social scientists cannot adequately do empirical work in moral development unless they make some important prescientific decisions about the nature of morality. Kohlberg decided that the moral theories of Immanuel Kant and the neo-Kantian perspective of John Rawls provide the most adequate philosophical framework for the scientific study of the moral development of persons (Rawls 1971; Kant 1959). Morality is primarily a matter of *moral thinking*; it is the capacity to guide one's actions by maxims that one can will to be universal law – a law for all humans to follow, both in your action toward them and their action toward you. To think morally means to be able to place oneself in the shoes of the other and think what one's actions might mean to them as well as oneself. It also means being blind to how one's action might benefit oneself in light of certain characteristics such as race, wealth, class, abilities, gender, education, or age.

Given these philosophical precommitments, what did Kohlberg actually learn from his scientific observations? Development of moral thinking, he showed, is measurable. One can find people thinking with some approximation to Kant and Rawls' view of morality, and that there is a developmental timetable for the emergence of one's capacity for such moral thinking. Moral thinking moves from the *preconventional* and egocentric stage of early childhood (the right thing to do is that which is satisfying and avoids pain and punishment), to the *conventional* thinking of late childhood and early teens (right action is what parents and the community say we should do), to *postcon-ventional* thinking of late teens and adulthood (right action is the greatest good for the largest number or, higher still, truly universal and reversible moral thinking of the kind Kant and Rawls describe) (Kohlberg 1981, 17–18). Of course, not everyone moves to the higher stages. Most do not get beyond conventionality and some are arrested at preconventional levels. Kohlberg believed his empirical studies demonstrated that moral development parallels, and is aided by, the natural sequence of human cognitive development. Finally, he claimed to learn some of the empirical conditions that facilitate the growth, elaboration, and complexification of higher levels of moral thinking. Moral development is provoked by diverse and conflicting social experiences that compel us to restructure our moral cognitive categories so that they become more attentive to and inclusive of the claims of other people, even those outside our traditional circles.

Today, it is widely believed that Kohlberg's view of moral development was far too narrow. He confined morality to moral thinking and paid no systematic attention to the premoral goods that moral thinking should order. Closely related to this point is the feminist critique. Carol Gilligan (1982) has argued that it is a model of moral thinking that fits men more than women. Hence, it was a gender-biased model. Kohlberg's view of moral thinking emphasizes justice and rights and neglects elements of care and

nurture, features that Gilligan believes, at least in Western societies, are more often found in the way women approach moral issues (1982, 62). Communitarian ethicists have advanced criticisms as well. They complain that Kohlberg neglects other aspects of morality, principally the role of virtue, narrative, tradition, and community (MacIntyre 1981). The field of psychology has been influenced by this line of thinking. Owen Flanagan (1991) argues for the importance in psychology and moral philosophy of the narrative formation of moral character and virtue.

Associated with the turn to virtue and narrative in modern theology, philosophy, and psychology is the emergence of character education in schools and communities in the US and other countries. In the early 1990s the general public in several countries became concerned about the increase in crime, cheating, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and alcohol and drug consumption among school-age populations. The leading approach centered around various programs in character education; these initiatives generally entailed school or community-wide discussions about the meaning of such virtues as truth, honesty, commitment, duty, etc. Although apparently powerful in producing a higher level of civility among students and community members, some critics believe that this approach to character education does little to illuminate either the goods at stake in moral issues or the principles of obligation that should guide deliberation and action in new situations. Furthermore, some sociologists believe that character education's concentration on lists of specific virtues may produce only superficial conformity rather than a vital and transformative moral life (Hunter 2000).

A Hermeneutic Understanding of Moral Development

Modern psychology has contributed bits and pieces of insight into the nature of the moral development of persons. It has not, however, delivered a dominant model that has been accepted widely or that has improved decisively our understanding of moral development beyond the wisdom of inherited religious and philosophical resources. Yet, the bits and pieces – the partial insights – can prove valuable if we resist the temptation to inflate a limited finding into representing the entire field of moral deliberation and action. The problem with social scientific research into moral development is this: it has been guided by inadequate prescientific models of morality.

Recently, new philosophical models of ethics and morality have emerged that should be examined for their usefulness for understanding the fullness of moral development. They also may have much to contribute to the social scientific study of moral development. I will illustrate these new prescientific models by outlining the hermeneutic view of ethics and morality found in the writings of Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur's model can be found in what he calls his "little ethics" (1992, chs. 5–10). According to him, development toward mature moral reflection and action, when fully described, *both includes and yet is more than* the internalization of parental prohibitions (Freud), deepened trust in one's own valuing process (humanistic psychology), kin altruism analogically applied to non-kin (evolutionary psychology), universalizable moral thinking (Kohlberg), and the uncritical assimilation of virtues (character education). For Ricoeur, the development of persons toward moral maturity reflects the full structure of the self in its interpretive and dialogical action with the world. Ricoeur believes that the self in dialogue with its world has a three-step rhythm: the steps of *describing*, *narrating*, and *prescribing* (Ricoeur 1992, 20). When confronting a moral problem, we first describe it, then bring it into contact with our fund of narratives about the meaning of life and our place in it, and then prescribe some kind

of moral response. This happy formula about the moral self will help us understand the full complexity of moral maturity.

Mature moral thinking and action develops along the following lines. First, Ricoeur makes a distinction between ethics and morality. In fact, he asserts the logical and developmental priority of "ethics" over "morality." "Ethics," he claims, springs from our desiring selves and from our efforts to realize some good in our lives. Here is where Freud, the humanistic psychologies, and evolutionary psychology throw some light on moral development; all of them taught that ethics springs from our desires, needs, and strivings for self-actualization (Ricoeur 1970). Morality, on the other hand, has more to do with duties and obligations to others. According to Ricoeur, morality builds on, tries to fulfill, yet properly orders our ethical striving toward the good and does this in light of the needs and reality of other people.

How do we understand and learn about these aspirations toward the good? Do we learn about them by directly feeling and following our raw desires and actualization tendencies? Ricoeur says no. We should instead *describe* (the first of the three steps) our culture and tradition's classic *practices* for pursuing these goods. Such practices crystallize our enduring goods and the appropriate means to acquire them. In this emphasis on practices as revealing the goods of our ethical strivings, Ricoeur affirms the importance to ethics of the teleological concerns of the modern psychologies (desire, organismic experience, self-actualization) but now places these strivings within a communitarian context. This view says, in effect, that the truly tested and lasting goods of life are discovered through the inherited practices of a community and its traditions (MacIntyre 1981, 177).

Teaching persons how to *describe* the inherited practices of a tradition is just the first step toward the moral development of persons. If we are socialized beings, the more excellent forms of our desires are projected into hierarchies of linguistic codes that give intelligibility to our practices: (1) codes of coordination (simple patterns of means to various ends); (2) codes of subordination (such as plowing in order to farm); (3) constitutive rules (moving the pawn to play the game of chess); (4) plans of life (far reaching goals and aspirations); (5) images of the "good life" (models as to what are truly valuable aspirations for life as a whole); and (6) larger narratives that give unity and meaning to our life in the midst of its disappointments and conflicts. All of these layers of language pattern our desires and practices at their very core, carry us toward more fully ethical action, and *lead us to the doorstep of morality*. Ethics understood as the pursuit of the goods of life requires a grand and complex process of education, socialization, and critical interpretation on the excellent practices of a tested and established tradition.

"Narratives" was the last of the long list of ways that our practices, which embody the goods we seek, are encoded by language and tradition. *Narration* was also the second step in Ricoeur's threefold understanding of the interpretive and dialogical self. Some narrative – some story – always integrates the hierarchies of encoded "ethical" practices. Some narrative gives the final meaning to our means–end actions, our if–then actions, our plans of life, and our images of the good life. To develop as a moral person, one must assimilate the classic narratives of one's tradition – those that over time have proved most capable of giving meaning to our ethical struggles and losses. In the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989), from whom Ricoeur has learned so much, development toward morality requires learning to interpret the "classics" of a tradition.

In spite of this emphasis on the role in "ethics" of inherited communal practices and traditions, Ricoeur would have us go beyond the traditionalism of communitarianism. Action at this ethical stage only deals with communally patterned aspirations; we have not yet arrived in the arena of full "morality." Why is it that our ethical aspirations toward the goods of life do not, in themselves, deal with the core of

genuine moral maturity for persons? The answer is that the goods of life conflict and thereby produce various forms of violence. The field of ethics, in contrast to the arena of morality, is born out of our purposive search for the good. "Morality" itself assumes and builds on our ethical and teleological aspirations, but it also goes beyond them. Morality in the proper sense of the word is born out of the tragic conflict between the goods of life. Morality mediates conflicts between goods and the different people and communities seeking these goods. Morality does this by employing tests about which of the maxims guiding our ethical striving are actually universalizable. Such tests can be found in Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative: "Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only" (Kant 1959, 47). In the context of religions such as Judaism and Christianity, and other religions as well, one finds similar tests in the Golden Rule. In Christianity, we find the principle of neighbor love: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:39). These principles show solicitude and respect for both other and self, tell us to treat all persons as ends and never as means alone, and require us to recognize that in their humanity alone *all* individuals are deserving of just access to the goods of life. Actions pursuing goods that pass this test of universalization are moral actions in contrast to simple ethical aspirations.

It is at the moment of this test that Kohlberg's model of moral development and his emphasis on universalization as the highest level of moral thinking would find a limited place within Ricoeur's fuller hermeneutic theory of morality. In discussing the test of universalization, however, one has already moved into Ricoeur's third step: the moment of *prescription*. But prescription has several dimensions to it. First, as we have seen, an ethics of desire, habit, virtue, and community formation (Aristotle) is tested by the categorical imperative and similar principles of universalization (Kant). Second, the tests of our ethical strivings that come from using the universalization principle of the categorical imperative, the Golden Rule, or the love commandment must now be fine-tuned to assess the concrete goods at stake in specific situations. Ordering and ranking these conflicting goods requires wisdom, or practical reason. It requires taking seriously the situation in all of its complications and ambiguity.

The Aim of Moral Development

This critical hermeneutic perspective points to a fuller and more adequate model of development toward mature moral reflection and action. We should help children, young people, and adults understand that they are moral interpreters who inherit traditions of moral practice. Parents, schools, and religious institutions should help them understand that the first step of a moral decision is an act of interpretation; it involves asking, what is the meaning of the deeply coded practices that they have inherited? They should learn to inquire into the proper way to interpret these practices. They should learn to ask, "Do I understand these traditions of practices correctly? What are the images of the good life and the narratives that give them meaning?" They should be taught to be sensitive about whether their practices and the goods they embody conflict within themselves and conflict with, and perhaps destroy, the practices and goods of others. They should then learn to exercise some version of the principle of universalization. Finally, they should learn how to return to the original situation to determine how their narratives and the principle of universalization help reorder the conflicting goods that engendered the original violence. The aim of moral development should be wisdom.

Conclusion

Moral deliberation is inextricably related to understanding and interpretation. Something like this model of moral reflection and action should guide our social, cultural, and religious effort to develop moral persons. Something like this model should guide our human and social sciences in their research to grasp the more detailed conditions for moral development.

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CHAPTER 16

Desire and Will

Kevin Jung

Is having the desire to do something the same as having the will to do something? At a cursory glance, it might seem that they are identical. People often use these terms interchangeably in reference to intentional action, as both desiring and willing are commonly attributed to an agent who engages in intentional action. But it is not clear whether they should be treated as the same. In the moral psychologist's chair, we may come to the self-awareness that we sometimes will to do what we desire to do but at other times will to do what we have no desire to do. We may will not to do what we strongly desire to do, or we may fail to do what we will to do. When it comes to normative reasons for action, some philosophers think that desires (more specifically, desire-based reasons) are the only grounds of normative reasons since they believe that no actions are causally efficacious without desires, while others believe that truth-valued judgments also can constitute normative reasons. This short entry cannot cover all of the many important philosophical and theological issues surrounding the topic of desire and will. In what follows, we will discuss only a few of the issues.

The Determining Ground of Free Choice

"Give me chastity and continence, but not yet," says Augustine in his autobiography *The Confessions* (1992, VIII). Even after his conversion to Christianity, Augustine continued to struggle with his sexual desire. But as an ordained priest and bishop, he also had a desire to remain chaste. Thus, within his mind, we see two competing desires, each seeking to overrule the other. But which of the two desires is his volition? Suppose he acts upon one of the desires. Is the action freely willed? What is the determining ground of free choice? Theologians and philosophers have been wrestling with such questions for centuries, as they often intersect with questions concerning other subjects such as divine foreknowledge, divine agency, and moral responsibility. I will briefly explore the nature of free will with a particular focus on the relations among will, desire, and the intellect among other things.

Ever since Augustine, who had a more expansive notion of will (*voluntas*) than any other ancient thinker, how the will is related to desire and to the intellect has been a subject of interest to many theologians and philosophers. In the Middle Ages, what later became known as intellectualism and voluntarism each presented opposing theories about the determining ground of free choice. Very briefly, intellectualism emphasized the primacy of the intellect over the will, while voluntarism argued to the

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

contrary, and, not surprisingly, their views on free will reflect their respective lines of emphasis. Thomas Aquinas, often viewed as a key intellectualist, considers the intellect to be a higher power than and to be prior to the will in the determination of an act. He holds that the intellect moves the will by presenting an appetible object to the will (*ST* I–I q. 82. a. 3; I–II q. 9. a. 1). Since the will, which is the intellectual appetite, is naturally ordered toward happiness, the last end of the human being, and since the object of the intellect is the idea of appetible good, the will is always inclined to some particular good apprehended as appropriate by the intellect. Thus, he explains, in the order of determining the act, "the intellect precedes the will, as the motive power precedes the thing movable, and as the active precedes the passive; for good which is understood moves the will" (*ST* I–I q. 82. a. 3).

Does this mean that we have *free choice*? Aquinas certainly thinks so because he regards our judgment to be from reason, not from a natural instinct in which case the judgment would be determined to one course of action. Insofar as inclinations are subject to the judgment of reason and insofar as the latter can follow opposite courses and can comparatively evaluate them, the will is to be considered free (*ST* I–I q. 83, a. 1).

A quite different view was developed by voluntarists. In particular, John Duns Scotus's views are interesting, not least because of the resemblance between Scotus and Kant on their shared notion of the will as the self-determining faculty. Contra Aquinas, Scotus insists that the will does not necessarily want happiness as its end and claims that free will requires having opposites in the agent's power (or what contemporary libertarians call the principle of alternate possibilities). Scotus rejects Aquinas's view that the will is automatically inclined to happiness as its object of desire and that the will passively desires the good as presented to the will by the intellect. Distinguishing the will into a natural appetite and a free appetite, he contends that the will as the free appetite does not necessarily desire happiness, and it may or may not will, or even may suspend willing, with respect to the end of any natural inclination or a deliberation made by the intellect (Scotus 1997 *Ordinatio* IV, suppl., dist 49, qq. 9–10). The will is indetermined in the sense that it is not determined by anything external to itself. Scotus argues, furthermore, that the will is not free unless "it has the potentiality to determine itself to either alternative with the other alternative before it, and therefore it will act in this way" (Scotus 1997 *Questions on the Metaphysics* IX, q. 15). The point is that rational evaluation of possible courses of action prior to a decision is not sufficient for the freedom of the will.

A new creative proposal on the problem of free will was made by Harry Frankfurt some decades ago, who responds to the libertarian principle of alternate possibilities by reformulating classical compatibilism (Frankfurt 1969). His strategy was to conceive a freely willed action as that of a second-order volition, whether or not the action is causally determined. Frankfurt makes a distinction between first-order and second-order desires, according to which first-order desires are simply desires to do or not to do something, which can be expressed in the form of "A wants to do X," and *second-order desires are* desires *about* first-order desires (Frankfurt 1971). The distinction is based on the idea that we are sometimes self-aware that there are some desires of ours that we sincerely do not want for ourselves. Imagine an unwilling alcohol addict who says and genuinely means "I want to stop drinking." The addict has a second-order desire about his first-order desire to drink. A second-order desire then is a desire to have a certain desire, which involves the self-evaluation of one's first-order desire(s). This implies that an agent's second-order desires may not be identical with her first-order desires.

The fact that there could be a conflict between first-order and second-order desires may suggest that not all first-order desires are what the agent really wants for herself. In fact, for Frankfurt, an agent's will is not necessarily identical to a first-order desire that inclines the agent to act. Rather, the will is

identifiable with what the agent wants *to be* her will, i.e. the second-order desire that a certain first-order desire be her "*effective* desire – one that moves (or will or would move) a person all the way to action" (Frankfurt 1971). He calls this second-order desire a second-order *volition*. Having a second-order volition is also important for the question of whether an agent enjoys freedom of the will. Frankfurt claims, "A person's will is free only if he is free to have the will he wants," implying that "having the freedom to do what one wants to do is not a sufficient condition of having a free will. It is not a necessary condition either" (Frankfurt 1971).

This claim shows a key difference between Frankfurt's version of "semi-compatibilism" and classical compatibilism. In a rather simplistic definition, compatibilism is the view that free will and determinism are compatible with each other. David Hume, one of its defenders, famously argued that the liberty of spontaneity, not the liberty of indifference, is the only necessary condition of free will. The liberty of spontaneity here means the absence of external coercion, and the liberty of indifference means a negation of necessity or determinism. Roughly, the idea is that the agent's will must be viewed as free as long as (1) she had the power or ability to do what she desired to do, and (2) there were no constraints or impediments that prevented her from doing what she desired to do. Classical compatibilists interpret (1) to imply that "one could have done otherwise, if he had chosen."

"But what if the agent could not have chosen at all?", ask libertarians. Frankfurt's version of semi-compatibilism seeks to meet this libertarian challenge by making irrelevant a common libertarian requirement for free will, viz. the agent's ability to do otherwise, known as the principle of alternate possibilities. On the libertarian assumption, the agent is not morally responsible for his action if he could not have done otherwise. But Frankfurt thinks that this assumption is false. He believes that the reason we often accept such a statement as a valid excuse for not incurring responsibility is not because the agent, literally, could not have done otherwise – as libertarians assume – but because that was *not* "what he really wanted to do." Here we find again Frankfurt's identification of second-order volition as the mark of ownership of action and as a necessary condition of free will.

Weakness of Will (*Akrasia*)

"I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:18–19), says the Apostle Paul. A number of philosophers and religious thinkers dating as far back as Plato have noted what appears to be a common experience in human psychology: we sometimes fail to do what we will to do or do something against our better judgment. Is weakness of will real? If so, why does this happen?

In Plato's *Protagoras*, Socrates denies that weakness of will (*akrasia*) is possible. He says, "No one who has knowledge or thought of other actions as better than those he is doing, and as possible, will do as he proposes if he is free to do the better ones; and this yielding to oneself is nothing but ignorance, and mastery of oneself is as certainly wisdom" (Plato 1992 358b7–c3). The idea is that if one genuinely knows or believes a proposition *p*, then she does not act against *p*. (It is worth noting that Socrates is by no means the only thinker who denies the possibility of *akrasia*. The contemporary philosopher R. M. Hare, for instance, also denies the possibility, arguing that *sincere* assent to evaluative judgments which are action-guiding must be necessarily motivating.) There is considerable dispute about how to interpret the Socratic/Platonic response to *akrasia*. One possible interpretation is that having knowledge is different from having mere true belief in

that having knowledge necessarily includes being capable of self-control, as Plato seems to suggest in *Protagoras* (Plato 1992 352b–c). But the problem is that he also clearly writes, as quoted above, that it is not just those who know that *p*, but also those who have better judgment that *p* never act against *p*.

One person who found the Socratic/Platonic position to be at odds with observed facts was Aristotle. He sees weakness of will (*akrasia*) and self-control (*enkrateia*) as contrary features of human action. There are two types of lack of self-control that he identifies, namely impetuosity and weakness (Aristotle 1999 1150b19–26). For some akratic people, they cannot stand by the results of their rational deliberations because of their feelings, while other akratic people are led on by what they are feeling because they have not deliberated. The former, due to their impetuous lack of self-control, hastily act without following their own rational deliberations, and the latter, because of the intensity of their passions, do not wait for reason and simply follow appearances. Though Aristotle appears to dismiss the Socratic view that we act against our better judgment only through ignorance (Aristotle 1999 1145b24–9), but it is worth noting that Aristotle himself holds that no prudent person is capable of acting willingly against one's practical wisdom (Aristotle 1999 1146a5–9).

As it turns out, how to understand *akrasia* can hinge a lot on how we interpret the meaning of knowledge and better judgment. Does knowledge entail self-control? Does it entail not only action but also strength in action? Or, as Donald Davidson puts it, is better judgment all-things-considered "conditional" or "prima facie" (i.e. relative to the total set of considerations available to me) judgment, or "unconditional" (relative to some subset of the considerations available to me) all-out judgment? (Davidson 1969) For instance, I may judge that drinking a lot of alcohol is not a good idea, all things considered, but I may judge that it is best to do now, given my feeling of sadness. According to Davidson, such is a case of *akrasia* when my unconditional judgment, rather than my all-things-considered conditional judgment, determines my action. On this view, *akrasia* reflects lack of rationality.

One implication of Davidson's position is that we can explain the possibility of acting against one's better judgment only if the better judgment is understood as a conditional (all-things-considered) judgment and only if we have some excuse for going against the conditional judgment. But is this true? It seems that people would sometimes act against their better judgment, knowing in advance there really is no good excuse for what they intend to do.

For some religious thinkers, weakness of will has less to do with the problem of rationality than with the condition of the will. Augustine, for instance, holds that all those who come after the Fall suffer from the debilitating condition of the distorted will that is a consequence of original sin. As a result, we are unable to form a good volition, much less to do what we will. Our will being turned away from God onto ourselves, we have neither the intention nor the power to desire our proper end, i.e. God, and to desire everything else in the right order of love. As Augustine says, "willing is one thing, and ability another; willing does not necessarily imply ability; nor ability willing" (Augustine 1955, ch. 53 [xxxi]). He then insists that God's grace is always necessary to repair our distorted will. To borrow Frankfurt's distinction about the two kinds of desire, we may say that God's grace is necessary for repairing both first-order desires and second-order desires; it helps us to form a good volition in us without us, and it strengthens our volition to be able to love God (Augustine 2017, chs. 29–33, 41–43; Stump 2006).

In a related but distinct way, Maximus the Confessor discusses two types of will that exist in human beings, namely natural will and gnomic will. Natural willing refers to the movement of a being in acting in accordance with the being's essential nature (i.e. its logos) and thus the divine will (McFarland 2015). He

posits that each creature has a particular motion corresponding to the end proper to the kind of being it is, and it follows that human beings have a proper end intrinsic to the kind of rational creatures they are. But living under the conditions of time and history in this earthly life prior to glory, our willing is not perfect. As rational creatures who do not have the perfect vision of the good, we are forced to deliberate and choose among the objects of our perceived good. Gnomic willing refers to this self-chosen inclination of a creature whose deliberation and choice can lead to error and thus to sin. From this perspective, weakness of will may be understood as the symptomatic expression of our gnomic will. It is important to note, however, that for Maximus the solution to our imperfect willing is found neither in the denial of our natural desires per se, nor in more rational deliberation and self-determination. Rather, it lies in accepting them as ours and bringing them to perfection beyond their natural capacities, through ascetic practices and divine grace, to correspond to our true nature, even though our willing remains gnomic in this life (McFarland 2015).

Normative Reasons for Action

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:46–48). Two agents who respectively performed identical actions may receive very different moral appraisals for the reasons on account of which each agent endeavored to bring about action. Reasons to do something are called normative reasons for action, and moral reasons for action are considered species of normative reasons for action. Now, are some reasons good or bad reasons for doing something, and if so, how should we think about these matters?

A desire is often understood as providing the agent with a goal to pursue and with a motivation to perform action. On this classical view, (a) having a desire entails having a desire for an object or a certain state of affairs, and (b) having a desire implies having a disposition to act. But on closer examination, neither having a desire for X nor having a disposition to act for X entails that X is a proper object of desire or that it is morally good to act for X. Some ethical naturalists infer from (a) the belief that the meaning of good is synonymous with what we desire (i.e. natural properties) such as pleasure. But as Moore pointed out, it raises an "open question" whether such a property is indeed good (Moore 1993). If the *meaning* of good is identical to what we desire, it would be a mere tautology to ask if what we desire is good (Hare 1952). Some contemporary ethical naturalists have taken a different approach, saying that what is desirable (i.e. moral properties) is synthetically reducible to what we desire (i.e. natural properties) without their analytic identity. Just as the morning star and the evening star can be known to be identical through observation despite their different meanings, they argue that *a posteriori* identification of moral and non-moral properties is possible.

With regard to (b), it is one thing to say that someone is attracted to the object of her desire, but quite another to say that it is okay for her to take her attraction or inclination *as a reason* for action. The former is a *descriptive* fact about the relation between desire and action, but the latter concerns *normative* reasons for action (hereafter normative reasons). Now suppose (b) is true. Still, (b) remains neutral on a number of related issues. Most thinkers agree that having a desire has a motivational effect on the will, but they disagree on whether this is a *sufficient* reason for performing an action. The question is not so much about whether having a desire can motivate the agent but whether all normative reasons, i.e.

reasons that count in support of action, are desire-based. Here subjectivists and objectivists *about reasons* usually find themselves at opposite ends of the spectrum (Parfit 2011, chs. 2–3). Very briefly, subjectivists about reasons (hereafter subjectivists) maintain that it is the facts about the subject's *attitudes* toward objects such as our desires that give us normative reasons, while objectivists about reasons (hereafter objectivists) focus on mind-independent facts that can render the objects of our desires and aims *objectively* good and thus give us normative reasons. Thus, subjectivists about reasons are (metaphysical) anti-realists about value, whereas objectivists about reasons are usually realists about value.

The biggest weapon in a subjectivist's arsenal often is moral motivation. If the end of morality is to teach us our duty and influence our conduct, are matters of fact capable of accomplishing this task? They argue, following Hume, that, in order for normative reasons to intrinsically motivate the agent, their source must be within the agent's subjective motivational set (Williams 1979). Otherwise, they worry that normative reasons for action would amount to nothing because they would be motivationally vacuous. The view sketched here is known as *reasons internalism*, which holds that all normative reasons are internal reasons, that is, reasons dependent upon the agent's psychological states such as want, desire, and emotion. Many – though not all – supporters of reasons internalism are Humeans who argue that only desires can motivate the agent. Humean internalism takes normative reasons to be always intrinsically motivating and thus states that normative reasons must be based on the agent's desires. If this Humean view is correct, we cannot be expected, much less commanded, to love someone unless the desire to love this person is already present within our psychological profile.

Objectivists, on the other hand, argue that there are object-given reasons for action. According to them, object-given reasons are made possible by the experience of certain objects which gives us the rational apprehension of their intrinsic values, regardless of our attitudes toward them. They also question the idea that all normative reasons must always be intrinsically motivating. It might be the case that some normative reasons have some degree of motivational force without always being intrinsically motivating. That is to say, some objective (i.e. attitude-independent) normative judgments may have some motivational force, but they alone may not be motivationally sufficient for moving the agent. Or, it could be the case that objective normative judgments as normative reasons require only *de dicto* (as opposed to *de re*) desires to motivate the agent. *De dicto* desires refer to standing desires toward some unspecified objects (e.g. she desires to marry *a* man as opposed to *that* man), whereas *de re* desires are specific to some particular objects. If so, having normative reasons does not entail the presence of *certain* desires, though the former may borrow some unspecified desires for motivation. For instance, an objectivist's normative reasons could go like this: when one performs an act of love towards a stranger, she is not motivated by some existing emotional attachment to the type of person this stranger is or certain instrumental value this stranger holds for her, but by intrinsic value the stranger possesses qua human and the additional motivational force that she borrows from her existing psychological resources through her moral imagination.

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CHAPTER 17

Perception

Michael Sohn

Introduction

Perception has long been a subject of philosophical and religious reflection, initiated by the ancient Greeks and Romans, elaborated by medieval philosophers and theologians, and renewed by modern scientists and intellectuals. This is unsurprising, for perception is central to each of the major areas within Western thought: metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. While the subject of perception can be approached from a number of different historical periods or from a number of possible constructive frameworks, this entry focuses on different modes of perception within modern and contemporary Continental thought: the empirical perception of the world, the phenomenological perception within consciousness, and the moral perception of the other. Examining these figures and frameworks accesses an important historical debate over the methodology of the sciences, delineates clear conceptual differences over the meaning of perception, and provides insight into how religion may shape our perceptions of the world and of others.

Empirical Perception: Perception of the World

Modern empiricism, which emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and is associated with thinkers such as John Locke (1632–1704) and David Hume (1711–1776), posits that knowledge is primarily based on our sense experiences. Our sense perceptions are nothing other than the passive impression of external objects in the world on our consciousness. Objects are perceived objectively with distinct qualities, such as color, odor, taste, and sound, within time and space. The world, then, is reduced to the objective world, and truth becomes objective truth. The subject is reduced to a non-participating spectator of the world, observing cold, hard facts without any personal interest or involvement. It is implicated only insofar as it is merely the passive receptacle of the impressions from objects in the world.

The modern natural sciences use the perception of contingent, particular empirical facts in the world as its starting point and abstract from it necessary universal principles of nature. The works of Isaac Newton, one of the founding figures of the modern scientific revolution, can be seen as exemplary of such a worldview. The modern scientific method and its discovery of universal principles of nature has allowed for the prediction of natural and human phenomena, which has provided a level of certitude in knowledge about the world that was previously unimagined, leading to important discoveries and innovations in science, medicine, and technology.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

The progress and achievements of modern science, however, did not come without its critics. Metaphysical critiques point out the contradiction that science begins with perception of the concrete and the particular, but concludes with abstract and universal truths. German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), for example, whose work will be examined in more detail below, points out that the immediate becomes only the apparent, and the "real" becomes beyond our immediate perceptions. He dedicated his work to critiquing the metaphysical and methodological presuppositions of the modern natural sciences and constructing an alternative method that would return to the immediate given within consciousness as the basis of a rigorous science. Epistemological critiques argue for alternative forms of knowledge and experience. The German historian and philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), for example, was concerned about the reduction of all reality and knowledge to the methodological presuppositions of the natural sciences. The dominance of empiricism, on his view, led to the loss of human spirit and life. To that end, Dilthey distinguished the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) from the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*). Whereas the former are based on outer experiences (*Erfahrung*) of nature that lead to the explanation of facts, the latter is based on inner lived experiences (*Erlebnis*) of the spirit that lead to the interpretation of meaning. By carving out the distinctiveness of human lived experience, Dilthey sought to restore the validity of the human spirit, the self who experiences, acts, and suffers in history. Finally, moral critiques find issue with the reduction of all perceptions to brute hard facts. David Hume, for example, noted that our perceptions of facts convey truth and falsehood, discovering objects as they really stand in nature. Morals, however, do not have objective truth or falsity in this sense, but are rather "gilded" onto their objects in conveying value. The fact-value distinction, raised most famously by Hume, states that prescriptions about what ought to be cannot be based on descriptions about what is. In other words, there must be a moral perception of the other distinct from empirical perception of facts.

Phenomenological Perception: Perception Within Consciousness

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) lived during this period of the dominance of empiricism and devoted his career to defending phenomenology as a rigorous science that would address the "crisis of the sciences." For Husserl, phenomenology represented a new descriptive method beyond empiricism. It brackets our outer experiences (*Erfahrung*) of objective existences within the world and, instead, turns inward to life experience (*Erlebnis*). Whereas empiricism is based on the particular perception of contingent, actual existences, phenomenology describes the necessary essential structures of phenomena as they appear to consciousness. Husserl does not reject wholesale the being of the world in favor of the being of consciousness. Rather, consciousness is the necessary condition that renders possible any particular perception within the world. By bracketing our outer experiences, it is not so much that one loses the world but that one all the more regains it in an intimate, more primordial relationship qua consciousness. Perception, then, is not grounded in the passive sensation of impressions on the mind, as modern empiricists had argued, but rather it is an active, constituting act of consciousness. In every cognitive act, consciousness aims or directs itself toward one or another thing.

For Husserl, phenomenology was a rigorous science, the foundation of all other sciences. Whereas the natural sciences were *a posteriori*, dependent and based on our particular perceptions within the world and concluded with universal principles in nature, phenomenology was an *a priori* science, independent

from our contingent experiences of the world. While biology, for example, is based on the perception of objects in the biological world, physics is based on the perception of objects in the physical world, and so on, phenomenology is the study of the essential structure of perception within consciousness, which is the condition for each particular perception of objects in the world. In this respect, all sciences become simply branches of phenomenology.

The distinct contribution of phenomenology is that it shows what primordially exists is not a reality hidden behind the apparent phenomenon but the phenomenon itself as it appears in consciousness. Unlike the abstractions made with empiricism and the modern scientific method, which move from the concrete to general laws of the world, Husserl believed phenomenology offered a rigorous return to a scientific understanding of the concrete. By bracketing our outer experiences of the world and returning to our inner life experiences, phenomenology presents an alternative, more primordial account of human knowledge and experience. In summary, phenomenology can be seen as Husserl's constructive proposal to overcome the metaphysical and epistemological critiques of empiricism.

Phenomenology, however, had its own dissenters. According to its critics, phenomenology's focus on the constituting act of consciousness remains abstract and theoretical, neglecting the concrete, practical, and axiological dimensions of human existence. The second issue may be called the problem of solipsism. The reduction to consciousness without a world suggests that concrete beings exists only insofar as it exists *for* consciousness. In other words, phenomenology leads to a self-enclosed condition that fails to account for the moral perception of the other.

Moral Perception: Perception of the Other

In this section, we will examine two distinct paradigms of moral perception proposed by Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) and Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005), French contemporaries and colleagues who belonged to the same generation, lived through the same historical events, drew upon the same philosophical sources and tradition. They belonged to a generation, which witnessed that as technological progress in modern society brought people closer together, it left them more distant and remote from each other. And even as they decried the malaise of anonymity that afflicted isolated individuals in modern mass society, they also witnessed and experienced invidious forms of social discrimination and political persecution. The Dreyfus affair that scandalized French society at the turn of the century remained part of his generation's cultural collective memory and they were both confined in a prisoner of war camp in Nazi-occupied France.

The issue of moral perception emerged as a pressing issue out of these historical forces, and Levinas found resources for formulating a philosophical response by drawing from the work of Husserl. When he entered the University of Strasbourg as a student, it was a time of much intellectual ferment, for the regnant dominance of empiricism as a methodological approach for the sciences was being called into question. Maurice Pradines, one of his university professors, later reflected on this period as one that constituted a "number of revolutions" from various disciplines over the very meaning and approach to the sciences. Levinas studied under a number of scholars who were probing into new methods for scientific research, most notably Edmund Husserl. He attended Husserl's lectures in Germany in 1928–1929, and he was seminal in introducing his work to the French intellectual context by translating them. His first major scholarly contribution, *Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, would become

among the first and most influential works dedicated to Husserl's thought. Levinas found Husserl's critique of empiricism to be so thorough and persuasive that he devoted sustained attention to it in this first work, but would dedicate the remainder of his life and career to understanding and critiquing Husserlian phenomenology.

From empiricism through phenomenology to Levinas's ethics, there is a progressive series of brackets that uncovers a deeper, more concrete, and more fundamental understanding of what it means to perceive. Phenomenology brackets empirical perception that simply observes cold hard facts in the world without any subjective interest or attachment. As we are more than simply spectators surveying or observing the world, phenomenology offers a return to an essential account of perception *within* consciousness. Levinas proceeds to go one step further by bracketing the phenomenological perception that describes phenomena as they appear within consciousness. As we are more than simply living within ourselves in solipsism as Husserl suggested, he describes an account of moral perception with the face of the other. Moral perception, in other words, is what it fundamentally means to perceive. To be human is not only to perceive empirical facts in the world; it is not only to perceive things as they appear to us; but it is most fundamentally to perceive the other with inestimable value. Levinas's ethics of alterity, on the one hand, recapitulates the fact-value distinction raised originally by Hume, yet he simultaneously breaks down that distinction by arguing that the immediate given is the other.

Levinas's account of moral perception is what he calls a "new sort of empiricism" that re-conceptualizes the meaning of sensation. It fulfills what the empiricists and phenomenologists had attempted, that is, to access the immediate and concrete. Sensation is neither the impression of objects on the minds of subjects as the empiricists had argued; nor is it implicated in the constitution of objects in the mind as Husserl suggested. Instead, sensation is radically passive, more passive than empirical sensation, as one is chosen and called to ethical responsibility by the other. At the same time, sensation is radically subjective, more subjective than phenomenology, because one is radically individuated and responsible to the other.

Through these successive brackets, there is a reduction that uncovers a fundamental account of moral perception. Beyond the empirical principles of nature that begin with our observations of facts within the world, beyond the phenomenological principle that begins with the constitution of objects within consciousness, there is an ethical principle that begins with the other. It is this radical encounter with the face of the other that indicates our deepest sense of self and our truest sense of what it means to perceive.

Moral Perception: Sympathy With the Other

Paul Ricoeur, Levinas's contemporary and colleague, provides an alternative account of moral perception, one that restores the self as the acting agent of moral perception. Like Levinas, Ricoeur played a critical role in introducing the work of Edmund Husserl to France by translating his works and by expositing his thought. Both Ricoeur and Levinas find that it is unclear how Husserl attaches value to the appearance of the other within consciousness. In other words, the other appears as a phenomenon within consciousness rather than as a person endowed with value, deserving respect.

Ricoeur turns to the work of German philosopher, Max Scheler (1874–1928), as a necessary corrective to Husserlian phenomenology. By drawing on Husserl, Scheler re-establishes the priority of the voluntary within concrete moral existence while, at the same time, acknowledging the involuntary constitutions of

human existence. For Scheler's ethics of sympathy is not grounded in the being or character of persons as such, but rather from the attitude of the spectator. While the other has a sphere of absolute difference which can never be given to us, we can have insight into others insofar as we treat their bodies as a field of expression for their experiences. Scheler develops a concept of sympathy (*Mitfuhlung*) that draws from Husserl's doctrine of intentionality; sympathy always directs feeling toward the other's joy or suffering. By restoring the centrality of consciousness within his account of moral perception, Scheler is careful to distinguish the voluntariness of sympathy from mere involuntary "emotional infection," for example when a child's infectious laughter and personality affects others or when a cheerful atmosphere in a pub may "infect" the newcomers and "sweep them up" into a mood of gaity. In these cases, there is neither an intentional direction of feeling towards the other's joy or suffering nor any participation in her experience. They just happen involuntarily and operate "unconsciously."

While Scheler retrieves Husserl's doctrine of intentionality for his account of sympathy, he also departs from him by distinguishing moral consciousness of others from consciousness of things. That is why sympathy (*Mitfuhlung*) in experiences of pity (*Mitleid*) and joy (*Mitfreud*) are always additional to the grasping of the other as an object or thing. While Scheler uncovers a specifically moral dimension to the consciousness of the other that Husserl's phenomenology overlooks, Ricoeur observes that Scheler does not explore and explain why he privileges sympathy among intersubjective sentiments. Scheler, in other words, focuses on the concept of sympathy and neglects moments of negativity in intersubjective life.

Ricoeur argues that a coherent phenomenology of sympathy presupposes an ethics of respect. Retrieving Kantian ethics, he argues that the other like myself becomes an absolute value, which in turn justifies and funds Schelerian sympathy. Sympathy is privileged over other intersubjective affections because it is based on an ethic of respect. It is by respect that we sympathize with the joy and suffering of the other as hers and not as mine. Without respect, phenomenology passes through the problem of the constitution of *things*, not *persons*. For Ricoeur, it is not a choice between respect as a formal principle and the material ethics of sympathy, but rather respect is *a priori* apprehension of the value of another as such.

Levinas and Ricoeur, then, provide contrasting positions on moral perception even as they are both trying to account for the difference between the manner in which a person announces herself and the manner in which a thing shows itself. Levinas extends Husserl's program of phenomenology as a rigorous science, uncovering the most fundamental principle, which begins not with *facts* within the world, not with *objects* within intentional consciousness, but which begins with the *other*. Ricoeur, on the other hand, pursues Husserl's phenomenology in beginning with his doctrine of intentional consciousness, but exposits a specifically moral consciousness of the other through Scheler's account of sympathy and Kant's ethics of respect. Despite their considerable differences, they were both attempting to preserve an account of moral perception over against the forces of anonymity and misperception that overshadowed their period.

Religious Formation of Moral Perception

Many Continental thinkers maintained a strict separation between their philosophical and religious thought such that their claims with respect to their phenomenology and ethics upheld an integrity independent of religious belief, authority, and tradition. They also acknowledge the distinct resources that their respective religious traditions bring to bear on their philosophies. The work of Emmanuel

Levinas is case in point. Levinas's critique of empiricism and phenomenology and his constructive account of moral perception was within the strict limits of pure philosophy. Yet, he employs religious terms within his philosophical writings that suggest his account of moral perception is formed by religious sources. This is unsurprising, for even as Levinas was trained and taught at French universities, he also maintained an abiding commitment to Jewish studies. He began working at L'Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) in 1930, a Jewish organization that was committed to promoting the "rights of man." From 1947 until 1980, he served as acting director of l'École Normale Israélite Orientale (ENIO), an organization that recruited and trained teachers to cultivate Jewish identity through the study of Talmudic texts in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Turkey, and Syria. Attention to his religious writings reveal the intersection and mutual relationship between philosophy and Judaism such that his account of moral perception is interpreted in specifically Jewish terms and that key doctrines within the Jewish tradition are interpreted in light of his philosophical account of moral perception.

Levinas's philosophical critique of the modern empirical sciences extends to his critique of the "science of Judaism" (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*). The science of Judaism transformed the study of Scripture in the nineteenth century through a rapprochement with modern methods of the sciences employed in sociology, history, and philology. Sacred texts became objects of historical, critical scholarship. By applying these methodological approaches to Jewish texts and history, the study of Judaism, so went the argument, would be properly elevated and esteemed to the status of a "modern science." The study of Judaism thereby shifted from Torah and Talmudic studies within the synagogue towards "academic Judaism" within a broader "scientific" study in the university.

According to Levinas, however, the study of Judaism, by employing modern scientific methods, abstracts from the true nature of living religion. While Lévinas does not discard wholesale the insights of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, he believes that its approach is not sufficient for the cultivation of Jewish life. To study Jewish texts with critical distance as historical artifacts relegates them to a distant past that has no import for present Jewish life. And the distinctiveness of Judaism was lost when its texts became treated merely as one object among many to be classified, compared, and measured against other objects of investigation.

Although Lévinas rejected premodern and modern formulations of the science of Judaism, he drew from their insights to offer a more adequate articulation of the proper nature and task of a science of Judaism. He preserves a premodern form of Judaism that valorizes its classical textual sources and tradition, while, at the same time, maintaining a modern form of Judaism that enlarges its relevance beyond a historical community. This paradoxical position is perhaps best captured in Lévinas's expression, "Jewish humanism." He tries to reconcile these two poles by integrating Jewish particularism with the new insights of a general phenomenological method. At this intersection, Jewish doctrines of election, suffering, and prophetic exile, found in textual sources and interpreted throughout history, infuse his account of moral perception.

In Lévinas's new science of Judaism, the doctrine of election becomes thematized within his description of ethico-religious experience. Moral perception involves a religious dimension because the wholly Other or God elects or chooses us in a call to responsibility. Lévinas draws from the textual sources and traditions of Judaism not only to re-interpret the Jewish doctrine of election within the horizon of phenomenology, but also to re-interpret the moral perception of the other in specifically Jewish terms. The figure of the ethico-religious Jew gains privileged access to and is elected by the Other by undergoing suffering and persecution. The suffering of Israel throughout its history thereby becomes interpreted as a moral and religious category within Lévinas's phenomenological analysis of human experience. On the

one hand, the radical distance of the wholly Other becomes more proximate through moments of suffering and persecution, and it is the religious Jew who Lévinas suggests has such privileged access. At the same time, the feeling of being chosen or elected within the phenomenological analysis of moral encounter and responsibility implies a radical passivity, to the point of persecution and suffering. The primordiality of sensation and passivity within Lévinas's philosophy then becomes re-interpreted against the backdrop of Jewish persecution and suffering, and conversely, Jewish persecution throughout history shapes his phenomenological description of moral perception. If the themes of election and suffering re-describe Jewish texts and history within a phenomenological experience, this comes to a head in configuring Jewish identity in terms of prophecy. Lévinas uncovered an ethical dimension of human life that bracketed the "world." His Jewish writings, in a parallel fashion, reduce the essence of Judaism to an ethico-religious encounter with the other such that the Jew lives outside of the world. The primordial dimension of ethical responsibility that brackets the world becomes reinterpreted within Jewish prophecy, and likewise, Jewish prophetic tradition is renewed by integrating its themes within phenomenological analysis.

While retrieving Jewish textual sources and historical experience, he reconfigured deeply ingrained categories and concepts, such as election, persecution, and prophecy, within a re-description and analysis of moral perception. Lévinas's new science of Judaism uncovered a concrete, ethical dimension that cultivated the perception of God and the other. The new science of Judaism sought to revive and renew Jewish life and identity in the postwar period by integrating the insights and overcoming the oversights of both premodern and modern forms. He retrieved classical textual sources that modern Judaism neglected while at the same time broadening its relevance beyond a historical community by employing a general phenomenology. While drawing from Jewish textual sources and tradition, he reconfigured specifically Jewish categories and concepts within an account of moral perception. Conversely, what appears as Lévinas's pure phenomenology within his philosophical writings is reinterpreted into Jewish categories and concepts within his Jewish writings. Philosophical concepts and themes, such as the passivity of sensation, individuation in the call to responsibility, and the primordiality of ethics that brackets politics and history are interpreted anew within Jewish notions of suffering and persecution, election and prophecy. In short, Levinas broadens the science of Judaism by moving beyond the boundedness of a historical community, uncovering an ethical and religious dimension that is accessible universally, even as the figure of the Jew holds privileged access to this phenomenon.

Levinas is an excellent example of a contemporary Continental thinker who brought religious sources and beliefs to bear on their philosophy. Ricoeur, to take another example, drew on Protestant theologians, such as Karl Barth, Ruldolf Bultmann, and Gerhard Ebeling to develop a Christian hermeneutics in parallel to his philosophical hermeneutics. Jean Luc-Marion and Michel Henry develop philosophical concepts, such as givenness and the body, in parallel to Catholic reflections on revelation and incarnation. All these thinkers endeavored to develop a pure, rigorous philosophy and yet, in their own ways, indicated how empirical religious sources and traditions can shape our perceptions of the world, of ourselves and of others.

Conclusion

By examining different understandings of perception – the empirical perception of the world, the phenomenological perception within consciousness, and the moral perception of the other – it also disclosed different understandings of the self. The deepest and truest sense of our self is not when we are

spectators, observing facts in the world, nor when we are participants, perceiving within our consciousness, but when we are ethically responsible, perceiving the face of the other. While Levinas describes this experience within his pure philosophy, there are resources within religion that shape and provide distinct access to it. In the aftermath of World War II, Levinas argued that Judaism brought distinct resources to bear for a shattered world. It would inject received history and culture with new possibility and thereby serve as a model for a world that had lost its moral compass and needed resources around which it could orient itself once again.

CHAPTER 18

Love and Compassion

Lisa Sowle Cahill

Most religious traditions value the dispositions of love and compassion and encourage members to embody them practically, even when competing teachings, narratives, or historical practices in the same tradition permit or approve violence. Perspectives on formation for love and compassion vary by culture and religion; the base point of this entry is Christianity, but illustrative connections will be made to other traditions. All four New Testament gospels portray Jesus as teaching love of God and neighbor, compassion for the poor and marginalized, and even love and self-sacrifice for enemies. Judaism teaches that one must not only obey the law but also imitate God's compassion toward other human beings. Hinduism considers compassion *(Karuna)*, incarnated in Lord Shiva, as a cardinal virtue. In Buddhism, *Karuna* refers to the strong desire to end the suffering of other sentient beings. The holy book of Islam, the Qur'an, names Allah as the one who is compassionate and merciful (Balslev and Evers 2010; McFarlane 1996). While valuing love and compassion, religious traditions prioritize them differently in relation to other character traits, and most limit their scope or application by differentiating between worthy and unworthy recipients.

Means of formation are both personal and social. They include appeals to individual conversion and desire, as well as engagement in community narratives and practices embodying love and compassion (e.g. religious rituals, communal patterns of moral behavior, and the emulation of role models). Some areas of critical debate regarding moral formation for love and compassion include: defining love and compassion; the interdependence of the emotions and moral reason in constituting moral character; the role of communities in teaching love and compassion; and the conditioning of moral agency by historical, genetic, or other biological factors.

What Are Love and Compassion?

While love is ordinarily understood as an intense feeling of deep personal affection and attachment, compassion is the ability to enter affectively into the experience of another, accompanied by the desire to relieve their suffering. More basic than either of these is empathy, the vicarious experience of the feelings or thoughts of another. The formation of loving and compassionate moral character is dependent on the capacity for empathy. Different from but related to all these is altruism, acting for the good of the other with no expectation of reciprocity or benefit. Many religious traditions idealize altruistic compassion, and praise those who sacrifice their own welfare for the good of others. Jesus Christ, whom the gospels

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

portray as sacrificing his life for the salvation of humanity, is a model for Christians. In Judaism, the Talmud and the rabbis commend a duty of self-sacrifice to meet the needs of the neighbor, though this duty does not override that of self-preservation. In the Buddhist *Jataka*, tales of a monkey and a hare who sacrifice their own lives to serve or rescue others idealize compassion as involving extreme altruism.

Christianity, originally a first-century Jewish reform movement, arose within the wider cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. Their influence is partly responsible for an ongoing Christian debate about whether acting with love and compassion fulfills and brings genuine human happiness, or requires extreme altruistic self-sacrifice. The classic philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Cicero) saw moral virtue as requiring control of the passions by reason, sought moderation in judgment and action, and believed that human happiness (*eudaimonia*) resides ultimately in true virtue. In the fourth century, Augustine of Hippo offered a Christian version of this eudaimonistic framework, proposing that a rightly ordered, virtuous and happy life is one in which all other goods are loved in relation to love of God (Augustine 1948). In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas (informed by the thought of Aristotle) agreed that the virtuous life is the happy life, adding that love of God as the supreme good requires the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) that unite the believer to God in personal friendship (Aquinas 1948, II–II.Q 62). Thus both Augustine and Aquinas envision that true Christian virtue – love of God and neighbor – leads to happiness (*eudaimonia*).

Yet from the earliest years of Christianity, Jesus Christ's voluntary and sacrificial death on a cross has contested the idea that to be virtuous is to be happy. Instead, some theologians argue, Christian virtue deeply contradicts earthly human happiness. Christian love entails the suffering and even death of the self in obedience to God's commands and in emulation of Christ. The New Testament Greek word for Christian love is *agape* – a term virtually synonymous with self-sacrificial love, extreme self-denial, and other-centered altruism. In the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformer John Calvin wrote that "the sum of the Christian life" is "the denial of ourselves" (Calvin, 1960, Book III.7). The early twentieth century Swedish theologian, Anders Nygren, wrote an influential book, *Eros and Agape*, contrasting the Greek idea of desire-fulfilling love (*eros*) with Christian *agape* (Nygren 1982).

One way to resolve the debate between Christian *eudaimonism* and "divine command" or duty-based ethics is suggested by Jesus's paradoxical saying, "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25). A traditional interpretation is that disciples who renounce happiness or even life itself will be rewarded with eternal life. Another interpretation brings *eudaimonism* and self-sacrifice closer together in temporal experience. Those who focus their moral choices on their own happiness will not ultimately find it; but those who live by Jesus's command to love God and neighbor will discover that the meaning of life (and happiness) lies in compassion, love, and striving to alleviate human suffering. Moreover, adherence to Jesus's example brings union with God that is joyous and rewarding.

The debate about whether the religious virtue of love fulfills human nature or requires a sacrifice of the agent's own happiness, is highly significant for the question of moral formation. If religiously inspired love fundamentally contradicts (selfish and sinful) human nature, and does not bring temporal happiness, then moral formation must teach asceticism, self-denial, and submission of one's own will to that of God. The death of Jesus on the cross is the central formative image for Christians, supported by biblical depictions of everlasting reward for other-directed service and punishment for pride and selfishness (the parable of judgment in Matthew 25, for example). Traditions of religious asceticism illustrate formative practices. More important than compassion are humility, self-discipline, courage, and fortitude.

If, on the other hand, Christian virtue is the path to profound and genuine happiness, then moral formation teaches believers to recognize true happiness and embrace empathy and compassion. Serving those in need brings psychological, spiritual, and relational rewards, despite sacrifices. Here an empathetic disposition to respond compassionately to the needs of others is more important than self-denial. Formative narratives would include the complementary parables of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 27–37) and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). In the former, a traveler rescues an injured robbery victim, providing care at his own expense. In the latter, a father joyfully welcomes his wayward son and celebrates with resources added to those the son has already squandered. Formative practices include religiously-inspired service, or outreach activities that build on human dignity and fellow-humanity, and increase relationship and understanding.

Reason, Emotions, and Moral Formation

Like the classical philosophers, Christian theologians have tended to see the passions and emotions as negative influences in the moral life, especially since the Enlightenment with its priority on reason. Since the Enlightenment, Christian theologians and ethicists have especially prioritized reason's ability to know, analyze, negotiate, and control moral situations. Moreover, empathy and compassion alone cannot choose between conflicting duties or needs of persons. Therefore, moral formation must emphasize ethical understanding, analysis, and reason-giving in favor of moral attitudes and actions.

Yet knowledge of right and wrong does not always produce the right actions or patterns of social behavior. In fact, as the term "rationalization" indicates, the desire for an outcome often conscripts reason in its service, rather than the other way around. Therefore moral formation must involve more than education in moral theory or analysis, and more than knowledge of moral rules. Formation must teach believers to desire the good wholeheartedly. Moral formation of the passions, emotions, desires, or "affections" has a history in Christianity tracing back to the Bible. Jesus's characteristic mode of teaching is parables: short narratives or scenarios with a surprising twist, reversing hearers' expectations, and imagining new possibilities of love and compassion. For example, the Good Samaritan belongs to a religious group on bad terms with Jews. Yet he stops to save a Jew left for dead by robbers, although two Jewish officials (a priest and Levite) have already passed him by (Luke 10:27–37). Gospel narratives about Jesus's forgiveness of sins, healing of the afflicted, acceptance of the outcast, and passion and death likewise awaken commitment and motivation to "go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

Virtually every major religious tradition embodies moral ideals in narratives, often centered on morally exemplary individuals, that are intended to shape the worldviews of adherents and produce commitment to analogous action. Buddhism honors Prince Siddhartha (to become the Buddha), who as a young man was moved by the sight of human suffering to adopt an ascetic path to enlightenment, and to teach compassion. Muslims recount that Muhammed illustrated compassion with a story in which a man with empathy for a desperately thirsty dog went down into a well to fetch water for him in one of his leather socks, and carried it up in his teeth. African traditional religions and moral cultures use maxims to elicit affective identification with the needs of others. The Akan of Ghana say "The right arm washes the left arm and the left arm washes the right arm," "Life is mutual aid," and "Your neighbor's situation is [potentially] your situation" (Gyekye, 2011). Imaginative illustrations of compassion, not abstract principles, have carried this ideal across multiple religious traditions over generations and inspired the moral passion behind it (Gill 2017, 187).

Among Christian theologians, Jonathan Edwards gives moral emotions or affections an unusually central place. Attraction to biblical love and compassion because of the beauty of the good is the key to virtue for Edwards, and virtue in turn beautifies the agent (Wilson and Porter 2003). In Christian tradition, the theologian *par excellence* of an ethics of reason is Thomas Aquinas, who grounds responsible moral action in "right practical reason," formed by the virtue of prudence (Aquinas 1948, II–II. Q 47). Right reason chooses the highest good in the hierarchy of goods at stake in any situation of choice. Diana Fritz Cates argues that despite privileging reason, Aquinas has an important place for the passions or emotions, as interdependent with moral reason (Cates 2009). Emotional attraction (or aversion) affects the way we reason, and whether we put what we know to be right into practice. In fact, we should cultivate our own emotions, so we are more likely to feel empathy and compassion, or a passion for justice.

A closely related topic is the value of an aesthetic approach to moral formation. The role of aesthetics in religious formation is to communicate the beauty and attractiveness of a relationship to God that includes compassion and love for fellow humanity. The inherent attractiveness and compelling nature of altruistic compassion is one of the main lessons of the narratives and maxims above. Religions have distinctive traditions in the visual arts, music, poetry, ritual, dance, and architecture that convey the beauty of a loving relationship to God and others, engaging emotional and imaginative capacities in commitment to a renewed way of life.

In 1965, the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church proclaimed that cultivation of the arts "can elevate the human family to a more sublime understanding of truth, goodness and beauty, and in the formation of judgments which embody universal values" (Second Vatican Council 1965, no. 57). The African-American theologian James Cone finds beauty in Christ's cross insofar as it stands for justice against manifest injustice, such as black people who suffered on "the lynching tree." Cone lifts up slave spirituals and the blues as musical embodiments of the connection of aesthetics to justice, and as invitations to empathy and to compassionate resistance (Cone 2011). John Paul Lederach shows how artistic expression and communication have inspired and empowered peacebuilders in violent conflict zones around the world (Lederach 2005).

Communities of Moral Formation

Moral formation is centered on individual character and virtue, but individual formation requires and assumes communal histories, traditions, narratives and practices (even though these are not stable but contested and renegotiated over time). Even when a religious tradition's formative practices are centered on instruction by a spiritual master, that individual transmits to the devotee a religious heritage that is crystalized in teachings and devotional practices. Members of religious communities are formed in worldviews that, for example, either depict outsiders as enemies, or foster the practice of hospitality. Many religious traditions have encouraged militaristic and xenophobic attitudes that validate cultural-political programs of conquest. Many, if not most, religious traditions incorporate status hierarchies that inhibit or limit love and compassion for all. Yet most religious traditions also honor and teach compassion-inspiring practices of generosity and service that inculcate dispositions like empathy and love.

One example is the Christian tradition of spiritual and corporal "works of mercy." The spiritual works are to instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, comfort the afflicted, admonish the sinner, forgive offenses, bear wrongs patiently, and pray for the living and the dead. While several of these can be seen

as expressions of love and compassion, the corporal works of mercy are more clearly ethical, justice-related practices. They are to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. These can be translated into contemporary works like reducing global poverty and hunger, alleviating homelessness, accommodating immigrants and refugees, campaigning for prison reform, and remedying the global "diseases of the poor" (malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS). The works of mercy are encouraged by the liturgy of the Eucharist and its repeated reminders that all are in need of divine mercy and called to show mercy to others (Keenan 2008). Christian communal formation for love and compassion need not always be asymmetrically other-directed. Oppressed and disenfranchised communities will rightly build up mutual solidarity, love, and compassion, while not excluding care for those who suffer beyond community boundaries.

Determinants of and Constraints on Moral Agency

The foregoing discussion of communities and moral formation shows why moral agency and freedom are always conditioned by social norms and expectations. This does not mean moral freedom is nonexistent, or people are unable to critique their cultures. This is why slaves were able to see through "biblical" justifications of their condition and embrace a different version of Christianity in which Christ on the Cross was suffering with them. It is why many white people were persuaded by the prophetic example of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. Yet it is more difficult to resist injustice if it is part of one's cultural worldview, practices, and institutions; and easier to do so if one is embedded in narratives and ways of life that continually remind one of the priority of love, compassion, equality, and altruism.

A newer line of inquiry concerns biogenetic determinants of moral agency. A first (and not so new) issue is the connection of moral agency to gender. Patriarchal gender hierarchies are almost a cross-cultural universal, and many cultural and religious traditions validate gender differences by saying they are "natural" or "God-given," and by forming boys and girls, men and women, to conform to norms of "masculine" and "feminine" behavior. Women are seen as "naturally" destined for motherhood and domesticity, and as less logical and rational than men; girls are formed to embrace a nurturing, sacrificial, and submissive role in family and society. Love and compassion are key feminine virtues in this view. Men, on the other hand, are presumed to be generally aggressive and adventurous, as well as rational and objective. Boys are formed to take leadership positions, to provide material resources for their families, to be interested in sexual conquest over parental nurturing, and to exercise authority over women and children. Boys and men are also expected to bond together and fight off outsiders and competitors. Love and compassion are at least atypical for men in this view, and at worst "feminizing" and unmanly.

It is difficult for empirical studies to either confirm or disconfirm whether there are any natural or biological bases of such expectations, since research subjects will already have been products of some socialization. That being said, most research to date does not confirm highly differentiated, binary, or rigid gender characteristics or moral predispositions that are the natural correlates of biological sex. Further complicating any defense of gender dualism is the reality that some intersex and transgender persons are not clearly either male or female; and many experience as "natural" some gender characteristics that do not correspond to the norms associated with their assigned biological sex.

However, there is some evidence (not definitive) that in general males tend to be more aggressive and competitive, to have a stronger sex drive than women, and to have greater visual–spatial skills; while

women have greater verbal ability and emotional intelligence than men, and more interest in ongoing relational ties. (Neither sex takes the lead in intelligence or innate mathematical ability.) Sociobiology and evolutionary psychology suggest that such traits may have arisen through "natural selection" due to their evolutionary value to the survival of the human species and its near relatives. However, such traits undoubtedly are reinforced socially, so that the relative influence of "nature" and "nurture" is unclear; moreover, individuals vary greatly in whether they possess these traits or to what degree. To the extent that they exist, sex-based gender traits do not mean that human beings are morally captive to their sex drives, aggressive impulses, emotions, or "maternal instincts." Rather, moral formation for love and compassion must take into consideration factors such as aggression and competitiveness, proneness to sexual infidelity, skill at emotional manipulation, or the tendency to conscript resources for one's own young exclusively, whether they occur in a man or a woman in any particular instance.

A related line of inquiry concerns morally significant behavioral tendencies that can be correlated with individual neurological or genetic traits. For example, some researchers have hypothesized that males who have an extra Y chromosome (XYY), or abnormal versions of the MAOA gene located on the X chromosome, are more prone to aggressive and criminal behavior. A greater proportion of affected individuals exists in populations of men convicted of violent crimes than in the general population. Yet it is highly unlikely that genes by themselves can code for violence or crime (or, conversely, dispose to compassion and love). Rather, they are risk factors when combined with other causes of stress, such as abusive family situations, low peer acceptance, or academic failure. Key to moral formation are early intervention, and positive incorporation into relationships and communities embodying self-control, empathy, compassion and love, expressed at the practical moral level as service and other pro-social activities.

Beyond gene-specific conditions, neurological and genetic factors may be involved in diagnosable mental disorders such as depression, schizophrenia, bi-polar disease, autism-spectrum disorders, anxiety, and paranoia that can interfere with moral self-determination and relational ability, especially with empathy, love, and compassion. Even within "normal" psychological parameters, individuals have differing inclinations to poor impulse control, outbursts of anger, spontaneous anti-social ideation (e.g. regarding sex or violence), anxiety, or lack of confidence in one's own agency. Formation for love and compassion must be sensitive to the differing capacities and obstacles of individual agents. Mentors, educators, and formative communities should respond with understanding, encouragement, and nuanced approaches. Moral freedom and the ability of individuals to be accountable, to assume moral responsibility, and to live up to the ideals of love, compassion, and justice – with the aid of a supportive narrative and community – are, and must remain, the sine qua non of moral formation.

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CHAPTER 19

Practical Reasoning and Moral Casuistry

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Practical reasoning is a phrase used in Western moral philosophy to designate the intellectual process whereby an agent deliberates and decides about a particular course of action. Since moral decision and action is formulated in the light of some sort of general principles, applicable to all similarly situated agents, particular agents must determine how those general principles apply to the specific situation in which they will act. The logic of practical reasoning has been a topic of interest since Aristotle delineated his views in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, pointing out how deliberation and decision about practice differs from speculative or scientific reasoning (1994, III, iii). Modern philosophers have studied how reasons serve to explain, evaluate, and justify intentional decisions and have analyzed the forms of inference involved in statements containing such words as "ought," "should," etc. (Audi 1989; Gauthier 1963; Raz 1978). Since real moral agents decide and act in relation to specific, attainable ends and in the context of concrete circumstances, practical reasoning can be said to be about "cases," that is, "instances" (in Latin, *casus*), in which the particular agent's specific purposes and motives, as well as the extant circumstances of time, place, probability, and possibility, etc., can be described. Thus, the term "casuistry," although it has a more particular meaning to be noted below, may be used as somewhat synonymous with practical reasoning, and will so be used in this chapter about practical reasoning in religious ethics.

While diverse manners of practical reasoning appear in different traditions and cultures, this entry will attend particularly to the forms of casuistic reasoning that have a prominent place in the ethical traditions of three historic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This review of the casuistic traditions aims at a general account of casuistic reasoning, with recognition of some problems inherent in this form of practical reasoning.

Textual Sources for Casuistry

Judaism finds the source of divine revelation in the five books of the Law given by Yahweh to Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, called collectively the Torah. Christianity accepts the same five books, together with another 34 books of the Hebrew scriptures, called collectively the Old Testament, and the four gospels and 23 other writings, called the New Testament. Muḥammed designated Jews and Christians as "People of the Book," meaning that they had received a divine revelation contained in the written words of an inspired text, the Bible. Islam also has its Book, the

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Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Qur'an, in which Allāh conveys to humankind a vision of the meaning of life and commands about how to live it.

Thus, in each of these historic faiths, a written text incorporates the fundamentals of belief, not in abstract terms, but in the specific communications of the Lord, Creator, and Redeemer. The form of that communication, in each of the holy books, is varied: stories about divine creation and providence, poetry about divine mercy and justice, and extensive rules about worship and about the behavior of believers in every aspect of their lives.

The faithful, who are guided by the sacred texts, also live in times and societies not exactly like those in which the divine words were spoken to the inspired scribes. Thus, while the commands are clearly in universal form and are intended to bind the faithful through all time, the differences in cultural, social, and linguistic settings of the faithful through history, require additional interpretation, beyond the casuistry found within the text itself. Further, there is the theological question about inspired scripture itself: Does it represent the literal words of the divine source or does the human intermediary necessarily introduce the human elements of fallibility or cultural relativity and, if so, to what extent? Faced with these questions, each of the three faiths, through their long history, developed institutions for interpretation and commentary on the originating texts. Over many centuries, theological, moral, and legal commentary accumulated into elaborate systems of scholarly theory and method and of rules and opinions taught to the faithful.

Jewish Casuistry

Judaism reveres Torah as the primary source of revelation. These books contain not only the Decalogue but also, according to Jewish tradition, another 613 commandments applicable to Jewish life. A scholarly class, the rabbis, reflected on every word of those books to reveal their deepest meaning and their relevance for observant Jews. Schools of interpretation, with differing emphases but a common purpose of elucidating the sacred text, grew up in Palestine, Babylon, and the Diaspora; the vast literary collection of their reflections constitute Talmud. The Talmudic literature, incorporating the commentary of a multitude of rabbis over many centuries, becomes the major secondary source of Jewish Law. Codes, composed for the most part during the Middle Ages, systematize the multifarious reflections of the rabbis. In general, the sum of Torah, Talmud, and Mishnaic commentaries and Codes make up Halakhah, the law of Jewish life, in its ritual and moral dimensions. However, all these sources are themselves written works, in need of continual interpretation for current times and problems. Rabbinic activity includes a dynamic process: responses to particular questions posed by the observant Jew facing a situation in which some aspect of the tradition seems challenged by previously unfamiliar circumstances. These responses, called Teshuva, (often given the Latin name *Responsa*), are directed to the immediate question but reflect the entire tradition and become part of the tradition (Freehof 1955).

The responding rabbi (or rabbinical council) first examines the texts of Torah and of Talmudic and Mishnaic commentary and the Codes for the most relevant guidance, notes any contradictions or obscurity in these sources, then attempts to reconcile these difficulties in order to find a way toward a resolution appropriate to the immediate case. In the most orthodox view, rabbinic resolution is more than advice; it binds the conscience of the questioner. These responses, which are given in the course of daily life, are often private but are sometimes recorded and collected, particularly if they issue from a rabbi of renowned piety and scholarship. The responses then enter the stream of interpretation of the Law and are used by subsequent rabbis as sources of wisdom. Among the vast number of known Teshuva

(estimated at around 250,000 dating from several centuries before the Common Era), a recent collection is most poignant and revealing of rabbinic method and wisdom: responses issued during the Holocaust to Jewish questioners under the most extreme circumstances. One eloquent and heartrending response, issued by the Chief Rabbi in the Warsaw ghetto, considers whether an infant's crying might be stifled as Nazi stormtroopers hunted for hidden Jews, even if the stifling might smother the child. The rabbi answers in a long, scholarly review of the tradition about endangering life, which is almost uncompromising about protecting life, yet he comes to the conclusion that, although the child might not be killed, its life might be endangered to save the hidden Jews, for its own life would certainly be extinguished if the parents were discovered. This casuistry manifests how a tradition with the highest respect for the preservation of life might find grounds for an exception (Kirschner 1985).

Christian Casuistry

Christianity accepts the same first five books of the Hebrew Bible. At the same time, the moral imperatives of Jesus announced in the gospels and the teachings of the first disciples reported in the rest of the New Testament, provide extensive teachings about the moral life, many of which, in Christian eyes, surpassed the Jewish Law in rigor and in sublimity. Early Christians endeavored to put into practice some of the "hard teachings" of Jesus, such as the imperative to leave father and mother to follow him, to turn the other cheek and put up the sword when attacked, and to refrain from marriage, and were forced to interpret these commands within the demands of daily life. In the early church, distinctions between counsels of perfection, as enunciated in the words of Jesus, and moral imperatives, stated in the Decalogue, marked the beginnings of casuistry. Clement, Bishop of Alexandria, for example, wrote extensive treatises to advise his Christian flock about how to live in the pagan surroundings of that great metropolis. When the church was officially recognized within the empire, the strict pacifism that appeared to be the teaching of Jesus had to accommodate the needs of civil defense. Christians served as soldiers and could not be simply told to put up the sword. St. Augustine, formulating the theology of church and state, initiated a casuistry of "just war," an idea already adumbrated in Roman authors, such as Cicero, in which the conditions of legitimate self-defense of person and nation allowed Christians to shed blood. A large casuistry developed around these questions (Kelsay and Johnson 1991).

A practice of confession of sins by a believer to a priest appeared in the late middle ages. Practiced in different ways in different churches, the church in the British Isles, particularly in Ireland, imposed on the faithful a particularly demanding regimen. Moral offenses were catalogued in detail and penances for each specified in books entitled Penitentials. Despite the detail, priests had to consider the grounds for excuse or mitigation and so a rudimentary casuistry developed that was carried by monks from Ireland onto the Continent. Toward the end of the eleventh century, there appeared a movement to organize church law and practice, which had developed largely out of the decrees of local bishops and regional counsels. Collections of these "canons," or rules, were made, inspired by the desire to order and reconcile them. As canonists, the lawyers of the church, performed these tasks; they encountered the many cases that had given rise, over time, to the decrees they were reconciling and, in so doing, formulated certain rules for the interpretation of cases. In 1215 a major church council, Lateran IV, promoted the practice of personal, private confession to a central place in Christian life, requiring all Christians to confess to a priest at least once a year. In the wake of this decree, the need arose to educate clergy

throughout Europe about how to judge the seriousness of the sins confessed to them and to make discretionary decisions about penance and absolution. Much more sophisticated Penitentials were produced, often by the theological scholars of the new universities, in which the nature of virtues and vices was analyzed and the circumstances that rendered them more or less serious, that is, as mortal or venial sins, were explained, usually under the general heading of the Ten Commandments. These explanations were illustrated by "for examples," that is, "cases." These cases were sometimes reports of actual ones familiar to confessors or were fictitious ones used for didactic purposes.

The work of canonists and theologians drew on several sources. They not only referenced the precepts of the Bible, the comments of the Fathers, and the decrees of councils. They also utilized the rational techniques of scholastic thought, inspired by the Aristotelian renaissance in the thirteenth century. Also, a theory of natural law, inspired by Roman law and Ciceronian and Stoic philosophy, provided a conceptual framework for ethics which was not dependant on revelation. Christian casuistry, unlike Talmudic or Islamic, could proceed with wide ranging exploration of rational ethics and only peripheral references to revealed sources.

In the sixteenth century, casuistry emerged as a special branch of moral theology and a multitude of books, analyzing every conceivable moral act, appeared. The authors of these books were frequently members of the newly founded Jesuit order, whose interest in the education of young Catholics and in the ministry of the confessional made them the casuists *par excellence*. In 1656 the mathematical genius Blaise Pascal published *The Provincial Letters*, a scathing criticism of Jesuit casuistry in which he claimed that the techniques of rational analysis had been carried to extremes, justifying by clever reasoning the most outrageous violations of Christian morals and submerging the gospel message under sophistry. His criticism gave casuistry a bad reputation for centuries, and ascribed to the word "casuistry" an almost entirely pejorative meaning – a cynical, sophistic, deceptive distortion of moral rules in order to avoid obeying them through specious rationalization (Pascal 1967; Jonsen 1993). Despite Pascal's criticism and the temptation to abuse, a sound, serious practice of casuistry continued within the Catholic and Anglican, and to some extent, Lutheran and Calvinist, churches (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988; Mahoney 1987; Keenan and Shannon 1995).

During and after the Reformation, casuistry also came in for severe criticism from the Protestant reformers. As Protestantism developed, the formal techniques of casuistry withered, although all moral judgment required some sort of practical reasoning. In Anglicanism alone, a vigorous scholarly casuistry prevailed, closely resembling Roman Catholic casuistry, although notably more liberated from hierarchical doctrine (Kirk 1999).

Islamic Casuistry

Islam holds the Qur'an to have been dictated to Mohammed by Allāh and to contain the substance of divine prescriptions for life. In addition, the Ḥadīth, or traditions ascribing certain words and practices to the Prophet, and to his first companions, was also held in high esteem as a guide to the moral life. Islam, within the first century of its existence, became sovereign over a wide region of the Near East and North Africa. Its military and political dominance prevailed over Persian, Syrian, Byzantine, and Hellenistic states where substantial systems of law and moral custom already existed. Islamic rulers desired to bring those legal and customary systems into some conformity with the divine law expressed

in Qur'ān. Early in Islamic history, then, judges (*quadis*) were appointed not simply to decide cases but to reinterpret them in light of Qur'an and Ḥadīth, and out of these judicial activities arose Sharī'a, the law of Islam which contained both legal norms for social life and ethical norms for personal behavior, which were not sharply distinguished: all life for the believer, as well as all rules for the state, were included in Sharī'a. The task of interpreting Sharī'a, the jurisprudence and ethics of Islam, is called *Ficq* (Schacht 1964; Hourani 1971).

The daily life of the faithful encounters difficulties with the familiar norms of Sharī'a and those who wish to fulfill the law are encouraged to seek the opinion of scholars of Ficq. These scholars, *mufti*, devote themselves to the study of Qur'an, Ḥadīth, and the traditions of interpretation. Organized in many schools of thought over centuries, these divided into traditionalists and rationalists: the former adhere closely to text and traditions, the latter allow the use of logic and rational methods, derived, as in medieval Christianity, from Aristotelian thought, to guide interpretation. Unlike Christian thinkers, Islamic scholars, even the rationalists, did not develop a formal theory of natural law ethics, although they left a large place for customary moral practices in their interpretation of Sharī'a. The mufti, either as individual scholars or in schools, consider cases submitted to them, formulate their opinion, *Ra'y*, and issue advice, called *Fatwā*, about behavior that would most closely conform to Sharī'a. The format of a Fatwā resembles the format of the Jewish Teshuva: reference to relevant scriptural texts, examination of scholarly opinion, rational efforts to interpret and reconcile opinions, allusion to analogies and formulation of advice. Fatwā can address political or personal problems. The consensus or agreement of the scholars, in a particular place or of a particular school or in all of the lands of Islam, provides an important criterion for the reliability of opinion. In the latter centuries of the Ottoman empire a bureaucracy was established, headed by a Grand Mufti of Istanbul, devoted entirely to the preparation of Fatwā for the guidance of government and of individual behavior.

Among the earliest and most fundamental moves of Islamic casuistry is the distinction of all moral law into five categories: obligatory, recommended, permitted, disapproved, and forbidden (there is debate about whether any acts are neutral). Working within these categories, mufti can draw careful distinctions about how stringently laws bind the believer. Thus, the ominous words of Qur'ān, "Fight in the cause of Allāh those who fight you ... and slay them wherever you catch them" (S. 2, 190) can be interpreted as permissive, not obligatory, and it can be recommended that women, children, old men, and other non-combatants can be left unmolested. The words "those who fight you" can be interpreted to exclude these parties but if they, although non-combatants, give aid to the enemies of Allāh, it is permitted, perhaps obligatory, to execute them. It is disapproved to slay any conquered person who may be of use to Islam and it is forbidden to slay those who convert to Islam. Principles of mercy and moderation temper literal fulfillment of the law in the light of circumstances (Khadduri 1955).

Casuistic Method

The casuistries of these three faiths, while different in content and inspiration, are remarkably similar in their fundamental methodology. Crucial to each form of casuistry is the move between revealed text or universal ethical principle and the particular decision. The revealed text itself is rarely specific enough to meet the perplexity of the presented case and the texts themselves often seem to the uninitiated rather peripheral to the problem. For example, a text of the Book of Leviticus (19:16), "thou shalt not stand by

the blood of your neighbor," serves as the starting point for a rich Talmudic casuistry about the duty to heal the sick. These words are certainly not an explicit command to heal, but one of the greatest Talmudists, Moses Maimonides (also a physician), reads them to say that anyone capable of rescuing another from drowning, from marauders, or from attacking beasts, who fails to do so, transgresses this command (Maimonides, *Hilkhot* 1.14). Maimonides clearly goes beyond the words of the text to what he considers its meaning. Modern Jewish bioethicists still reflect on cases of withholding technological life-support in the light of this text and its interpretations over time. Drawing any text close to an actual case demands both reverence for the text as well as intellectual ingenuity. It is this intellectual ingenuity that forms the heart of any casuistry.

However, intellectual ingenuity may also challenge reverence for the text or the principle. The human intellect is capable not only of reasoning but also of rationalization: thus, scholars may utilize the techniques of reasoning, such as definition of terms, distinction and division of concepts and the subtle, often fallacious, steps of logic to reach any conclusion dictated by their preferences. Religious casuistry attempts to reign in the unfettered use of rational techniques by embedding the reasoning within the tradition of scholarship. Many casuists have considered similar cases and frequently come up with similar conclusions, sometimes even by different routes of reasoning. Their opinions are to be respected and the divergent opinions that may also appear are to be carefully analyzed, in order to discern the grounds for the differences and to reconcile them, insofar as possible. If reconciliation is not possible and a genuine difference of defensible opinion remains, the questioner is free to act in accord with various opinions. Here the reputation of the competing casuists and the reasonableness of the various opinions must be weighed. In each casuistic tradition, rules for this weighing of opinion are devised.

Reference to the tradition of scholarly casuists involves reference to the cases that those scholarly predecessors and contemporaries have decided. The cases are, as noted above, "similar" to the instant case and their conclusions are "similar." Again, the casuistries of the three faiths utilize reasoning by analogy as an indispensable technique. Reasoning by analogy involves identification of a case that seems similar to the present case and then carefully distinguishing the precise ways in which the present case resembles the former one, in expectation of finding some feature that allows the casuist to claim that this previously decided case is similar enough to the present case that the prior decision, or consensus of decisions, should be taken as the key to the resolution of the present case. It is, however, only the key, for the circumstances of the present case are likely to differ from the former one, or the circumstances of the former one might be too sketchily described to allow direct comparison. Thus, the importance of the circumstances must be carefully specified and their bearing on diverse resolutions evaluated.

These are central activities of casuistry: use of analogical reasoning and evaluation of circumstances. They too are open to abuse, since the choice of appropriate analogies and the description of circumstances may be very subjective. Here, the recourse to tradition is of less value, since at this point in the analysis, the casuist is on his own. He has been able to check his subjectivity by placing himself within the long conversation of his casuistic colleagues, but only up to the point where he must choose the appropriate analogy and weigh the current circumstances. Here the "prudence" or "practical wisdom" of the casuist, his ability to consider fairly and comprehensively the circumstances of this case, in light of relevant principles, becomes central. It is a virtue or talent of the experienced casuist. Casuistry, then, is both conservative and creative: it places cases within a tradition and then moves the tradition ahead by the decision in the present case. The primary check on unfettered ingenuity now becomes the response of the contemporary casuistic community, and the broader community of believers, to the new resolution of the new case.

Religious casuistry, then, is the practical reasoning of communities of faith. In the background always stand the scripture and traditional beliefs of the community. In the foreground stand the scholarly communities who interpret that scriptural and traditional background and teach it to the faithful. They use common rational methods of interpretation and, in addition, refer that interpretation to the preceding tradition of scholarship. They not only theorize but also respond to actual cases in which the faithful may face perplexity in acting according to their faith in current circumstances. They utilize to a high degree analogical reasoning, working from case to case, in order to reach a resolution that is both traditional and novel.

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CHAPTER 20

Virtue and Virtue Ethics

Cheryl Cottine

Today the term virtue might conjure up images of figures like Mother Teresa, Gandhi, or Martin Luther King Jr. These figures, known for their benevolence toward humanity in many ways represent much about what is good in the world. Beyond turning to these larger-than-life-super-humans, many of us can identify models of virtue in our own lives. These individuals display courage in the face of adversity, are known for honesty, or seek out justice, perhaps at the expense of their own safety. Virtues come in many forms and are often defined by a particular social and/or cultural context. While what counts as a virtue may certainly vary between places and across time, there are some discernible characteristics that mark something as a likely virtue, and there are identifiable frameworks that are traditionally in place when we consider how a virtuous disposition is developed. Virtue and virtue ethics are distinct categories, yet, unsurprisingly, how one understands the former deeply influences the shape of the latter.

In what follows, a sketch of some key elements of virtue is provided. The aim is not to be comprehensive, but rather to focus on elements of virtue that are sometimes implicit in contemporary articulations of virtue ethics, as well as features that represent important points of debate. We then turn to consider how virtue influenced ethical theory and to the contours of contemporary discussions of debate in the field of virtue ethics. Finally, we consider how virtue ethics applies to practical ethics by focusing on the example of environmental virtue ethics.

Core Concepts

Virtue in Outline

Virtue has meant many things to different people, and there is certainly no agreed upon list of the virtues. To get a handle on what virtue entails, we briefly consider three thinkers who have articulated robust accounts of virtue from different traditions: Aristotle (384–322 BCE), Mengzi (ca. 391–308 BCE), and Aquinas (1225–1274). Aristotle's conception of virtue is the most referenced and retrieved conception of virtue by contemporary virtue ethicists. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle famously defines virtue as, "a state that decides, consisting in a mean, the mean relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason, that is to say, to the reason by reference to which the prudent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency" (Irwin 1991, 25). Additionally, virtue is about feelings and actions, and more specifically it is about choosing those actions that best express both

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reason and emotions while aiming at what is fine or praiseworthy. Virtue is a state of character, and becomes such through deliberate habituation. Aristotle's account of the virtues is teleologically (end) oriented toward *eudaimonia* (flourishing). *Eudaimonia*, as the complete and self-sufficient goal for humans, is best realized through becoming virtuous. Virtue, requires *phronesis* (practical wisdom), and is something sought after for its own sake.

The early Confucians (thinkers living prior to 221 BCE) are equally renowned for their attention to virtue. Virtue (*de*) has a number of different characteristics. Where virtue often referred more generally to an object's distinctive characteristic that enabled it to act and respond to the world in a certain way (e.g. the virtue of a horse is to run fast), with the Confucians it more generally refers to a human character trait that allows one to act and respond well to others. In other words, the early Confucians moralize the concept of virtue. Virtue has a magnetic quality to it; a virtuous person is charismatic. In Confucius's language, the virtue of a ruler is like a pole star around which all others orbit (Slingerland 2003, 8). Mengzi expanded the scope of virtue, claiming that becoming virtuous was within everyone's power. Virtue is a character trait based in basic and universal human emotions that must be nurtured. Benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), ritual propriety (*li*), and wisdom (*zhi*) are the four cardinal virtues, and the sprouts of these virtues are the feelings of compassion, disdain, deference, and of of approval and disapproval respectively (Van Norden 2008, 45–47, 149). Despite having origins in natural human emotions or inclinations, Mengzi by no means thought that virtue came naturally or easily to humans. One must actively choose to cultivate virtue, a task requiring persistent attention and refinement.

The final definition of virtue we want to consider comes from Aquinas. As with the other thinkers considered, Aquinas's conception of virtue is too complex to do it justice here. For Aquinas, virtue helps orient us toward a particular end. Unlike his intellectual predecessor Augustine (354–430), who rejected the Aristotelian virtues on the grounds that they badly oriented individuals and bolstered personal egos rather than correctly orienting one toward God, Aquinas made room for both natural virtue (temperance, courage, justice, and prudence) and infused virtue (faith, hope, and charity). Aquinas recognized potential in the natural virtues to orient people toward the laudable end of the common good (sometimes called civic virtues), but also toward individual perfection. However, a human's true orientation is toward God, and infused virtues are necessary for this end. Infused virtues are not enhancements of natural virtues, nor are they merit based. Infused virtues are a gift of grace.

Virtue Requires a Robust Account of Moral Anthropology As Well As An Account of Moral Cultivation

Fully grasping the work that virtue does in a human's quest for moral betterment presupposes a robust account of the human condition. Are humans born morally blind and thus in need of direction to become virtuous? Were humans once perfectly good and now corrupt due to a fatal preoccupation with themselves? Or are humans naturally inclined toward goodness, but in need of direction to fully realize this potential? Where one begins determines the work that virtue does to enable one to reach the desired end, in many cases the most fully realized (read virtuous) version of oneself. Philip Ivanhoe identifies several models of moral cultivation. The four models this entry will focus on are the discovery, reformation, developmental, and recovery models (Ivanhoe, 2000; Van Norden, 2007). The discovery model presumes that humans already possess all of the requisite capacities to become fully moral; they simply need to dust off the mirror (to use a Buddhist or neo-Confucian image) to fully access these cognitive and

affective capacities and put them to use. On the reformation model, humans have the innate stuff to become moral, but this stuff requires a new mold in order to enable moral actualization. Xunzi (late fourth century BCE), another early Confucian, nicely exemplifies this model. According to Xunzi, humans are born morally blind but with strong inclinations, emotions, and cognitive capacity. If left untutored or in their raw state, then these inborn inclinations have the tendency to lead us toward selfishness and other unsavory tendencies. However, with applied effort, the help of teachers, and considerable manipulation (Xunzi famously uses the image of straightening warped wood to illustrate this point), these inborn tendencies can be beautifully reformed and directed into virtues. In contrast to reformation models, developmental models assume a more optimistic starting point for the human condition. Mengzi, for example, posits that our natural emotions and inclinations (the sprouts of virtue) incline humans toward goodness. Required is attention, care, and a will to help the sprouts develop into complete virtues. The recovery model is best exemplified by many Christian thinkers. On this account, humans (either collectively or individually, depending on the thinker) began life correctly oriented toward their end (God in this case), but fell from grace through a perverted act of the will. What is required for moral realization, then, is to recover some lost state.

Conceptions of moral development are not mutually exclusive, and often elements of several are contained within a particular account of moral development. Regardless of the account of human nature one begins with, and regardless of the target for fully realized humanity, an intelligible account of virtue will begin with an account of the human condition and articulate a method for obtaining or perfecting specified virtues.

Virtue is Responsive

To say that virtue is responsive means that it engages both the will and the emotions (or the passions, if we are talking about Hume). Responding well to a situation requires both rational and emotional training and maturity. The role that responsiveness plays in conceptions of virtue varies. Aristotle's and neo-Aristotelian portrayals of virtue situate responsiveness within a *eudaimonistic* framework. Responding in the right way is, in Aristotle's words, having feelings, "at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way" (Irwin 1999, 2.6.11). Appropriately reading the situation and determining the best response requires training, an acute attentiveness, and the desire to act for virtue's sake. Responsiveness within this sort of *eudaimonistic* framework is a responsiveness to the demands of virtue.

Responsiveness can take other forms as well. Christine Swanton describes the response dependent virtue ethic of Hume and Nietzsche as "emotional response dependence." For Hume this manifests itself as a "pleasurable love of virtue constituting the approval of the moral sense"; whereas for Nietzsche, "the nature of the ethics-constituting response is inherently creative" (Swanton 2015, 28). Other thinkers, such as Iris Murdoch, describe responsiveness in terms of attention. Careful observation of the other and concerted reflection on one's reaction to others can result in a gradual revolution of how one sees and internally responds to the other (Murdoch 1997 and 2002). And within the Mengzian worldview, responsiveness manifests itself both in outward actions toward another, but also in careful attention to one's emotional responses to a given situation. Recognizing an action as a benevolent response, for example, is to simultaneously acknowledge the sprout of benevolence operating, in turn strengthening that inclination, making it more likely to fire in other analogous situations (e.g. Van Norden 2008, 7–15).

While responsiveness and virtue takes a variety of forms, it generally involves both an internal and an external component. The latter provides the framework for a response, while the former engages faculties such as emotional response, reflection, creativity, and the will.

Virtue is Normative

For those who understand morality in terms of virtue, virtue is a normative concept. To say something is normative means that it is action guiding, that it provides direction in determining right from wrong, good from bad. The way in which virtue guides one toward good responses is certainly different from the way focusing on duties or consequences do. Rather than asking about the appropriate maxim to apply to an act (deontology) and rather than calculating the good and bad consequences of an action (consequentialism), virtue provides normative guidance in its conceptualization of what it means to act from a specific virtue. In other words, the normative force of virtue comes from the overall picture of what it means to possess a specific virtue. Additionally, we can understand a virtue's normativity in terms of side constraints. Recall Aristotle's definition of virtue discussed earlier, where he places virtuous activity between two vices – between two sets of responses that are emotionally and cognitively inappropriate responses to a situation.

A side-constraint approach to thinking about virtue's normative aspects is more akin to doing normative ethics negatively. A virtuous action is not a vicious action. However, there are other normative guidelines available. In positive terms, one can determine the virtuous response by contemplating what the virtuous person would do. To be more precise, one would contemplate what the just, kind, courageous, benevolent, etc., person would do. These V-rules, as Hursthouse calls them (1999), are perfectly capable of providing concrete action guidance. Additionally, encouraging reflection on how a virtuous person might respond makes moral exemplars an integral part of virtue.

Virtue Attends to Moral Exemplars and the Community

One of the more compelling features of virtue is that it permits notions of the self and community into the sphere of moral concern and relevance. Communities are the backdrop that define and give meaning to virtue concepts; they produce the exemplars of virtue that are championed and admired, and, in Lawrence Blum's words, communities "can powerfully shape members' sense of undue burden, and hence of what they regard as "'reasonable to expect'" (Blum 1996, 245). Blum laments the lack of attention that contemporary virtue theorists give to community. Choosing to focus on what virtue is and means for an individual is to overlook the significant fact that notions of virtue and virtue cultivation are often community building and defining.

Communities often provide a sense of belonging; they are a larger entity to which one can relate and contribute to its growth and flourishing. Communities large and small establish codes of conduct, often champion exemplary figures who embody all that is good about the community, and they provide systems of support and correction. Communities work on multiple levels – they can provide an individual a broader sense of belonging, or offer a narrative into which an individual fits and understands his or her life (Haurawass 1981). Virtue, understood in the context of communities, is a praiseworthy character trait that enables the individual to contribute to communal flourishing at best, and functioning at minimum. It is from particular communities that exemplars emerge. Exemplars of virtue are individuals who embody

certain character traits which are deemed a worthy standard to strive toward in one's own quest for moral betterment. Mengzi, for example, championed ancient sages (exemplary figures of ancient times) not only because they embodied the virtues of a Confucian worldview, but because they were keenly aware that role models were integral to encouraging virtue cultivation by individuals in the community.

Virtue, with its attention to exemplars and community, more readily captures the complexity of the human psyche. Humans are social creatures who have a desire to belong to community and who are deeply influenced and compelled to action by others. Attending to the conditions defining and enabling virtues and to the power of moral exemplars necessarily expands the scope of the moral universe. Conceptualizing virtue as situated both within a specific communal context and in relation to moral exemplars provides a powerful explanatory mechanism for thinking about what motivates both moral cultivation as well as specific acts.

Virtue is Both Self and Other Regarding

Intimated above is the idea that virtue allows for and often requires attention to the self. In other words, a virtue focused ethic allows for what Michael Slote calls self-other symmetry (Slote 1992). One critique of consequentialist theories in particular is that they fail to adequately take into consideration the interests of the acting agent, prioritizing instead the interests and needs of others. Champions of virtue, however, more readily acknowledge that favoring the interests, needs, desires, and motivations of others over those of oneself, is problematic and lends morality an air of disinterestedness.

Many proponents of virtue recognize the improbability and danger of ignoring or downplaying personal interests, motivations, and what we might broadly label self-care. Aristotle perceptively speaks of friendship in terms of self-love not because he thinks that everything reduces to self-interest, but rather because he believes that we naturally and genuinely desire to realize the true and appropriate end for humans, and that this serves as a model for relating to, caring for, and aiding others – in this case friends (Irwin 1999, 119–136). The early Confucian texts emphasize in their own ways the importance of self-reflection. To fail to attend to the self and to strive toward virtue could be disastrous both at the individual and communal level. At the individual level because it would result in a failure to realize the full human potential, and at the communal level because it would contribute to moral decline and furthermore set an inadequate or bad example. Finally, we can observe attention to the self, acknowledged in specific Christian frameworks. Søoren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), for instance, recognized that at the heart of Christian doctrine was a requirement for correct self-love (love thy neighbor as thyself). Failing to correctly orient oneself toward God would prevent one from being able to appropriately love others. These are very different examples, and yet they all attest to the importance of attending to self-orientation and cultivation. Notice, however, that attention to self-cultivation is not at the expense of other-regarding dispositions, but rather a prerequisite to being able to appropriately and adequately attend to the needs and interests of others.

From Virtue to Virtue Ethics

Ever since G. E. M. Anscombe's 1958 essay, "Modern Moral Philosophy," virtue ethics has enjoyed a revival and undergone significant development from its more traditional roots in Plato and Aristotle. While ancient Greek philosophy was certainly not the only ancient form of philosophy to champion

virtue – the early Confucians also had a robust account of virtue and moral cultivation – it certainly held a prominent place in the imagination of those desiring to address the shortcomings of the two dominant ethical theories broadly categorized as deontological and consequentialist ethics. The dissatisfaction with the contemporary state of moral philosophy was as varied as the thinkers addressing the problem: Iris Murdoch bemoaned moral philosophy's obsession with rationality and the will (Murdoch 1997); Bernard Williams was concerned that these forms of morality had become all-encompassing leaving no aspect of life untouched (Williams 1985); and Alasdair MacIntyre (MacIntyre 1981) with what he perceived to be a morally bankrupt America where communities as the source of and structure for meaning and morality were replaced with radical individualism and moral whim. These and other responses to bereft ways of conceptualizing the moral life spurred interest in rethinking what it means to be moral and to act morally, and renewed interest in more ancient ways of doing philosophy, ways which focused on character, defining the good life for humans, and moral development.

Virtue focuses on character, motivations, and cultivation, in addition to having something intelligent to say about the will, emotions, and human ends. With focus directed toward attributes of a person as well as motivation and away from a narrower focus on acts and consequences, virtue ethics naturally engages a wider set of questions about the moral life. How should one live? What is the good life for humans? What are the virtues? And what is human nature like? Many contemporary virtue ethicists traditionally answered these questions in neo-Aristotelian terms, embracing concepts such as *arête* (excellence), *phronesis* (practical wisdom), and *eudaimonia* (flourishing). Yet how these concepts relate and which is most integral to defining virtue for contemporary times, remains controversial.

While Aristotle's conception of virtue dominated early articulations of contemporary virtue ethics, it also spurred scholars to revisit virtue concepts in other classic thinkers in whose work virtue had not been the primary concept. For example, scholars began asking questions such as: was Kant completely uninterested in moral character? Or was this more a characteristic of Kantian ethics as engaged in by modern philosophy? Was it really the case that virtue concepts were lost? If so, how do we account for figures like Aquinas, Hume, Hutcheson, and Nietzsche, figures recently identified as carrying the torch of virtue despite the emerging trend and rhetoric moving toward championing reason?

The rising interest in virtue ethics also spurred comparative work, most notably comparison with early Confucianism. Lee Yearley's pioneering work compared Aquinas's and Mengzi's theories of virtues; Aaron Stalnaker's work engaged questions of moral cultivation in Xunzi and Augustine. Other scholars of early Confucianism focused more exclusively on identifying and analyzing the distinctive features of virtue within the early Confucian texts. Scholars of other traditions also explored the different notions of virtue and ethical formation contained within their respective traditions texts.

Virtue Ethics and Practical Ethics

Fields of practical ethics have also benefited from the sorts of questions and concepts championed by virtue ethics. In bioethics, for example, there is a distinct set of voices that challenge the more dominant deontological and consequentialists trends when thinking about issues such as resource distribution, patient-physician relationships, genetic engineering, or any other specific quandary. The field of environmental ethics, even more so than the field of bioethics, is increasingly interested in questions of virtue. Environmental virtue ethics (EVE) questions the efficacy of approaching questions surrounding

the human responsibility toward the environment in terms of duty and obligations. While important, proponents of EVE argue that what is required to address environmental issues is a question of character. How do we get humans to consider the environment as something worthy of *moral* respect? What are the environmental virtues? And what would both human *and* environmental flourishing entail?

Beyond questions of character and specific virtues, vice is often a topic of interest. While vice features in a more limited way in the broader virtue ethics literature, EVE devotes considerable attention to these questions in order to diagnose the root of the problem. Vices such as gluttony, greed, and apathy are considered particularly dangerous in relation to the environment because they represent a disposition prone to overconsumption and domination. The list of environmental virtues is open for interpretation. Some prefer to retrieve virtues from ancient sources and reorient them toward environmental ends. Other scholars suggest that developing new virtues are in order. Wonder, for example, could be a virtue that, if cultivated, would encourage a keen interest in environmental processes as well as a disposition to constantly look at and learn from one's surroundings.

Bioethics and environmental ethics are just two examples of how virtue ethics has started to inform and expand into fields of practical ethics. We see questions of character and virtue in other areas such as the ethics of interrogation, virtue and technology, and virtue and the professions more generally.

An attempt has been made to show the rich array of positions on virtue, as well as expose points of debate about the nature of virtue both within and across traditions. Just as definitions, sources, and key aspects of virtue vary, so too do contemporary articulations of virtue and virtue ethics. Ethicists wanting to return to virtue have sparked intriguing discussions and debates within the broader field of ethical theory, which has done much to expand the scope of ethical inquiry generally. What questions of virtue contribute to ethical reflection generally is a keen awareness that the moral life is complex and that focusing on acts of will, rationality, and consequences only account for a small fraction of moral activity.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Chip Lockwood and the editors of this volume for providing helpful feedback on this entry.

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CHAPTER 21

Consequentialism

Werner Wolbert

The terms consequentialism, proportionalism, teleology, utilitarianism, agapism, and agathology denote a type of ethical theory which regards the consequences of an action as its only right or wrong making property; it is opposed to a deontological theory which knows additional wrong making properties. The first term seems to be used primarily by its opponents (first by Anscombe 1981) who hold the opposite view of a strong deontology.

Terminology

The terms "teleological" and "deontological" were introduced by C. D. Broad. Deontological theories hold (Broad 1979, 206) "that there are ethical propositions of the form: 'Such and such a kind of action would always be right (or wrong) in such and such circumstances, no matter what the consequences might be.'" Teleological theories hold "that the rightness or wrongness of an action is always determined by its tendency to produce certain consequences which are intrinsically good or bad." (Broad 1979, 206–207). According to this definition, every normative theory falls under one of these two types. In addition, two types of deontological theories can be distinguished:

a) The view that certain kinds of actions are always wrong because of a certain property of the action (e.g. its unnaturalness).
b) The view that some actions have certain properties relevant, but not decisive, for their ethical assessment; this assessment is not based on harmful or beneficial consequences. Those actions (violation of a promise, not paying debts) are only presumed to be wrong (prima facie wrong) (Ross 1930, 19–20). The respective prohibition can be overridden by teleological considerations.

Critics of consequentialism often do not pay attention to this milder form of deontology (which they may also classify under consequentialism, as Anscombe [1981] would do), because it leaves open the possibility of overriding absolutely understood deontological norms by consequentialist considerations. A deontological theory, when defined as the contradictory opposite of (a), holds that the rightness or wrongness of actions is *not solely* a matter of the overall goodness or badness of their consequences. If only (a) is defined as deontological, there would be a large field of mixed theories. If "deontological" comprises types (a) and (b), every non-teleological theory is to be classified as deontological by definition.

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Schüller who introduced Broad's distinction into Catholic moral theology (Schüller 1987, 282–298) chose this complete distinction because, first, the Catholic debate was centered on deontological norms in the absolute sense of (a). Second, it seemed to fit better into the framework of a Christian ethic. Unlike deontological theories, teleological ones hold "that there is only one *ultimate* obligation, and that this involves an essential reference to *value*. According to them the one ultimate obligation is to secure the increase and to prevent the decrease of the present amount of good, and to secure the diminution and check the increase of the present amount of evil" (Broad 1971, 126). This would correspond to Romans 13:8–10 according to which all commandments are summed up in (or derived from) the commandment of neighborly love. This position could also be called agapism. The opposite position is most extremely formulated by Prichard (1971, 4–5) when he doubts "whether our sense that we ought to pay our debts or to tell the truth arises from our recognition that in doing so we should be originating something good." Whereas the deontological theory of obligation is pluralistic (because different duties cannot be summed up under one principle), the teleological one knows only the one obligation of love as benevolence and beneficence. "All other obligations, such as the duty to keep one's promises or to obey the laws of one's country, are derivative from this one" (Broad 1971, 126).

What regards the axiology, teleological theories may hold a pluralistic theory of value. The term "utilitarianism" mostly denotes a monistic theory which assumes that the one and only good-making characteristic of experiences is their hedonistic quality (Rashdall 1907, I 184). There is, however, also a pluralistic version "ideal utilitarianism" according to which "actions are right or wrong according as they tend to produce for all mankind an ideal end or good, which includes, but is not limited to, pleasure" (Rashdall 1907, I 184). Only this version can be classified as agapism in a Christian sense for which the "ideal" end is morality, love, and obedience to God itself.

Exceptions

A consecutive property of deontological norms in the strong sense seems to be that they exclude exceptions. For Anscombe it is a "noteworthy feature" of the Hebrew-Christian ethic, "that there are certain things forbidden whatever *consequences* threaten" (Anscombe 1981, 34). Consequentialism (like mild deontology), on the other hand, seems to be a theory that justifies exceptions from duties deontologically understood (e.g. prohibition of killing the innocent, vicarious punishment). This assumption is, at least partly, misleading because the necessity or possibility of exceptions may depend on the complete or incomplete formulation of a norm. The traditional prohibition of directly killing an innocent could also be formulated: killing a human being is forbidden, except killing the guilty and indirectly killing an innocent. Deontological norms can also leave room for exceptions by a restrictive interpretation of a norm (e.g. of "murder" or "lie"). By using evaluative terms, even a teleological norm may apply without exception because the prohibition is already included in the respective term. "Adultery" means an immoral sexual intercourse outside marriage; "treachery" denotes some form of disloyalty. Exceptions from the prohibitions of "treachery ...; idolatry, sodomy, adultery" (Anscombe 1981, 34) are excluded, because the prohibition is already included in the evaluative term. Those terms leave open the reasons for the moral disapproval of the actions denoted; the prohibitions are, therefore, only ostensibly deontological. The only point of debate between teleologists and deontologists is in which case and for which reasons an act is to be judged as adulterous, treacherous, etc. A moral norm may also appear as "absolutist," because it provides for possible

exceptions already by a restrictive clause ("unless ..."). Granting exceptions is sometimes seen as a sign of moral laxity because of the wrong presupposition (e.g. in Kant's writings) that exceptions are always made from a selfish intention. Refusing exceptions then seems to be a sign of moral seriousness or radicalness. Exceptions have, however, to be justified by the consequences for all beings concerned. Since caring for the well-being of all beings concerned by my action is a moral duty, the real question is not whether an exception is allowed, but *from which* of the conflicting duties an exception has to be made and for which reasons.

Consequences

There is no clear distinction between act ("itself") and consequences. Depending on the language use, the consequences may already be included in the respective term or not. The term "poisoning" includes already the harmful or deadly consequence of e.g. "administering potassium cyanide." The same could be said comparing "torture" and "coercion." The consequences included in the description of an act have, therefore, to be distinguished from those not included. The first ones could be called *properties* of an act. (Bentham defines utility as "that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness ... or to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered" (Bentham 1970, 12). Other teleologists speak of the "nature of the *whole action*" which has to be taken into regard (Stace 1975, 119; Janssens 1977, 231). Consequentialism could therefore be explained without distinguishing between action and consequence. The opposite theory, however, which holds that consequences may sometimes be not decisive, is dependent upon that distinction (Stace 1975, 119).

Speaking (with Bentham) of a *tendency* to produce indicates that the actual consequences of an act may be different from the foreseen or desired ones. Since the judgment on right or wrong normally has to be made in advance, the tendency has to be the decisive criterion, whereas in retrospect the actual consequences may count. Speaking of a tendency could also suggest that the judgment is not on a single action, but on a type of action. What kind of consequences do count, is a point of debate between act- and rule utilitarianism. Two concepts of rules have to be distinguished here. Regulative rules are rules of thumbs suggesting that in general an action *a* will have beneficial or harmful consequences. Institutional or constitutive rules create an institution or a practice, e.g. marriage, family, promise, penal law. There is a strong presumption for obeying those rules because the institutions are of fundamental importance for the coordination between humans as acting persons. This is a teleological criterion for obeying those rules, whereas deontologists like W. D. Ross used to regard their *prima-facie* validity as independent of any teleological reason (by paying one's debt one does not do anything good). The question remains which criteria may apply for solving conflicts of those duties, when teleological considerations are excluded or not decisive.

A simple act-utilitarianism seems to overlook that an ethical evaluation has to imply the fundamental criterion of the Golden Rule or of universalizability, which means that any person in a relevantly similar situation should act in the proposed way, and, insofar, every moral judgment implies a rule. Therefore, the dispute between act- and rule-utilitarians is better understood by distinguishing different levels of moral thinking, the intuitive level at which we operate most of the time, when we follow rules or principles that are at least general enough to be learnable. For distinguishing good from poor principles, however, and for solving conflicts between the former ones, we need a higher level at which

"we select for use at the intuitive level those principles whose general acceptance or adoption is for the best, and in cases of conflict prefer those whose observance in the particular case will be for the best" (Hare 1986, 642). A deontologist like Butler would reserve those judgments (e.g. on preferential duties to our family or nation) to God's providence who laid us under particular obligations "which we may discern and feel ourselves under, quite distinct from a perception that the observance or violation of them is for the happiness or misery of our fellow creatures" (Butler 1969b, 376 note). Since we have no direct and reliable access to the divine intelligence, we have to rely on our consciences in which those obligations are engraved. That means "that benevolence and the want of it, singly considered, are in no sort the whole of virtue and vice" (Butler 1969a, 383), and that, ultimately, those duties are justified because compliance with them will be beneficial for all creatures thanks to divine providence. Because of this reference to divine providence, Butler's theory is basically teleological, insofar as the basic moral concept is the good; a teleological theory could, therefore, also be called agathological. In this sense, traditional Catholic moral theology is also basically teleological, even if it knows two types of deontological arguments. The first is humans' lack of competence (*defectus iuris in agente*) in judgments which God has reserved for himself (questions of killing and dissolving marriages); the second is the unnaturalness (*contra naturam*) of certain sexual behavior and of false testimony. These arguments imply, however, that God as moral legislator will grant that complying with those norms and so relying on God's superior wisdom will be to the universal benefit of his creatures. Insofar, traditional Catholic moral theology (like Butler's theory) is basically teleological with some deontological twist caused by the failure to distinguish between the *manifest* and the *hidden* wisdom of God. When, for instance, killing the fetus is forbidden, even when the life of both the mother and the fetus is endangered and rescuing at least the mother seems to be the reasonable solution, one refers to the hidden wisdom of God. But this reference has its "*Sitz im Leben*" in the field of theodicy, not in that of normative ethics. Even Kant, who is often regarded as an archdeontologist shows a teleological conception in the second formula of his Categorical Imperative based on the unconditional value of morality and humans insofar as they are capable of it. For a deontologist like Prichard, however, the basic concept is obligation, or duty, or the right.

Numbers and Trumps

Butler's arguments for particular duties could lead to the more general objection that a teleological theory leaves no room to particular obligations to people in close relation to us. Cicero comments: "For with them Nature herself engenders friendship" (*Laelius* 5, 19). Like Butler, Cicero seems to ground particular duties on the wisdom of nature in a deontological way. Unlike Butler, however, he identifies the rationale of that natural equipment: it leads to a more effective and coordinated use of our limited resources for doing good (*De officiis* I 16, 52); insofar, Cicero refers to the *manifest* wisdom of nature; his argument is, therefore, teleological. This is sometimes overlooked when a teleological theory is understood as taking the number of beneficiaries of an action as its only or predominant right making property, as Bentham's formula of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" (Bentham 1988, 3) might suggest.

According to one of the most common arguments against consequentialism, it sacrifices the individual in the interest of the greater number (using the individual as a mere means) when, for

instance, punishing (killing) one innocent for some overriding purpose, e.g. saving the lives of several persons (Anscombe 1981, 33–34). Deontologically understood prohibitions seem to offer some barrier against a maxim like that of Caiaphas (John 11:50; 18:14), according to which "one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." This maxim gets, however, a different sense in the context of the passion of Jesus when the suffering is voluntary. Self-sacrifice is normally something regarded as supererogatory and must be voluntary. The real issue, therefore, seems to be whether and how consequentialism can justify the difference of obligation and supererogation when the action with the best possible consequences is always obligatory. The teleologist could point to the necessary division of tasks and the difference of talents or gifts. Some actions or ways of life are desirable only when few persons practice it (e.g. celibacy), those who feel a vocation to it, or feel obliged to some ideal (e.g. serving the poor or the sick). Acting according to that ideal may be regarded as an obligation by the respective person. From the perspective of the third person, however, those obligations are categorized as supererogatory; nobody would be blamed for not aiming at a certain ideal way of life or a peculiar altruistic behavior.

Rights are also sometimes regarded as barriers, "side constraints" (Nozick 1974, 30) against (teleologically based) limitations of individual freedom of choice, as "trumps over some background justification for political decisions that state a goal for the community as a whole" (Dworkin 1984, 153). From a teleological point of view, one could argue that a goal for the community like happiness or well-being "is the justification, and ought to be the controller, of all ends, but is not itself a sole end" (Mill 1959, 621). Respecting rights could, therefore, be seen as a particular end serving the universal end of happiness of all beings.

Expressive Actions

Speaking of *producing* benefits as the only normative criterion may narrow the teleological perspective because it leaves out of sight expressive actions like boycotts or demonstrations, which do not necessarily produce or cause anything good, but are to be understood as a statement expressing an attitude against some evil or in favor of some value. Martyrdom, civil resistance, signs of solidarity, or affection may serve as striking examples. Protests, demonstrations, etc. may not change an evil situation (at least, not in the short run); they are to be regarded as an expressive statement on a certain evil witnessing against it. The story of the woman anointing Jesus (Mark 14:3–9) is a classic example of an action expressing love, sympathy, adoration, and remorse. Especially religious actions (e.g. prayer, services, pilgrimages) belong to this category. The story of the anointment may also illustrate the ethical problems given with those actions. On the one hand, they are meaningful in themselves as an outer expression of an inner attitude; on the other hand, they are often expensive or even wasteful and there may be doubts whether the resources could have been spent in a more useful way. Weighing up the expressive values (or disvalues) of an action with its actual beneficial or harmful consequences can be difficult when, for instance, public authorities consider succumbing to blackmail in order to save lives. The term "consequentialism" may obfuscate the need to take the expressive value of actions into regard because those values or evils will not spontaneously be associated with "consequences." But without taking into regard the value of expressive actions, a teleological theory would seem one-sided and narrow-minded.

Moral and Non-moral Good (Evil)

Consequentialism is sometimes said to have increasing or maximizing of *non-moral* good and reducing or minimizing of non-moral evil as its goal. This sounds reasonable, because one cannot directly influence the morality of other persons; it overlooks, however, that the first rule of preference is the predominance of the moral good over non-moral values. Morality as an attitude or conviction is "under our control" (Epictetus 1966, 1); it is, insofar, the only possible object of a categorical demand, the only unconditional value. Non-moral goods like health, wealth, honor are useful, but can also be misused. In this sense, Kant distinguishes between price and dignity. Whatever has a price can be traded off against another good; the dignity of morality and the human person, insofar as it is capable of it, can never be traded off against anything. With reference to this dignity, all persons are equal. The moral good can be identified with the commandment of love of God and impartial love (benevolence) of one's neighbor, respecting him or her as an end in itself. It corresponds also to the Golden Rule of applying the same moral standard to everybody. Augustine (1962, I 27) formulates that a just man has to form an "unprejudiced estimate of things," "so that he neither loves what he ought not to love, nor fails to love what he ought to love, nor loves that more which ought to be loved less, nor loves that equally which ought to be loved either less or more, nor loves that less or more which ought to be loved equally." Benevolence and justice (equality) are, therefore not distinct principles, but are based on the equal dignity of all persons. Since the moral good has always the precedence over non-moral goods, and moral evil (sin) may never be chosen to avoid some non-moral evil, which means e.g. obedience, fidelity to one's conscience.

Good Ends and Evil Means

The term "proportionalism" is related to a special problem in Catholic Moral Theology, namely justifying evil means for a good end. The term is inspired by a passage in Aquinas's treatise on self-defense (Aquinas 2019, II–II q 64 a 7) according to which a lawful act (with some evil effect) must be "proportionate to the end" (proportionatus fini). Traditionally, the principle of double effect, according to which the evil effect (e.g. the death of an assailant) may never be intended directly as a means, but may only be permitted indirectly, was applied only on few cases deontologically assessed. It was reinterpreted by P. Knauer as "the fundamental principle of all morality" (1969, 25), according to which indirect means "justified by a commensurate reason" (1969, 29). This interpretation changed the principle and the meaning of its terms. For the traditional reading, the respective action is forbidden as an evil means, not only in a non-moral sense, but in a moral sense as well because of the presupposed deontological prohibition. Insofar, one could better speak of an action with a double moral character (Schüller 1978, 175). Not the death caused is the evil effect, but the deontologically forbidden action causing the effect (killing), whereas for Knauer, indirectly intended is everything proportionate and not counterproductive to the intended end. That would mean that e.g. punishments "proportionate" to the end of deterrence and reintegration would have to be classified as indirectly intended. And immoral behavior may appear as simply foolish, because the agent would thwart his or her own ends. Knauer's proportionalism seems to amount to a teleological position, but in a narrower sense because he denies a general obligation of increasing goods and diminishing evils.

Indirect causation has to be distinguished from indirect intention, even though opponents of proportionalism often take it for granted that, what is indirectly caused, is indirectly intended as well. That may mean, in practice, that the decisive normative aspect for a therapeutic abortion is the place where the doctor attaches the knife. To avoid those conclusions contrary to common sense, some authors classify as indirectly willed everything which is not a necessary part of the project (killing the fetus is not a necessary part of the project of rescuing the mother). In other contexts (e.g. indirect killing of civilians in war), the results of double effect thinking may be more plausible than supposed teleological conclusions. In most cases, however, the judgment may be the same, but for different reasons. Double effect thinking may sometimes indicate problems not yet satisfactorily solved from a teleological point of view. The same may hold for questions on doing and refraining when the consequences seem to be identical, e.g. killing and letting die.

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CHAPTER 22

Deontology

Bharat Ranganathan

Introduction

In contemporary normative ethics, deontology (*deon* = duty, *logos* = science, study of) is a theory according to which agents deliberate about how they ought to act and evaluate whether their actions are right or wrong. On a rough characterization, deontology prioritizes the right over the good. Therefore, deontological normative theories require, forbid, or permit actions as a matter of principle, conforming to particular moral norms, largely regardless of the outcomes produced by those actions. In prioritizing the right over the good, deontological normative theories incorporate *agent-centered restrictions* and *respect for individual persons*. Because "standard deontological views maintain that it is sometimes wrong to do what will produce the best available outcome overall," Samuel Scheffler writes, such views incorporate agent-centered restrictions. These restrictions on action:

> have the effect of denying that there is any non-agent-relative principle for ranking overall states of affairs from best to worst such that it [is] always permissible to produce the overall best available state of affairs so characterized. (1994, 2–3)

Because of these agent-centered (or agent-relative) restrictions, the individual moral agent may be forbidden from performing some action that would promote the agent-neutral state-of-affairs. In other words, deontological agent-centered restrictions aim to capture the intuition about why the individual moral agent should not perform some action regardless of the good (i.e. agent-neutral state-of-affairs) that may come about from performing it.

Further underwriting the prioritization of the right over the good is respect for individual persons. For example, in his *Theory of Justice* (1999), John Rawls writes:

> [e]ach person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of a society as a whole cannot override. For this reason, justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. (1999, 3)

For deontologists, respect for individual persons trades on the fact that each and every person possesses a particular (and equal) moral status. That is to say, people are *inviolable*, with such inviolability obtaining

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

simply by virtue of their humanity. For many deontologists, an action cannot thus be required if that action puts a group of people's gains – however many people, however large the gain – over and against the losses incurred by a single individual. T. M. Scanlon brings this view into sharper refine with his famous Transmitter Room example:

> Jones has suffered an accident in the transmitter room of a television station. Electrical equipment has fallen on his arm, and we cannot rescue him without turning off the transmitter for fifteen minutes. A World Cup match is in progress, watched by many people, and it will not be over for an hour. Jones's injury will not get any worse if we wait, but his hand has been mashed and he is receiving extremely painful electrical shocks. Should we rescue him now or wait until the match is over? Does the right thing to do depend on how many people are watching? (1998, 235, cf. Rawls 1996, 365)

Commenting on Transmitter Room, Scanlon writes: "if one can save a person from serious pain and injury at the cost of inconveniencing others or interfering with their amusement, then one must do so no matter how numerous these others may be" (Scanlon 1998, 235). On this example, the individual moral agent has an agent-centered restriction not to maximize a state-of-affairs (i.e. allowing some large number of people to continue watching the World Cup) and an agent-centered requirement to show respect for an individual person (i.e. to rescue Jones).

The roots of contemporary deontology can be traced to (among others) Immanuel Kant. In his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, for example, Kant's second formulation of the Categorical Imperative (i.e. unconditional commands) contains the Formula of Humanity: "[s]o act that you use your humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (1999, 80, cf. Nozick 1974, 30ff.). For Kant, people's humanity makes them inviolable or, in Kantian terms, ends-in-themselves. Recognizing and respecting the humanity of another is normative (i.e. requires, forbids, or permits) upon certain actions. Other classical thinkers, for example, Thomas Hobbes (1996), John Locke (1988), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1997), developed deontological commitments in terms of contractualism, with contractualism concerning (1) the relationship among authority, individuals, and social groups, and (2) the public justification of deontological norms for political and social policy.

In contemporary normative ethics, deontology's foil is *consequentialism*. One particular species of consequentialism – utilitarianism, which is concerned with the maximization of "utility," "well-being," and so on – has long been the dominant normative theory in moral and political philosophy (for some classic treatments, see Bentham 1907; Mill 2002; and Sigdwick 1981; for some contemporary treatments, see Smart 1973; Kagan 1991; and Singer 1993). On a rough characterization, consequentialism prescribes and evaluates the rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness of action solely according to the consequences brought about by that action. In contrast to deontology, then, consequentialism prioritizes the good over the right, where the *good* refers to the maximization of consequences. Owing to the arguments developed Rawls and others, for example, F. M. Kamm (1993, 2007), Thomas Nagel (1991), Robert Nozick (1974), T. M. Scanlon (1998), Samuel Scheffler (1994), and Judith Jarvis Thomson (1990), deontology has emerged in recent decades as a plausible alternative to consequentialism. Despite these developments, however, Bernard Williams's hope – "[t]he day cannot be too far off in which we hear no more of it" (1973, 150) – has not yet been fulfilled.

Before proceeding, some further distinctions are necessary. Given that both are concerned with the prescription of action, deontology and consequentialism are *deontic* (i.e. what we are obligated to do) theories. Moreover, both are *evaluative* (i.e. what is right or good to do). In contrast to these two theories, virtue ethics is an *aretaic* (i.e. excellence of kind) theory: it is concerned with what sort of person one is or ought to be. Furthermore, in contrast to deontology, both consequentialism and virtue ethics are *teleological* theories, that is, they are concerned with outcomes, whether of an action or of a person's life. But the distinction between teleological and non-teleological theories may only work within the ambit of non-religious ethics. Given that all religions tend to be concerned with the final ends of humanity and, indeed, all life, it is difficult to say that there exists a religious ethics that is not teleological in character. In Christian theological ethics, for example, God is conceived as both the good (*Summum Bonum*) and the source of the right, collapsing any easy distinction between the right and the good. Thus, in religious ethics, the formulations "the right *over* the good" or "the good *over* the right" might be better understood as "the right *in* the good" or "the good *in* the right."

This entry identifies some characteristics of deontological moral reasoning. To help appreciate these characteristics, the entry first works through some thought experiments. In working through these examples, the aim is to map roughly the distinctions between deontological and consequentialist reasoning. Second, turning to medical ethics, this entry examines how deontological commitments may be understood in contractualist terms, focusing on the example of doctor-patient interaction. However, there are two further qualifying notes. First, given the sheer number and diversity of religious cosmologies, as well as the potential commensurabilities between these cosmologies, the entry will be limited to sources drawn from Christian ethics and moral and political philosophy. Second, some readers may be hesitant about (if not resistant toward) the use of moral and political philosophical concepts to think about religious ethics. The entry will refrain from commenting on whether such hesitance is warranted.

Distinctions between Deontology and Consequentialism

To begin distinguishing between deontology and consequentialism, consider the following case:

> Torture. Frank is holding five innocent people, who he intends to kill if his demands aren't met, hostage. Fortunately, counterterrorism agent John has captured him before he has the chance to do so. If John tortures Frank, he will be able to discern the location of the hostages. Moreover, if John tortures *and* then kills Frank, he will not only be able to discern the location of the hostages but also prevent Frank from ever again taking hostages. The counterterrorism agency's analysts have been unable to discern where Frank has kept the hostages. Therefore, the director of the counterterrorism agency has licensed John to use his best judgment. What ought John to do? (Ranganathan 2014, 13)

What features from torture are worth noting? There is an initial *state-of-affairs* (Frank holding hostages), an *agent* (John) who *aims* through some *means* (torture, kill) to bring about some *end* (saving five people). Conflicts between deontologists and consequentialists emerge when reflecting on whether (and, if so, how) John might bring about this desired end.

If John employs consequentialist reasoning, on the one hand, he will have one of two options. On the first option, if he *merely* tortures Frank, he will be able to discern the location of and rescue the hostages. The promotional function of this action, then, would result in saving five lives. On the second option, if he tortures *and* then kills Frank, he will not only be able to discern the location of and rescue the hostages but also prevent Frank from ever again taking hostages. The promotional function of this action would result not only in saving five lives but also ensuring that Frank will never again be able to commit some wrong action that detracts from the overall state-of-affairs. On either option, John overrides Frank's particular (and equal) status.

If John employs deontological reasoning, on the other hand, he will not have recourse to either of the options available to the consequentialist. This is because deontological theories take seriously the separateness of persons (Rawls 1999, 26). For deontologists, the separateness of persons is predicated on the idea that individual people have a particular (and equal) status. This status places normative constraints on the actions one may take in the pursuit of one's goals. On normative constraints, consider Robert Nozick's definition:

> [i]n contrast to incorporating rights into the end state to be achieved, one might place them as side constraints upon the actions to be done: don't violate constraints *C*. The rights of others determine the constraints upon your actions. . .The side-constraint view forbids you to violate these moral constraints in the pursuit of your goals. (1974, 29)

In torture, both deontologists and consequentialists can agree that John's aim of saving five people is laudable. But from a deontological point-of-view, given that Frank possesses a particular (and equal) status, John is normatively restricted from taking either option available to the consequentialist in order to save the hostages. The rightness of certain actions (e.g. respecting Frank's status) is antecedent to and therefore restricts the ways (e.g. torture, kill) in which one may pursue some end (e.g. saving five people). Given this restriction, John has a *prerogative*, that is, a morally permissible option, not to maximize the state-of-affairs.

Keeping in mind Torture, another distinction between consequentialism and deontology is that the former is agent-*neutral* whereas the latter is agent-*relative*. Scheffler (1994) distinguishes agent-neutrality from agent-relativity as follows. For consequentialists, there are agent-neutral reasons to bring about some state-of-affairs: since a state-of-affairs in which five people are saved is *better than* a state-of-affairs in which they are not, John has reasons to aim for that state-of-affairs, using whatever means are necessary to bring it about. But deontological theories have constraints on the means by which some end may be brought about, constraints that are relative to the agent who must undertake an action. "Side constraints," Nozick writes, "express the inviolability of other persons" (1974, 32). In a particularly famous passage, he comments further on respect for the inviolability – or separateness – of persons:

> [i]ndividually, we each sometimes choose to undergo some pain or sacrifice for a greater benefit or to avoid a greater harm: we go to the dentist to avoid worse suffering later; we do some unpleasant work for its results; some persons diet to improve their health or looks; some save money to support themselves when they are older. In each case, some cost is borne for the sake of the greater overall good. Why not, *similarly*, hold that some persons have to bear some costs that benefit other persons more, for the sake of the overall social good? But there is no *social entity* with a good that undergoes some sacrifice for its own good. There are only individual people, different

> individual people, with their own individual lives. Using one of these people for the benefit of others, uses him and benefits the others. Nothing more. What happens is that something is done to him for the sake of the others. Talk of an overall social good covers this up. (Intentionally?) To use a person in this way does not sufficiently respect and take account of the fact that he is a separate person, that his is the only life he has. (1974, 32–33)

These constraints prohibit John from *treating* Frank in a certain way (torture, kill) in order to bring about the state-of-affairs in which five people are saved. John has agent-relative reasons not to torture and/or kill Frank. So, while both consequentialists and deontologists may agree that a state-of-affairs in which five live is better than one in which five do not, they disagree over the means that agents may employ in order to reach such a state.

Reflecting a common pre-philosophical commitment, the distinction between *doing* and *allowing*, *commission* and *omission*, also separates consequentialists and deontologists. Roughly speaking, one has duties and obligations to another depending on whether one *does* something or merely *allows* something to happen to another. For example, Andrew and Bartholomew are interacting with one another. Since they are interacting, they have particular duties and obligations toward one another, for example, Andrew owes it to Bartholomew to treat Bartholomew according to some acceptable terms. If Andrew and Bartholomew are trading baseball cards and Andrew damages one of Bartholomew's cards, then, by virtue of their interaction, Andrew has particular obligations to Bartholomew, for example, to replace Bartholomew's baseball card. If some third party, Christopher, damages one of Bartholomew's baseball cards while Andrew is present, Andrew might not have these obligations because he merely allowed something to happen. He may have a prerogative to do so – namely, to respect Bartholomew's humanity – but failing to do so does not mean he acted wrongly.

While many deontologists accept the distinction between doing and allowing, consequentialists reject it. For example, in his classic article, "Active and Passive Euthanasia" (1975), James Rachels introduces two cases – call these Bathtub – with the aim of collapsing the distinction between doing and allowing. In the first case:

> Smith stands to gain a large inheritance if anything should happen to his six-year-old cousin. One evening while the child is taking his bath, Smith sneaks into the bathroom and drowns the child, and then arranges things so that it will look like an accident. (1975, 79L)

And in the second:

> Jones also stands to gain if anything should happen to his six-year-old cousin. Like Smith, Jones sneaks in planning to drown the child in his bath. However, just as he enters the bathroom Jones sees the child slip and hit his head, and fall face down in the water. Jones is delighted; he stands by, ready to push the child's head back under if it is necessary, but it is not necessary. With only a little thrashing about, the child drowns all by himself, 'accidentally,' as Jones watches and does nothing. (1975, 79R)

Smith acted by commission: he actively drowned his cousin. Jones acted by omission: he allowed his cousin to drown. For both Smith and Jones, their desired end – a large inheritance – and the circumstances according to which that end might be reached – the death of each person's cousin – are the same.

Commenting on this pair of cases, Rachels claims: "[i]f the difference between killing and letting die were in itself a morally important matter, one should say that Jones's behavior was less reprehensible than Smith's. But does one really want to say that? I think not." And if Jones defends himself by claiming that he merely let his cousin die, Rachels says, "[s]uch a 'defense' can only be regarded as a grotesque perversion of moral reasoning. Morally speaking, it is no defense at all" (79R). For Rachels, there is no morally relevant distinction between doing and allowing. From the point-of-view of consequences, both Smith and Jones acted wrongly.

For deontologists, the distinction between doing and allowing *is* morally significant. So, how might a deontologist respond to Rachels' charges regarding a case like Bathtub? The deontologist can agree with the consequentialist that both Smith and Jones acted wrongly. But evaluating the wrongness of their actions is not done by an appeal to the consequences brought about by his (in)action. Instead, the deontologist can point out that neither treated his respective cousin as bearers of a particular (and equal) status. That is to say, each treated his respective cousin, through his (in)action, merely as a means toward some desired end rather than as an end-in-himself. Compared to John in Torture and Smith in Bathtub, each of which highlighted restrictions about whether one may pursue some desired end, Jones gives rise to obligations about how one ought to act. So, deontologists acknowledge that respect for others may, depending on the case, restrict or oblige. And the justification and motivation for restrictions and obligations derives not from an appeal to consequences but rather from a respect for persons.

For deontologists, then, treating others as bearers of a particular (and equal) status can also give rise to positive obligations. On such obligations, consider the following case

> Dinner. Phil has at long last secured a dinner reservation at Exclusive Restaurant. On his walk to dinner, he witnesses a woman being involved in a hit-and-run. The woman is badly injured. No one else is around who can help. Phil could call an ambulance, apply pressure to her wounds, and wait with her until help arrives. If he were to do so, however, he would miss his reservation. What should Phil do? (Ranganathan 2014, 15–16)

Commonsensically, Phil ought to stay with the woman and provide whatever care he can until the ambulance arrives. This obligation obtains despite the fact that he will miss his reservation; it also obtains despite the fact that Phil himself did not hit the woman. That is, he did not directly *override* the woman's particular (and equal) status. Respecting her status, however, requires some positive obligations. Thus, to respect the woman, Phil ought to stay with her and provide whatever help he can (cf. Scanlon 1998, 103–107, 152ff.).

Contractualism in the Context of Medicine

Rawls and Scanlon further explicate deontological commitments in contractualist terms. Contractualism is concerned with determining and establishing the authority, content, and legitimacy of moral norms, norms that prescribe and evaluate the conduct of individuals and/or political and social institutions. In the domain of politics, for example, the authority and legitimacy of political institutions hinges on those

institutions being designed and consented to by the people whom those institutions govern (cf. Rawls 1996). And in the domain of morality, the authority and legitimacy of actions and principles turns on mutual agreement among those affected by those norms. For example, Scanlon writes:

> [w]hen we think of those to whom justification is owed, we naturally think first of the specific individuals who are affected by specific actions. . .[W]e must [also] take into account not only the consequences of particular actions, but also the consequences of general performance or nonperformance of such actions and of the other implications (for both agents and others) of having agents be licensed and directed to think in a way that that principle requires. (1998, 203)

Without such considerations, actions or principles are neither authoritative nor legitimate. Like its non-contractualist varieties, contractualist deontology aims to respect individual persons. Following Scanlon's description, respect for individual persons requires justification to those affected by particular actions. Moreover, discerning the content and authority of moral principles in general likewise requires agreement among those aiming to discern the content and authority of those principles.

To think about the relationship between contractualism and religious ethics, briefly consider a case from medical ethics: doctor-patient interaction. When doctors and patients interact with one another, the doctor diagnoses the patient's ailment and presents the possible course(s) of treatment to the patient. The patient first needs to consider whether to pursue treatment or, if presented with several courses of treatment, which course of treatment among them to pursue, and second, provide informed consent to the doctor. Providing such consent demonstrates that medical practice is a "mutual process between physician and patient of informing and discussion (whenever the patient is capable of discussion), thereby leading to a mutually acceptable treatment." Informed consent is important because it "provide[s] the opportunity for the patient to become more actively involved in the ongoing decision-making process than has often been the case in medicine" (Brock 1993, 22).

Underwriting the relationship between the doctor and patient, Paul Ramsey observes, is a more basic relationship, that is, a relationship between members of the covenanted community. "In order to create and maintain a community of persons," Ramsey writes, "much more (and more intentionally) than in economic exchange is necessary that each seek not his own good, but the good of his neighbor" (1993, 235). Moreover, "[o]nly an element of concern for the other person for his sake creates a community among men" (1993, 238). Concern for the other person for that person's own sake follows from recognizing that the other person has a particular (and equal) status. Moreover, in the context of doctor-patient interaction, concern for the other person both requires and prohibits certain actions, the content of which is discerned through informed consent.

How does informed consent reflect concern for the person? Informed consent prohibits the doctor from overstepping his or her bounds while treating the patient, reflecting the deontological commitment to observing normative constraints. Moreover, privileging the person delimits what may and may not be done, prioritizing the right over the good. Between the doctor and patient, there must be "a determination of the rightness and wrongness of the action and not only the good to be obtained in medical care or from medical investigation" (Ramsey 2002, 2). To determine what is right or wrong, the doctor is required to get consent from the patient, with consent reflecting the "canon of loyalty" between them. Instead, the patient is "a *personal* subject," with the antecedent person-to-person relationship between the doctor and

patient informing and delimiting what may be done. For Ramsey, "[c]onsent expresses or establishes this relationship, and the requirement of consent sustains it" (2002, 5).

Depending on the length of treatment, consent must be "continuing and repeatable" (Ramsey 2002, 6). What is more, the patient must also be able to "reasonably free and adequately informed consent." Thus, informed consent in medical ethics takes seriously the claims that people make on one another. Moreover, given their commitment to act together, the doctor and patient recognize and are motivated by one another's status. That they even engage in the give-and-take of reasons in the first place indicates that the doctor and patient recognize one another's particular (and equal) status, reflecting the deontological commitment to respect for persons. Recognizing one another's status also highlights that there are constraints on what may be pursued in the context of their interaction with one another, tracking the idea about the agent-relative normative constraints. And the give-and-take of reasons helps determine the content and limits of what they together do, highlighting in particular the contractualist contributions to deontological reasoning.

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CHAPTER 23

Responsibility

Jesse Couenhoven

"Responsibility" is a term that has taken on a number of technical meanings in scholarly usage. Even in everyday speech, talk about responsibility can mean significantly different things, depending on context. One might, for instance, talk about hurricanes being responsible for the devastation they cause. That notion of simple causal responsibility is quite different from the meaning parents have in mind when they tell their children to behave more responsibly, or when people of all ages try to do the responsible thing. Such talk of meeting one's responsibilities invokes the idea of moral obligation, and is often characterized as looking forward to what one ought to do of course one can look back in time to obligations met or unmet as well. More closely connected to the idea of causal responsibility are the things adults sometimes tell one another about holding one another responsible, or being the responsible party. Such ways of talking about what is often called moral responsibility invoke the ideas of being accountable or of something's being attributable to one, and typically look backward, assessing persons for their having met or failed to meet some obligation.

The Responsible Self

It is helpful to distinguish these uses of the term "responsibility" to avoid confusion. Having a responsibility (obligation) is not the same as being morally responsible (attributability). However, some theologically influenced treatments of the idea of responsibility have sought to reflect on ways in which forward and backward-looking uses of the term are connected. The connection between speaking about human beings as under obligation and as accountable has especially been made via H. Richard Niebuhr's notion of the "responsible self," where "responsible" evokes the idea of being able to respond, and thus a responsive self (Niebuhr 1963). In his and associated approaches, human beings are conceived from a theological vantage point as engaged in dialogue with other human individuals, with society, with the natural world, and with God. These realities address us, and we are called to answer them, but in order to do so we must engage in interpretive struggles to determine what is being communicated to us and how we might best answer. The responsible self, when it is indeed responsible, is thus an agential self that is both passive and active. Human persons are passive inasmuch as we are deeply receptive, a product of God's creative power and the creative this-worldly forces that give us essential aspects of our selves. At the same time, however, we are not merely acted upon; we are also active agents who are able to respond in creative ways that are not simply determined by the past.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Crucial to Niebuhr's development of the first of these themes was a particular take on the idea of human beings as being under the call of morality. As "answerers," the moral task is not simply to follow rules or to achieve particular goals by whatever means necessary (and thus, not to be merely indebted to deontic or utilitarian ways of thought, as he understood them). Rather, we are called to be perceptive and attentive interpreters who ask "what is going on?" This emphasis on the importance of interpretation in the moral life helped to inspire and shape the early interest in virtue ethics in such thinkers as James Gustafson (Gustafson 1983) and Stanley Hauerwas (Hauerwas 1974). Early theologically inspired virtue theorists were interested in the importance of moral vision and social, religious, and other perspectives in shaping accounts of virtue and vice, right and wrong.

A second theme that emerged from Niebuhr's discussion of human beings as responsible selves is accountability. Having engaged the powers that engage us, and sought to understand them, we are called to act in a manner befitting the situation. As we do so we have responsibilities to the realities with which we are engaged, and whose responses to our responses to them call us to account. This combination of the themes of interpretation and obligation is central to "hermeneutical" approaches to religious ethics (cf. Schweiker 1995). The aspects of this theme of responsive action that are associated with the ideas of human social solidarity and communal and cultural "situatedness" have also received a fair amount of development in the field of religious ethics (e.g. Curran 1999), which has in recent years typically been more sensitive to ideas about human community and inter-relatedness than the field of philosophical ethics. However, theological and religious ethicists have paid much less attention to another central question related to the idea of accountability, the problem of who is accountable and under what circumstances, and how accountability relates to freedom.

Influential as Niebuhr and others' treatments of the "responsible self" were, the term "responsibility" today more strongly evokes the questions about free agency and accountability just mentioned than the themes of vision and interpretation mentioned above. Virtue theory has flourished in religious and philosophical ethics, but increasingly without making central the idea of human selves as answerers. This is not to say that Niebuhr's insights, or those of his followers, have been lost, but rather that his terminology is no longer prevalent in the realm of ethical theory or meta-ethics. By contrast, terms such as "responsibility," "answerability," and "accountability" are regularly used in discussions of freedom and responsible moral agency, especially in the subfield of philosophical action theory.

The Concept of Moral Responsibility

Moral responsibility is, broadly speaking, the kind of responsibility persons have for their actions or states of character when they can be held accountable for them, and called to answer for them. It is widely accepted that when a person is morally responsible for something she or he is open to being morally blamed or praised and even (when further conditions are met) punished or rewarded. Conversely, it is widely thought that agents who are not morally responsible should not be blamed or praised for their actions or attitudes. Appropriately, then, moral responsibility is often contrasted with mere causal responsibility. A hurricane might be causally responsible for destruction to your home, but we do not blame it for that (certainly not morally, and probably not otherwise), or hold it against the hurricane. The hurricane has a certain kind of power and influence but it is not, after all, a responsible agent. Were a friend to be causally responsible for destruction to your home, however, more difficult questions would

arise. Did that person know what she was doing? Did she do it intentionally? If so, it would be natural to consider her morally responsible and, at the least, blame her for it. If causing harm to your house was simply an accident, however, or if your friend was doing what she did only because she had been forced into it, it might make sense to excuse your friend from responsibility, or at least from blame.

Talk of *moral* responsibility focuses attention on personal accountability for morally significant behaviors. But it is also possible to be responsible, in the rich and important sense that talk about moral responsibility attempts to pick out, for non-moral states of affairs. For example, a person might practice drawing or painting, and create a work of art that seems meaningful and significant. One would generally be considered responsible for doing so, but it might be confusing to speak here of moral responsibility. A better approach might be to appropriate Susan Wolf's idea of "deep" responsibility (Wolf 1990). An artist can be deeply responsible for her or his work, and worthy of significant praise for it, without that work having to be morally significant. Deep responsibility is therefore a broad concept, one that includes the idea of moral responsibility but is not limited to it.

Saying more about what it means for a person to be deeply responsible for something turns out to be a complex and controversial task. The most intuitive approach may refer to attributability, as well as praise and blame. On this approach, a personal agent is responsible for something if it is attributable to that person, in such a way that it is appropriate to hold that person accountable. Attributability, then, is what makes blame and praise appropriate (Strawson 1982). Blame and praise are typically understood as umbrella terms meant to encompass a wide range of positive and negative reactive attitudes that respond to actions (or states of character) for which agents are responsible. One can blame or praise oneself as well as other agents. When we do blame, we hold the person we blame responsible in the sense that we attribute something to that person, see it as bad or wrong in some way, and consider it proper to call them to account. Notably, however, it is possible to be responsible for actions for which one should be neither blamed nor praised, such as in cases where a person is responsible for doing something morally indifferent. Understanding responsibility in terms of attributability can be helpful, therefore, in cases where thinking about reactive attitudes are not.

The metaphor of a "ledger" is sometimes used to develop these ideas (Zimmerman 1988). The ledger metaphor offers an image that makes particular sense from a religious perspective. It is an ancient tradition within monotheism to think of God as a judge who keeps accounts concerning what a person has or has not done or stood for. In this picture, the ledger is the divine account book, a register of the actions and states of character that are attributable to each person. Much like financial accounts, this register contains not merely a list of things done but negative and positive entries for good or bad behavior that can add up in various ways. Of course, one need not believe that any such books are actually kept by anyone for the ledger metaphor to be helpful. That said, it is notable that even apart from religious traditions about God as judge, we often speak of ourselves as keeping accounts on others.

To have a ledger at all is to have a special kind of status; not every being is capable of performing actions that ought to be charged to their own personal account. Even those who have a ledger will find that not everything about them is listed on the ledger. Their physical attributes, for instance, are an important part of who they are, but they are not accountable in any deep way for such attributes (plastic surgery aside). What is entered on the ledger is relationally significant, provoking praise or blame, because the actions, attitudes, and so on that are recorded are attributable to the person whose story as a personal agent is being told in the lines of the book. The ledger metaphor thus suggests that accountability is social but does so without implying that being deeply responsible is merely a social construct.

The account books are supposed to contain objective judgments that make praise and blame fair and appropriate. Taken as a whole, persons' ledgers tell a story about who they are, in light of which those persons can be called to account, and potentially asked to answer for what they have done and even who they are.

In keeping with what was said above, it is notable that although a ledger entry makes it possible for a person to receive praise or blame, it need not imply that either praise or blame is required. It is possible for something to be attributed to a person in such a way that that person is accountable for it without deserving blame or praise. The example given to make this point above was indifferent actions, which might be acceptable but not deserve particular praise. It may also be possible to be responsible for bad acts without being blamed for them, for instance, if a person acts badly but only under compulsion. Being coerced does not justify doing just anything, but it does seem to mitigate or in some cases even nullify blame or praise.

It is also widely agreed that blame and praise do not necessarily lead to punishments or rewards. Since external expressions of blame and praise can function as punishments or rewards, it can be helpful to distinguish between attitudes of blame and praise, and public censure or endorsement. Words can provide powerful incentives and reinforcement. What we typically think of when we think of punishment or rewards, of course, goes beyond words to the assignment of penalties or giving good things. Here it is helpful to keep in mind that although anyone may be in a position to properly have an attitude of blame or praise, it is more rare to have the standing required to properly assign a person a penalty or reward. In addition, it is notable that the logic of assignments of deep responsibility, blame, and punishment seem to differ in certain respects. Being responsible or even blameworthy is not a sufficient reason for being punished (much here depends on one's theory of what punishment means, and what it is for).

This overview is meant to illuminate the idea of deep responsibility and to offer a picture of the relationships between some of the key terms often used to talk about responsibility. It does not, however, address the problems of how freedom relates to responsibility, or of what conditions must be fulfilled in order for a person to be responsible for anything.

Responsibility and Freedom

That there is a connection between freedom and deep (moral) responsibility might seem obvious. It is widely taken for granted that responsible agents are free, and vice versa. However, the term "freedom" can mean a great many different things. As a result, it can be confusing or even misleading to associate the two ideas. The question of how political freedom (the freedom to follow your conscience as an actor in the realm of politics, however "politics" might be defined) relates to deep responsibility differs in important ways from the question of how personal freedom (on many accounts, the idea that something is "up to me," perhaps in the sense that I have intentional control over whether it comes to pass or not) relates to deep responsibility. One might, for instance, want to claim that even non-responsible actors (such as infants or incapacitated adults) are entitled to a variety of political freedoms. By contrast, it is widely thought that personal freedom is required for and implied by deep responsibility.

Here again, complications arise. It was historically common to speak of personal freedom in normative terms, associating true freedom with the power to be good and to know what is true. Today, we tend to focus on more structural kinds of personal freedom, such as freedom of the will, of choice, or of action.

All of these kinds of personal freedom are related to responsibility, but not necessarily in the same ways. It seems clear, for instance, that a person could be responsible for her or his actions without having the normative freedom described above.

Libertarians, who consider determination incompatible with deep responsibility, tend to think of freedom of the will as a condition for responsibility. By contrast, at least a fair number of compatibilists, who consider determination of at least some sorts compatible with responsibility, have been open to the possibility that the conditions for freedom differ from those of responsibility. On such views, one might be responsible without being free (e.g. Fischer and Ravizza 1998). This position gains credence from the fact that although it may make sense to think that agents can be responsible for coerced actions, it can seem odd to say that a person who has been coerced is free. (Even if I have been threatened one could argue that I remain responsible for the way I responded to the threats, or which threats I responded to.)

However, the question of how freedom and responsibility are related is one that this article will largely put aside. Perhaps the best argument for doing so, aside from the limitations of space, is the pragmatic point that given the vast number of things people mean when they appeal to freedom, it is hard to clarify the idea of or conditions for deep responsibility by reference to it. Freedom is no less confusing than responsibility, so rather than claim that responsibility depends on freedom, it is helpful to simply elaborate on the specific conditions for responsibility one has in mind.

Theories of Responsibility

As just noted, philosophers typically divide theories about the conditions of responsibility into two broad categories, the compatibilist and the libertarian (a species of incompatibilism). Compatibilists hold that deep responsibility is compatible with determination of at least some sort, whereas incompatibilists hold that it is not. Libertarians are incompatibilists who believe that human beings are free and responsible (for an incompatibilist who is not a libertarian, see Pereboom 2017).

Typically, libertarians maintain that persons are accountable only for what they could have avoided. The avoidability requirement, however, is not meant to capture the essence of deep responsibility but rather functions as a way to ensure that agents meet a more fundamental condition of responsibility. That more basic condition is that agents be in some way or other the ultimate source of the actions or attitudes that are attributed to them. This "sourcehood" requirement is not meant to deny Niebuhr's insight that human agents are fundamentally responsive as beings who are always part of interconnected webs of relationships. Libertarians do not see responsible agents as merely autonomous. They do tie deep responsibility to a kind of autonomy, however, inasmuch as they claim that it is only fair to hold a person accountable for what is fundamentally attributable to that person, and that what is attributable to that person is only what that person had some sort of final say concerning. Thus, if I am inclined to love the things my family has loved, but could do otherwise, then I make my own non-determined choice about who I am and how I act, and it seems fair to hold me accountable for that. If, by contrast, I am not able to avoid doing something or being a certain way, then I do not appear to own it in the same deep way. In short, as Robert Kane has argued, to be morally responsible for something "we must be responsible to some degree by virtue of our own voluntary actions for anything that is a sufficient ground (arche) or reason (condition, cause, or motive) for our acting as we do" (Kane 2000, 66).

This claim applies especially to our wills: if we do what we want, but do not control what we want, we are under the control of some cause external to us. The libertarian ideal is thus that "Man himself must make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, whether good or evil, he is to become" (Kant 1960, 40).

One might wonder how it is possible for a human being to be an ultimate source of her or his own behavior. In some ways, libertarians are still refining and developing one or both of two suggestions made centuries ago by Anselm of Canterbury (Timpe 2013). Anselm thought that humans define themselves by their choices, and most fundamentally by their non-determined decisions about whether to prioritize self-love or love for justice. Such choices can incorporate antecedent influences from one's past yet go beyond them, making it possible for human beings to have a kind of power of self-creation. Anselm also saw God and other personal agents as "agent-causes," whose actions cannot finally be explained by reference to any antecedent causes (or mere chance) but rather by reference to a person's having willed them (Anselm 1998).

Although it has ancient roots, libertarianism is particularly popular today. Historically, however, compatibilist views were at least as influential and widespread. Compatibilists often begin making their case by offering a distinction between kinds of determination (ancient examples include Augustine 1999; Calvin 1996). Causal or theological determinism are thought not to undermine responsibility, but being forced or coerced does. Correlatively, many compatibilists argue that it is possible to have whatever kind of control of one's will and actions is required in order to be morally responsible, even if one cannot do or be otherwise, so long as one is able to act for one's own reasons. They argue, therefore, that in itself necessity is no barrier to responsibility. After all, if I intentionally act in a particular way because I think it best, why should that not be attributed to me, and why should I not be held accountable for it, even if I am expressing who I necessarily am?

Perhaps the most famous and influential recent compatibilist account has been Harry Frankfurt's. Frankfurt suggested that although we may not be responsible for the first-order desires we simply find ourselves with, we are responsible for the desires we identify ourselves with (our second-order desires) (Frankfurt 1988). Making a choice remains important on his view, but Frankfurt was aware that if determinism of some sort is true, the choices we make are unavoidable. Frankfurt argued, however, that what matters is not whether our choices could have been otherwise but whether they flow out of what we, upon reflection, endorse.

A more recent addition to the conversation have been what some call "quality of will" compatibilist accounts. On such views persons are responsible for their attitudes, when their attitudes are properly sensitive to reasons, and for the behavior that flows from their attitudes (e.g. Scanlon 2008, Chapter 4). This makes it possible for persons to be accountable for the character they have even in cases where they did not choose to have the emotional or belief-states that make their character what it is. Decentering the importance of choice in attributions of responsibility seems to suggest that responsibility is not mainly about control but about personal ownership (Couenhoven 2013).

One increasingly influential response among philosophers to these disagreements has been to distinguish ever more carefully between varieties of deep responsibility (Shoemaker 2015). It may be that a number of important qualities of character can be attributed to us even if we have not chosen them, or if we have no option but to choose them. Certain responses of, say, repugnance or delight might be

appropriate in response to such aretaic qualities. Such reactions might be rather different, however, from more demanding ideas of accountability, which might be associated with having higher degrees of control over oneself. Although extremely fine distinctions between terms that seem to have overlapping meanings in common speech can be unhelpful, the intuitions to which these ideas refer force us to ask whether moral responsibility is one integrated concept or a compilation of many. A way to mediate between these options might be the suggestion that responsibility has a unified meaning but also comes in degrees, the degrees of which have been at least partially captured by many existing theories of responsibility.

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CHAPTER 24

Value Theory

William Schweiker

Definition and Task

Value theory is a rational account of the meaning, definition, source, and justification of claims about "value" in human life and conduct. It is related to, but distinct from the narrower task of "axiology" as classifying what things are "good." By "value" one means, most simply, what people care about and deem important, whatever the reason or source of their care. Not only things and people can have value or worth, but so too ideas, beliefs, ideals, experiences, events, and so on. There is seemingly no end to what people can and have valued. The attribution of value may be, as will be explored below, due to the intrinsic nature of something or someone; it might rest on the usefulness of an entity or idea; beauty and other aesthetic qualities are also valued. One can thereby differentiate aesthetic, religious, economic, political, and many other kinds of value, including, for this entry, moral value. In terms of moral value, a distinction is often drawn between moral and non-moral or even pre-moral values as well as intrinsic and instrumental values. In religious ethics, these ideas are often important for relating religious and non-religious values or goods.

One task of value theory in general, then, is to define and clarify the types and relations among human values (see R. B. Perry, *General Theory of Value* 1926). This is important in ethics since human individual and social life are surrounded by and saturated with values. However, value theory within ethics, as normative reflection on the orientation of human life, must provide the means to determine which values can and ought to guide human conduct and how to adjudicate between values when they conflict. With respect to moral values, we are especially interested in reasons for actions, or, stated otherwise, answers to the question: why do you do that? Ethics must also assess and judge the justification of those reasons for action. In that respect value theory cuts across the traditional categorization of moral theory into normative and meta-ethical inquiry. This entry will focus on value theory within ethics, addressing other forms of value tangentially.

There is a related and yet distinct task of value theory for ethics that reaches back through the history of Western thought. In his famous dialogue, *Euthyphro,* often associated with the question of the source of the good (is it from the gods or is it self-subsistent?), Plato's Socrates asks the young Euthyphro,

> But what sort of thing would make us enemies, angry at each other,
> if we disagree about it and are unable to arrive at a decision? Perhaps
> you cannot say offhand, but I suggest you consider whether it would

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

> not be the just and unjust, beautiful and ugly, good and evil. Are not these the things, when we disagree about them and cannot reach a satisfactory decision, concerning which we on occasion become enemies – you, and I, and all other men?
>
> (Plato 1984: 7c–d, 47)

Human conflict seems to be waged over competing beliefs about values, moral and non-moral, say, democracy or human rights or the value of prenatal life. While disputes over matters of fact can be resolved empirically and disagreements on rational matters can be settled by means of deliberation and validation (however defined), the most difficult disputes to resolve are those about values. What people care about and why can and does pit son against father (as in the *Euthyphro* itself), family against the state (see *Antigone*), nation against nation (the history of wars from the *Iliad* onward), or civilization against civilization (see Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 1996) with each side claiming the rightness of its conduct.

Beyond clarifying the types, sources, and meaning of value within value theory, ethics itself as a discourse about moral value must seek to provide non-violent means for the resolution of conflicting values. In fact, this search for peace may be, humanly speaking, the *raison d'être* of ethics. It is why one undertakes the labor of critical and normative moral reflection. In this respect, value theory is crucial for the analytical and conceptual work of ethics but also in terms of the practical purpose of orienting human conduct. The following pages explore these basic tasks of value theory mindful of the challenge that conflicts of values put to the work of ethics. Yet, it cannot, by the nature of the case, discuss in detail every topic in value theory, say, value pluralism or value monism. The constructive claim of the entry is that value theory is important in ethics because of the issue of human conflict and the search for a moral and peaceful resolution to it.

Types of Value

In spite of the importance of value in human life, there is little agreement about its "meaning," and how, if at all one can communicate about individual values. Granting that value is "what is important" to an individual or group of people, what they care about or have an interest in, it is still not clear that such import can be adequately articulated within any culture's linguistic and cultural forms. Must value ultimately escape rational definition, communication, and adjudication? Are values solely the product of a society's beliefs and discourses? In light of these and other questions, thinkers have isolated different types and terms for value.

Value as Price and Utility

The simplest, and in our global age most ubiquitous, means for communicating about "value" is to denominate its meaning in economic terms, say, price. This definition shares with the common sense meaning of value as what is important or cared about, but it complicates matters in terms of what *creates* value. Some, like Adam Smith no less than Karl Marx, argued that labor creates value in the so-called labor theory of value. Others have argued that value or price is determined by the market with respect to supply and demand in relations of exchange. Likewise, neoclassical economists speak of "utility," meaning by this the value that someone (e.g. a consumer) expects to derive from something at a certain price. Debates about the meaning and source of value within business and economics are ongoing, but

their moral relevance is the extent to which utility and price define every form of value, that is, allow all values to be commensurate. There are then two questions. First, can one kind of value be applied across diverse categories of objects? For example, can we put a price on a "valuable" idea or work of art or a person? Second, are there some things, say, persons, whose value cannot be reduced to any price, say, because they have independent worth in themselves?

The moral theory most interested in commensurating values is classical utilitarianism. Utilitarians aimed to show that every form of pleasure or interest could be treated alike and one way to do so was to assign a price and thus utility to them. This argument gave way to John Stuart Mill's more nuanced account of forms of pleasure and thus an expanded sense of utility. Yet even in Mill's case, the concept of "justice," which hardly seems commensurate with other values or pleasures, could be related to utility. We leave the discussion of economic value to other entries in *The Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*.

Intrinsic and Instrumental Values

Within forms of ethics that resist a utilitarian calculus a distinction must be drawn between intrinsic and instrumental value, although there are other types as well. Instrumental value is a means to a separate, further end. I might, for instance, value my car as a means to get to work. Insofar as the car fulfills that function, then it has instrumental value to me and can be easily replaced by another car that performs the same task more efficiently and cheaply. There is nothing inherent in, or essential to, the car that is of value; it simply does the job it is meant to do. It is instrumental to other ends or purpose that I might have.

Intrinsic or inherent value, conversely, indicates that something cared about in and of itself. This is the framework for Immanuel Kant's famous distinction between worth (intrinsic value) and price (instrumental value) (Kant 2012). I do not value my son, hopefully, because he is instrumental to caring for me in my retirement, for example. I do not love a friend because that person is a means to advancing my reputation or increasing my income. In fact, the ideas "love" and "son" designate non-instrumental or intrinsic values. These individuals are not means to further ends, but, as Kant put it, ends-in-themselves. The paradigm case of an intrinsic value is oneself. That is, I do not, unless deluded or wrongly self-sacrificial, love myself as a means to some other end, say, the glory of the nation or the pride of my race.

Of course, these categories can shift, as pragmatists have shown (see below). I might instrumentally value my car as a means to get to the intrinsic value of having a job. But, on reflection, having a job might be instrumental to loving my son. These are, then, distinctions dependent on context and matters in view. But they do designate two distinct, if related, perspectives on value: objective and subjective. Objective, or intrinsic, value exists independent of how people perceive, speak, or act on it. Subjective value depends on the emotions, experiences, desires, interests, or perceptions of valuing individuals. These two types of value have often been taken as exhaustive of the types of moral value.

Hypothetical and Categorical Values

In Kant's moral philosophy, the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value generates two distinct correlated types of duties. A hypothetical duty is an obligation on me insofar as it pertains to a means to some desired end. The object of the duty is a means to some further end, that is, its value is instrumental. If I want to learn to play violin, then I have a hypothetical duty to practice daily; if not, then no such duty obliges me.

Categorical obligations are binding in every case and for everyone. They concern ends-in-themselves (say, persons) and are not subjective in the above sense. I have a duty to respect a person whether or not I like him or her. In fact, respect just *is* the marker of that obligation; it testifies to a categorical, that is, intrinsic value. To act justly or to tell the truth are also, for Kant, categorical imperatives that signal the intrinsic worth of a peaceful community and language as a means for human communication and understanding. These ideas have been important in the development of modern human rights discourse as well as our treatment of animals, the natural environment, and the ethics of Artificial Intelligence.

Kant also articulated at once a modern and yet also ancient conception of the Highest Good, morally speaking. That is, while religious sages have long identified the Highest Good with God, the sacred, or the holy (see *Euthyphro*), other thinkers have defined the highest moral good as some relation between virtue and human flourishing, namely happiness (*eudaimonia*). Kant held that the highest good is not virtue itself (as the Stoics argued), happiness as pleasure (hedonists old and new), virtue and the good fortune to be happy (Aristotle), but rather a synthesis of happiness commensurate with virtue, that is, justice. The possibility of this synthesis, and thus a reason to act on the highest good so conceived, warranted, for Kant, the postulate (not proof) of the idea of a God to reward virtue and immortality in order to work out one's worthiness to be happy.

Contributory Value

Pragmatic theories of value, like John Dewey's (1929), argue that human beings always act with ends-in-view or certain ideals. However, insofar as humans are always acting and adapting to changing circumstances, there is no such thing as an "intrinsic" value, but, rather, that which serves in the ongoing search for some consummate fit between an agent and its environment. In this respect, every value contributes to the resolution of the search for a creative fit realizing that, in the ongoing labor of life, new "fits," and so new contributor values, will be needed. This has led one contemporary pragmatist to argue that values are about self-formation and self-transcendence in that we are dependent on going beyond ourselves toward ideal ends (Joas 2000). Pragmatism also elides the philosophical distinction of objective versus subjective values.

Beginning somewhat like Charles Darwin with an organism's need to adapt to its environment, Dewey argued that values are what contribute to, and so shape the ongoing interaction between the two (Dewey 1958). Human beings, as thinking and acting creatures, can revise their values in order to achieve a consummate fit with their social and natural environment, a final ideal. There are no intrinsic values or fixed ideals that are not open to revision and could thereby thwart and distort action. This means that what was once a final ideal can become, in the flow of time, an instrumental value as agents reflect on and adjust their action. In a word, value construction is an ongoing creative process of reflexive action seeking to further the labor of life. Value is that which contributes to this creative process.

Theories of Value

The concept of value is essential to understanding distinctively human action. It is not surprising, then, that within the history of Western philosophical and religious ethics there have been various "theories" of value (axiologies). These theories seek to clarify the meaning of moral value, the relation between

moral values (if there be more than one), and to justify the meaning and ranking of values. Given the immense scope of the topic, we can organize the myriad theories into four basic types, with claims about a transcendent Good, on one extreme, and the idea that values are mere human social constructions, on the other. Between these are theories that conceptualize value in terms of the proper function of a being or the object of a special human intuition or moral sense.

The Transcendent Good

Perhaps the oldest philosophically sophisticated axiology is found in the work of Plato, as intimated in the citation above from the *Euthyphro*. Plato's contention was that in a proper sense, "good" cannot be defined. It resists articulation because it is the form in light of which we apprehend other things. Comparing the "Good" to the sun, in his *Republic*, Plato argued for the Form of the Good as a transcendent source of every specific good. The philosophical task, on this account, is a journey or ascent of the mind to a "vision" of the Good in order to gain a proper knowledge of contingent reality. This meant, importantly, that philosophy is, conceptually speaking, learning to die to the realm of appearances in order to apprehend the reality of the Good. For Plato, what is "good" is intrinsically so, because what is meant by the good is something that inheres in its "object" regardless of knowledge of it or a community's discourse about values.

Plato's thought has, of course, been a dominant voice in the history of Western ethics, philosophical and religious, with expressions in Jewish, Islamic, and Christian thought. In the ancient world, religious thinkers like St. Augustine and Philo, among others, or medieval theologians such as St. Bonaventure, in *The Mind's Road to God* (Bonaventure 1953), continued the argument in theistic terms. For classical theists, God is the supreme reality and proper object of human desire, and God is a being in whom is found the pattern or archetype of reality. This makes contemplation of God and/or the love of God and others the highest human good.

Surprisingly, Platonic insights also appeared within twentieth-century ethics. G. E. Moore, in *Principia Ethica* (1993), argued that in the analysis of moral concepts, "good" is indefinable since one can always ask of any ostensive candidate for "goodness," "is it really good?" As an indefinable predicate of anything, Moore argued within a generally consequentialist outlook that value is the object of an intuition akin to the experience of "yellow." One must experience it to know it and yellow is not the object of description. This means, in his terms, that good is a non-natural property and thereby escapes the so-called naturalistic fallacy, namely that moral terms can be "reduced" to natural characteristic of a thing, person, or action (see below). Rather, the good or value is intuited as it supervenes on non-moral realities.

Another "Platonic" voice in twentieth-century ethics was the philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch who famously argued that the "Good" is sovereign over other concepts and that, in fact, the idea of Good can replace previously metaphysical conceptions of God as a real, existent, supreme reality. In this sense, as she put it in her Gifford Lectures, metaphysics should guide morals (1992). Yet like Moore, who shifted the argument to the nature of moral properties, Murdoch likewise redirected the Platonic argument, in two ways. The Good is known, first, by loving attention to concrete other people rather than as the form of all forms (see Murdoch 1970 and Antonaccio 2000). Second, she argued that we perceive the world with respect to gradations of value and the task of the moral life is to escape self-consoling fantasies in order to see the world and others in truth.

The Argument from Function

The oldest line of criticism of the Platonic Good is found in the thought of Aristotle. He denied Good is a unity and looked instead to the proper and maximal function of a thing or creature. A good "shield" is one that fulfills its function. Human beings too have a proper function. While we share bodily and social natures with other animals, humans alone can rationally guide their conduct. Insofar as the "Good" is, formally speaking, what everything aims at, as noted in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1999), the human aim is happiness (*eudaimonia*) achieved through rational and virtuous action. In terms of axiology, then, Aristotle's argument is that "good" is the flourishing and perfect functioning of a specific thing or being such that it will be predicated of a warrior differently than, say, a "knife." This is, in terms of moral theory, a form of ethical naturalism.

Aristotle's thought has also had a profound influence on Western Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and philosophical ethics. Widely used by medieval Jewish thinkers like Maimonides to give an account of the moral (as distinct from the intellectual) virtues. Muslim scholars Avicenna, Averroes, and Al-Farabi as well as Christian theologians like Thomas Aquinas each drew on Aristotle's virtue ethics, often linking it to biblical law (Maimonides, Aquinas), the example and teaching of Muhammad and the Qur'an, as well as, in Aquinas, ideas about natural law. In each case, what is of value is the perfection and flourishing of the being in question, specifically, the human (Rubenstein 2004).

Aristotelian naturalism fell out of favor with the criticism of medieval scholasticism by nominalist thinkers and then with the rise of modern, experimental science, especially Darwinian thought, that challenged the idea of a natural teleology to any living thing. Yet, surprisingly, here too there have been several twentieth-century revivals of ancient Aristotelian axiology. One contemporary form of Aristotelian virtue ethics was advanced by the Catholic philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in his landmark work *After Virtue* (1981), where he argued that modern moral thought is pieced together from fragments of different ethical systems and thereby feeds endless moral disagreement. The answer to this condition is to reclaim a teleological vision of the human good in terms of the virtues and practices to which they are germane. In later works, like *Dependent, Rational Animals* (2001), MacIntyre embraced a morally robust ethical naturalism in terms of his conception of human value.

Amartya Sen, an economist, and Martha Nussbaum, a philosopher, have developed what they call the "capabilities" theory which draws heavily on Aristotle and others. Their argument is that human beings have rights to the development of their natural capabilities important for their flourishing. Relatedly, the philosopher Philippa Foot developed an axiology in her book *Natural Goodness* (2001) that, like Aristotle, depended on a concept of the flourishing of an individual as a member of a species. Granting developments in biology and philosophy of science, Foot nevertheless championed a form of ethical naturalism wherein "value" is defined with respect to the flourishing of a being given its distinctive natural features.

Intuitionism and Moral Sense

Another strand in theories about value is moral sense theory or, more broadly, ethical intuitionism. The claims of these positions, generally stated, is that human beings can know the distinction between moral/immoral and good/bad and so moral facts non-inferentially either through a specific cognitive capacity (conscience or moral sense) or emotional experience with respect to various sentiments, say, benevolence or self-love. In modern British moral philosophy, thinkers like David Hume, Adam Smith, Lord Shaftsbury, and Francis Hutcheson argued, in different ways, for a moral sense in the case of Hume and

Smith, within a hedonic idea of value linked to pleasure and pain. Yet this hedonism was properly moral insofar as the moral sense, say, benevolence, motivated action for the good of general utility.

Other British thinkers, like Thomas Reid, the founder of Scottish common sense philosophy, Bishop Joseph Butler, and theologians like John Wesley and, in the American colonies, Jonathan Edwards, also argued for a distinct moral sense on analogy to other senses. Edwards, in his *The Nature of True Virtue* (2003), claimed that religion is a matter of holy affections and that virtue is consent to the system of Being and an apprehension of moral beauty. Butler argued that "conscience" dictates our duties consistent with or contrary to other principles of action (self-love and benevolence) (Butler 1983). In a word, the field of human values, for example, aesthetic, religious, moral, were understood to be apprehended by a distinct sense, say, the sense of beauty, or through a distinct rational faculty, say, conscience. For these thinkers, moral properties are not inferred from natural ones, thus they rejected naturalism as well as rationalism.

There are also contemporary forms of moral sense theory and intuitionism. Deeply influenced by the thought of Jonathan Edwards and also Pragmatism, H. Richard Niebuhr and, with a more naturalist bent, James M. Gustafson argue for relational theories of value. The first axiological question for these theologians is "good for whom?" "Value" is what advances a form of life within complex sets of relations, social and natural, that sustain and limit that being. The perception of that value, and hence what is a responsible relation to it, is a sense of what is "fitting" to the situation (Niebuhr) or an informed intuition backed by a process of discernment (Gustafson 1992). In each case, value is increased through the right relations within a social or natural situation.

Ethical intuitionism, has found advocates in W. D. Ross (1877–1971) and more recently Robert Audi (1941–). Building on Ross, Audi argues for a form of deontological, pluralistic intuitionism. That is, there is a plurality of real intrinsic values open to human intuition that can be understood in relation to a Kantian-like deontology: the Good is in the Right, as he puts it (Audi 2004). The advantage of this form of intuitionism is that it avoids the problems found in G. E. Moore's consequentialism because it insists on the intrinsic moral status of every individual (see Jung 2015). First noted by Henry Sedgwick, in his *Method of Ethics*, the most basic form of intuitionism is the non-inferential grasp of moral duties outside of complex reasoning about cases. Kant's arguments about the Categorical Imperative or Butler's dictates of conscience would seem to be cases in point. Rather than depending on elaborate systems of ethics, the human can grasp under its own lights principles of right and wrong (Kaspar 2012).

The Construction of Value

We have seen that value theory touches on issues in moral epistemology, namely, how values are known, say with respect to a "moral sense" or by analysis of the specific function of an animal, including humans, or a thing. Value theory also poses metaphysical and meta-ethical questions: are values real, and if so in what way, and do they have truth status or are they the objects of sentiments and experiences, and hence non-cognitive? Values are also basic to a conception of moral agency in terms of motivation, say, the quest for happiness or moral excellence, interests, and utility, and thus are reasons for actions. Theories of value in ethics answer these questions in different ways, as has been indicated.

One other type of value theory remains to be addressed, namely, the category of theories that claim that values are individual or social constructions. The value theories explored above claimed that value is somehow a metaphysical feature of reality, however they are known (Platonic-like theories); defined with respect to the proper functioning and flourishing of a thing or creature; or the perception or command of a

special moral sense. In this respect, each of them is a version of *moral realism,* meaning by this that moral statements have truth-value; they can be true or false. But there are other theories of moral value that claim that value is an expression of subjective preference or the (arbitrary) creation of human communities.

In many respects, constructivist theories are the most dominant ones in later modern, globalized societies. The reason for this fact seems simple. Given the profound moral diversity of such societies as well as the loss of any shared religious or metaphysical conception of value, it seems that different persons and communities simply "value" different things and have diverse ways of ranking values. This has the added attraction of seemingly avoiding the conflict of values, first seen in the *Euthyphro*, since there is no "objective" standard for adjudicating between theories of value. Certainly, the global reach of value as price and economic utility is an expression of constructivism in axiology. Price is set by the market and not written into the nature of things.

Perhaps the most dramatic and controversial constructivist theory of value was advanced by Friedrich Nietzsche in the nineteenth century. Nietzsche, in texts like *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1967), argued that everything is driven by a will-to-power (*Wille zu Macht*): an urge which every being has to increase its power and its capacity to dominate others, but also simply to affirm its life. Against this background, societies develop "tables of values," that is, conceptions of what is valued and then a ranking of what is deemed valuable. He argued that two fundamental value systems dominate the West. One found originally in ancient heroic Greek culture, especially Sparta, which prized strength and the affirmation of life marked by the axiological distinction of good/bad. The good is simply what the strong endorses, especially themselves, while the bad are the weak. With a supposed "slave revolt" among Jews and Christians this heroic table of values was overturned and with it there was instituted the distinction good/evil where the good is what is humble and weak whereas the evil is anything that harms the weak. In this way, the West came to despise the will-to-power and also finite life itself even while being driven by it. The West became, in a word, nihilistic. The task now, Nietzsche, insisted was the "self-overcoming" of "Man" through a new transvaluation of values. He was insistent that any value system that denies the vitality of living things must, ultimately, be overcome.

The legacies of Nietzsche's work have been many, some horrific (National Socialism) and some not. Communitarian ethics, for example, holds that values are constructed and understood in terms of the discourse and practices of some community and its tradition, for example, the Christian Church (Hauerwas 1981) or some oppressed racial group (Cannon 1995). In each case, values serve the affirmation of the life of the relevant community and one must be or become a member to grasp its values as reasons for action. Pragmatic theories of value creation are also constructivist, as noted above in Dewey's ethics. Then too, there are radical relativists who believe that values are the creation of and thus relative to individuals. Like the ancient world, claims about value dominate much contemporary social thought and moral theory.

Value Theory and Ethics

The domain of value theory is vast and it is obviously contested territory among moral thinkers, religious or not. If Socrates is right, as noted above in the *Euthyphro*, then ethics is, in itself, a moral advance for human beings. That is, if reasoned debate about conflicting values can in some small measure triumph over hostile conflict, then the good of peace is shown to be humanly possible and not merely a wishful dream. In this respect, one can say, again, that value theory is, *in nuce*, the grounds and purpose of moral reflection itself.

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CHAPTER 25

Alterity

Paul Mendes-Flohr

The concept of *alterity*, denoting the non-self, marks a radical shift from the question of "How do I know other minds?" to "How am I to relate to the other?" whose inner-reality is acknowledged to be beyond the epistemic reach of cognition. This entry traces two overarching approaches to alterity, transcendental phenomenology and the philosophy of dialogue. The former, principally associated with Edmund Husserl, formulated this issue as one of "inter-subjectivity" or the intentional act of becoming aware of others; the latter, represented Emanuel Levinas and Martin Buber, as one of interpersonal relations, which for both has the quality of a religious act. The entry concludes with a brief account of the appropriation of the concept of alterity by various humanistic disciples.

A term derived from the Latin *alter* designating the other (of two), alterity denotes a philosophical problem reaching back to René Descartes (1598–1650) who pondered the epistemological dilemma whether knowledge of other minds is possible. The Cartesian "I think. Therefore, I am," poses the question of the relation of the self – the cognitive I – to the non-self. How, indeed, can I know the other and his or her inner reality, or Otherness? Is the other a mere object of the knowing subject? In that case, the other would be but an epistemic iteration of one's self, the "same," implicitly denying its otherness. And should the other be held to be intrinsically beyond the reach of rational cognition, one is faced with an untenable solipsism and epistemological relativism. In twentieth-century thought this seemingly intractable epistemological conundrum was re-framed to consider the ontological status of the other. To mark this shift in focus from the epistemic other to the ontological other, the term "alterity" is increasingly employed. Posited as an autonomous subject and agent, the ontological alterity of the other is not regarded as an object of knowledge but rather is enjoined to honor the non-self in his or her irrefragable and distinctive otherness. The overarching question facing otherness or alterity so conceived is thus not how one knows the other, but how one is to relate to the other. How is one to respond to the other who confronts one in concrete, specific situations?

Initial adumbrations of this shift to ontological otherness may be found in Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), who famously argued that the human sciences (*Geistewissenschaften*) are not to be studied according to the analytical presuppositions and methods appropriate to the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*). Whereas the latter seeks causal explanation (*Erklärung*), the human sciences require understanding (*Verstehen*). This methodological distinction accordingly entails a transition from epistemology to hermeneutics. In seeking to gain an understanding of others and their life-experience, Dilthey insisted, one cannot assume others are mere extensions of oneself. Through such essays as

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"Understanding other Persons and their Life-Expressions" (Dilthey 1910), he set the ground for the emergence of a phenomenology of the other.

To understand why a child cries, one does not seek to explain the cause of a child's sobbing by analyzing the chemical composition of her tears or the physiological process of ocular tearing; rather one seeks to understand the inner lived-experience (*Erlebnis*) that is prompting the emotional state of crying. Understanding (*Verstehen*) the lived-experiences of others thus requires an imaginative entry into the other's experience (*Nacherleben*), which is not, however, merely an act of empathy. One gains access to the inner experience of others through its expression in language, gestures, or artistic production. One understands the inner-experience of others through these culturally objectified structures of expression that give voice to that experience. The interpretive decoding of another's experience, then – such as the crying of one who is hurt, physically or psychologically – as articulated in a specific culture's discursive structures is thus said to have the dialectical effect of acknowledging the subjective uniqueness of the experience of that person, while also allowing it to be recognized as an experience that the interpreter can recognize as one they have had or can imagine having (Dilthey 1910).

In broad strokes, there are two distinctive approaches to the phenomenology of the other, transcendental phenomenology and the philosophy of dialogue, as delineated and systematically analyzed by Michael Theunissen (Theunissen 1984). To explain our experience of a non-self, transcendental phenomenology deploys the concept of inter-subjectivity, a technical term first formulated by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). The inter-subjective experience of others, Husserl argued, is borne by empathy, the conscious attribution of intentional acts to other subjects by which we put ourselves, as it were, in the other's shoes. The vicarious experience of the innermost motives or emotions of others, however, are felt as real or imagined; but empathy as an inter-subjective experience is *not* the experience, feelings, and motives of the other. Hence, it is argued that the transcendental theory of intersubjectivity – even as elaborated and refined by the likes of Heidegger and Sartre – is unable to relate to the other *qua* other, for it merely provides an empathetic sense of the other's inner world. Husserl's inter-subjectivity, in the end, remains within the realm of the intra-subjective, and thus perforce reduces alterity and ontological difference to the "same." By deducing the other by way of analogy, Husserl, in effect, derives the other on the basis of the Same and hence ceases to be to "other as such" (Levinas 1984). It would seem that Dilthey's cultural hermeneutics, in which one sees one's self in the other, also fails to confirm that other of its alterity.

Dialogical philosophy avoids the subjectivism of transcendental phenomenology by assuming what Martin Buber (1878–1965) calls a "primal distance" (*Urdistanz*) from the Other, which allows one to honor the ontological integrity of difference (Buber 1965a). I-Thou encounter is not an intentional act, for one ultimately meets the other in dialogue, which, as Buber's colleague, Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) put it, in dialogue one addresses "someone [who] is always some one who is always quite a definite some one, and he has not only ears, 'like all the world,' but also a mouth" to which one may – if one is up to it – respond (Rosenzweig 1925, 200). The dialogical response to the other is thus both active and passive. It is a "pure" act that is, "at the same time a doing" and " not doing" (Buber 1923, 42, 77). This paradoxical formulation was inspired by the Chinese Daoist sage Zhuang Zhou's concept of *woe-wie* – no-action, a non-intentional, non-calculating, non-deliberate manner of being the world. In adhering to the "path" of *wo-wie* one is wholly open to the moment, the here and now (Buber 1910). The Daoist doctrine of *wo-wei* would inform Buber's concept of the I-Thou encounter. Cf. "The You encounters me by grace – it cannot be found by seeking. But that I speak the basic word [of I-Thou] to it is a deed of my whole being, it is an essential deed. ... Thus, the relationship is election and electing, passive and active

at once. An action of the whole being must approach passivity, for it does away with all partial actions and thus with any sense of [intentional] action ..." (Buber 1970, 57).

The Other addresses one with the expectation of a response, which may or may not be forthcoming. In responding to the address, one meets the other not as an It, not as the object of an intentional act. Rather one meets the Other as a Thou – as an independent subject; as such dialogue is akin to love, a bond between two individuals that is born of the free response of one to the other. It is neither coerced (by heteronomous precepts) nor generated by the intentional activity of one of the members of the dialogical relationship. It is thus said to be reciprocal. The reciprocity of the I-Thou dialogue is preeminently existential; in its full expression dialogue is instantiated by the mutual confirmation of the other's existential "presence." In this respect, the I-Thou dialogue is meta-ethical.

To further clarify dialogue as a meta-ethical, non-intentional act, Buber sought to differentiate it from empathy (*Einfüllung*) from what he called *Umfassung*, embrace or include. In contrast to empathy – by virtue of which one identifies with the experience of the other as similar to one's own – in *Umfassung* one is attentive to the experience of the other as expressed in distinctive voice, which one seeks to hear without subsuming it under a universal category or with one which one is familiar. When one embraces the pain of another; it is heard not as pain is in general, but as specific pain of a specific person. Nor does one empathetically identify with the pain of the other, for it is to remain the other's specific pain (Buber 1965b, 97f.).

Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) thus somewhat derisively characterized Buber's conception of dialogue as "spiritual friendship" (Levinas 1967, 148). Levinas surmises that the encounter with the other issues in an ethical response (Levinas, 1969, passim). That response may be in the small acts of everyday life by which one acknowledges the needs of the other, such as the gesture of holding the door of an elevator for one not swift afoot, or more urgently in heeding the biblical injunction to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked (Levinas 1969, 77). Buber's response to Levinas's critique highlights the fundamental difference in their respective conceptions of dialogue: One "may clothe the naked and feed the hungry all day and it will remain difficult for him to say a true Thou. If all were well clothed and well nourished, then, the real ethical problem would become wholly visible for the first time" (Buber 1967, 723).

The difference between Buber and Levinas boils down to how they each understand the address of the other (Atlerton 2004). For Levinas it is a call for help, a call for an ethical response, to take on the responsibility of satisfying the perceived need of the other, of relieving the other of his or her anguish. The call need not be uttered in words; the summons may be etched in the face of the other. The visceral response precedes the decision how to realize the responsibility one has taken upon oneself. The conative impulse precedes the cognitive translation of the call. The response is pre-intellectual (or as Husserl would say pre-intentional). The call issued by the face of the other is neither that of God nor any ethical authority. The Face that addresses one has no normative voice behind it. It is the "gaze" of the other in-of-itself that "speaks," that commands. What primes the gaze is beyond our cognitive, or for that matter our auditory reach. It is simply the utter otherness of the gaze of the other that enjoins one's ethical response. The radical otherness of the other is, as it were, outside the person one encounters; it is infinitely beyond him or her. It is the infinite otherness of the other that constitutes its alterity. In the immediacy of the encounter, the other is not experienced as an other subject like oneself, but as a radically Other, who calls one to respond even before determining how to do so: "Obedience precedes any hearing of the command" (Levinas 1978, 148). Radical Otherness begets a radical passivity in which one humbly accepts the command before hearing the concrete command of the other: "The possibility of finding, anachronously,

the order in the obedience itself, and of receiving the order out of oneself, this reverting of heteronomy into autonomy, is the very way the Infinite passes itself" (Levinas 1978, 14). The assumption of ethical responsibility for the other is, then, the affective, immediate experience of alterity as the bearer of "transcendence." The ethical life, as Levinas understands it, thus takes on a religious hue.

Levinas does not identify transcendence with God, however. It is in response to the address of the Other and its infinite Otherness that testifies to a religious sensibility (and not necessarily belief). Called upon by the Other, one testifies to his or her readiness to respond as Abraham had when addressed by God, *Hineni,* here I am (Genesis 22:1). Levinas explains Abraham's replies as follows: "'Here I am in the name of God,' without referring myself directly to his presence; 'here I am,' just that! The word God is still absent from the phrase in which God is for the first time involved in words. It does not at all state 'I believe in God.' [...]. The witness is humility and admission; it is made before all theology, it is kerygma and prayer, glorification and recognition" (Levinas 1978, 149). The adjective "religious" serves as phenomenological description of the "moral responsiveness to the concrete reality of the other as exemplified in the vulnerability and height [that is, infinite otherness] of the face. The dimension of height is associated not with heaven but with invisibility [of alterity's transcendence]" (Levinas 1969, 35). In confining himself to a phenomenology of the lived-experience of the response – the *Hineni* – to the call of the Face of the other, Levinas withholds any theological or metaphysical delineation of the experience (Levinas 1987, 84). Hence, all he can say is that the primordial response of *Hineni* does not place one in a reciprocal relation with the other. The *Hineni* opens an "intersubjective space [that] is not symmetrical," that is experienced as reciprocal, nor is it necessarily anticipated as reciprocal. Such anticipation would be to suggest that one anticipates a reciprocal response would, of course, inflect the response with a theological orientation, which would breach the bounds of a purely phenomenological portrayal of the primordial, kerygmatic moment of a "moral responsiveness" to the call of the other. Accordingly, it has been observed, "Levinas does not offer a religious or theological ethics but a philosophical exploration of the conditions of the ethical that potentially addresses all as an each, including the non-believer and non-monotheist. Ethics is not so much a belonging to any order or institution of being, including the religious, as it is the transcendence and utopianism of 'small goodness' to use [the Russian novelist Vasily] Grossman's expression" (Nelson 2008, 102, cf.). "Levinas does not want to propose laws or moral rules ... it is a matter of [writing] an ethics of ethics" (Derrida 1967, 111).

Levinas, nonetheless insisted that religion cannot separate itself from ethics. "Going towards God" is meaningless unless seen in terms of my primary going towards the other person. I can only go towards God by being ethically concerned by and for the other person (Levinas 1986, 23). But Levinas's conception of God is ambiguous. To be sure, he draws on biblical tropes, such as, humility, grace, judgment ("the Other who judges me"). Yet he consistently refrains even in his Talmudic Readings (Levinas 1990) from speaking of a personal God, who is, indeed, a God who enters a reciprocal relation with humans. What intrigued Levinas about the Talmud is not its theology but rather the attention the rabbis give to concrete human concerns. The Talmud thus demonstrates that concern for the other is not, indeed, cannot be mere theoretical or rhetorical exercise. Levinas reads the Talmud to challenge the Western philosophical tradition reaching back to the pre-Socratics of attributing ontological primacy to the self. Reading the Talmud philosophically, he sought "to express in Greek what Greece herself cannot express" (Wygoda 2000, 145).

The concrete, even quotidian concerns of the Talmudic rabbis, as Levinas reads them, foreshadowed an understanding that ethics is the ground of being, that a solicitous concern for one's fellow being is the

"first philosophy." The rabbis realized that one meets God in the existential realities of the everyday of one's neighbor. And the neighbor is always a specific other (Levinas 1974, 159). For Levinas, implicitly parting from the rabbis, the radical otherness – the alterity – of the neighbor is beyond sociological ascriptions; one heeds the call of the neighbor as one is utterly "different," an "alien" unknown voice. The neighbor is thus beyond definition, political cultural, ethnic, or otherwise. Herein lies the universality of Levinas's ethics of alterity.

Inspired by the increasing philosophical attention to alterity, the radical other, the ethical presuppositions of various humanistic disciplines have been revisited and, accordingly revised (Mendes-Flohr 2015). Anthropologists have thus shifted their focus from cultural differences, constituted by distinctive epistemologies and worldviews, to "being." Consonant with this "ontological turn," anthropology views worldviews not simply as different representations of the same world. Rather, cultures are now said to have different ontological perspectives on the meaning of existence and thus see the world in different ways, although the world remains one. Therefore, the ontological turn refers to a change in perspective that suggests that cultural differences can be understood, not in terms of a difference in worldviews, but differences in the world ontologies and, therefore, that all of these worlds are deemed to be of equal validity (Holbraad 2017).

Poststructuralist theories have conscripted the concept of the radical other to dismantle the hitherto regnant notions of the subject as sustaining a stable and "centered" discourse. Deconstruction, a method of textual analysis most prominently associated with Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), seeks to uncover and expose the imperious discursive logic of Western literature, and open it up to *other voices* that its "logocentrism" perforce suppresses (Derrida 1978). In a similar vein, feminist theory discerns the root of gender inequality in the male dominated culture to represent women superciliously as *the other*, which has been characterized as the Manichaeanism of sexism of patriarchal cultures, the origins of which Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) locates in the biblical book of Genesis: "[Therein] humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him ... He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (De Beauvoir 1978, xxii).

Postcolonial theories have likewise challenged what is held to be invidious logic Manichaean dualism. As the Palestinian literary critic Edward W. Saïd (1935–2003) noted, such dichotomous conceptual constructs imply that cultural differences are epistemological and axiological; "our" civilization is self-evidentially privileged and superior, theirs is, indeed, different and strange. In truth, however, this binary separating us from them is inherently confrontational and, indeed, belligerent (Saïd 1978). From the perspective of the experience of contemporary China, Xianomei Chen (b. 1954) questions the anti-Western polemic attendant to the postcolonial theory. Coining a concept of Occidentalism – in contradistinction to Saïd's Orientalism – that by reversing the dualistic divide of West versus East, postcolonial theory fails to appreciate the political significance of cross-cultural appropriation. "It seems imperative that we at least attempt to find a reasonable balance between Self and Other, between East and West, so that no culture is fundamentally privileged over its Others. Perhaps the realities of history cannot allow such a balance to be fully realized. Indeed, it is even necessary to affirm that these master tropes are necessarily veiled by the fictional. What must be stressed here is that even imagining such a balance – surely one of the first requirements of a new order of things – can never be possible without each Self being confronted by an Other, or by the Other being approached from the point of view the Self in its own specific historical and cultural conditions" (Chen 2002, 89). Judith P. Butler (b. 1956) shares Chen's caveat about the "exclusionary logic" of an oppositional binary of Self or Other, particularly when

evoked as ideological trope as an ideological construct. It is not only utterly unnecessary for gay and lesbian identity, she argues, "to constitute themselves through the production and repudiation of a heterosexual Other," but such adversarial constructs are likely to invite a "reversal" of the antagonism (Butler 1993, 112). The ideological appropriation of the philosophical concept of alterity often confounds honoring the ontological integrity of the Other with othering.

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CHAPTER 26

Discourse

Brett T. Wilmot

Communication is a method of social coordination, where a speaker or writer conveys information to a recipient that elicits a response based on an understanding of what has been communicated (which includes potential misunderstanding of the content or intention of the speaker/writer). Even distorted communication (e.g. deception, threats, etc.) are parasitic on this basic form (e.g. in the way that the possibility of a lie depends on the presumption of truthful communication). Discourse is a second-order form of communication that takes up the content of first-order communication and subjects it to critical analysis. This can happen on an ad hoc basis when the validity of a claim has been contested in the context of a particular communicative exchange or as part of a formal inquiry, where various types of claims are systematically evaluated following the norms of a particular discursive practice. Discourse is typically intersubjective, involving two or more parties in an exchange of arguments, evidence, and reasons, and its norms closely reflect a given community's epistemological assumptions (e.g. its views on what count as authoritative sources, conditions for justified belief, valid forms of argument, etc.). Discourse is also constitutive of subjectivity independent of engagement with interlocutors insofar as the self engages in critical reflection on her own beliefs, and this interior dialogue mirrors and anticipates intersubjective exchanges. While "discourse" suggests verbal exchanges, texts (or other methods of preserving communicative content) provide a mechanism for the critical analysis of validity claims extended over time and space. As with any form of communication, matters of understanding and interpretation are critically important, including challenges related to translation. The possibility of discourse, and communication in general, rests on overcoming a number of hermeneutic hurdles, particularly when considering exchanges across the boundary of traditions and even within traditions over time. Religious ethics as a discipline can be understood, in part, as a form of discourse (second-order critical reflection) focused on assessing the legitimacy of normative claims made in the context of particular religious traditions, between traditions, and as part of public discourse in liberal democratic societies that affirm the legitimacy of an indeterminate plurality of religions.

Language is a mechanism for coordinating social activities of various kinds based on what has been understood (e.g. directing an employee to complete a task, expressing one's sympathies at another's loss as a way satisfying social norms, etc.). When there are reasons to suspect the legitimacy of the content of what has been communicated or the act of communication itself (e.g. how, when, and where particular claims have been made), discourse is the social practice of assessment (which can be more or less formal) by which that legitimacy is tested. If first-order communication seeks understanding and assent with the

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

aim of social coordination, discourse involves the evaluation of the validity of these first-order claims, which temporarily suspends the first-order attempt at social coordination. It is always possible, in theory, to suspend first-order social coordination to engage in informal and/or formal methods of discourse with respect to the nature and content of communicate acts; however, most matters of understanding and assent are resolved informally in light of appeals to widely held community norms and expectations. Communicative acts involve at least three possible dimensions for consideration on the part of an interlocutor: the truth of a claim (whether the propositional content expresses a factual claim about the world that can be supported by reason and evidence), the truthfulness of the speaker (whether the expressed content truthfully conveys the internal states of a speaker, e.g. intentions or emotions), and normative legitimacy (whether a command or evaluative claim – including ethical judgments – are appropriate). Formal methods of discourse have emerged that focus on the critical assessment of the truth (e.g. natural sciences), truthfulness (e.g. psychology), and normative validity (e.g. ethics) of communicative acts. While these practices can be employed in cases where specific claims have lost their prima facie legitimacy and are in need of justification if they are to serve as mechanisms of social coordination for the parties involved, they have also developed as free-standing practices of inquiry that operate independent of the need to justify particular claims in an actual discourse. When engaging in discourse where particular claims are in need of justification as part of an effort at social coordination, the normal process of coordination is temporarily suspended so that this second-order social practice can resolve questions and disputes related to the validity of communicated content and/or its form of expression.

Every community will have some more or less formal framework for engaging in discourse when validity claims are contested, including religious communities and the traditions they embody. Pre-critical discursive forms typically rely on the consultation of recognized sources of authority for a community or tradition. When discursive practices emerge for contesting the validity of such authorities within a tradition and become formalized, then the tradition has entered into a critical stage with regard to its modes of discourse. While this distinction has been contested, it is often used to differentiate culturally between pre-modern and modern periods, with modern modes of discourse defended as systematic methods of inquiry and critical analysis whose sole authority rests on human reason and experience. Postmodernity reflects, in part, suspicion of modernity's claim to have achieved (or approximated) its foundational ambitions to escape the limits of inherited tradition/authority through the formalization of its methods of critical discourse. One of the tensions that persists in the modern world for religious communities is the suspicion that the very nature of religious beliefs and the forms of social coordination they make possible are irreconcilable with modern forms of rational discourse. This has to do with the role of authority in religious traditions, which often circumscribes its dogmatic beliefs and revealed truths in ways that preclude assessment through modes of discourse more familiar to modern science and philosophical inquiry.

It is helpful to distinguish between inter- and intra-traditional discourse, both synchronously (among contemporaries) and asynchronously (extended through time and often dependent on the availability of texts of various sorts). Discourse occurs within a tradition, among its various members, as a way of evaluating a range of claims that are central to the self-understanding of that community. Religious communities rely on oral traditions and/or sacred tests that require authoritative interpretation, and this gives rise to more or less formal modes of discourse for resolving disputes for their application to the social coordination of these communities. Distinctive modes of discourse also emerge in the context of interreligious dialog, which raises novel hermeneutical challenges related to translation. Discourse is also a

practice extended in time that is enhanced by the possibility of preserving communicative acts in more or less permanent forms as texts. Here, too, we can speak of discourse that operates over time within a tradition that retains significant continuity with itself and discourse that involves encountering different traditions through preserved artifacts.

There are two further points that are noteworthy regarding the nature of communicative action and the special case of discourse. First, it can be argued that both communication and discourse (as a special form of communication) involve a number of pragmatic assumptions regarding the parties involved. At the very least, attempts at social coordination through communication assume that one's interlocutors are capable of understanding and assenting to what has been communicated, which emphasizes their equal status as rational beings. In the modern era in particular, rational beings are accorded a special moral worth, so communicative action implicitly assumes the equal moral worth of conversation partners, even when such equality is explicitly rejected by one of the parties (one example of distorted communication). Additionally, since social coordination relies on assent to the validity of what has been communicated, there is always the presumption that such assent can be withheld (at least in principle), which then raises the question of how to proceed when validity claims are contested by other rational beings. This presumption anticipates and invites the social practice of discourse (again, more or less formal in nature) as a mechanism for resolving disagreements or misunderstandings, not merely as a practical tool but also as a moral imperative based on the recognition that for assent to be legitimate, dissent must be possible, including some process for expressing and resolving dissent. Thus, every communicative exchange between interlocutors presumes that both are capable of understanding and assenting/dissenting to what is understood and, further, are capable of suspending social cooperation temporarily in order to engage in discourse in cases of misunderstanding or dissent. Norms of communication and discourse, then, are always implicit presuppositions of every community that is coordinated by communicative acts (every human community), whether or not these norms have been made explicit and affirmed by those communities, and this would be true of religious communities/traditions as well.

Second, for language users, our subjectivity is constituted, in part, by our interior discourse, where we find ourselves engaged with ourselves over time regarding the validity of our beliefs, including beliefs about the nature of reality and ethical norms. It can be helpful to think of our beliefs as enjoying the kind of prima facie legitimacy noted previously in everyday communicative activity with others. We typically operate uncritically in terms of our beliefs until something calls them into question, which include assent to propositional characterizations of our world, understandings of our own interior states, and the appropriateness or legitimacy of our value and normative commitments. It is also possible to be habituated to forms of critical thinking that make such evaluations a more regular occurrence in the life of a given individual, even when nothing but that habit of thought has called a belief into question for the subject. Any of these beliefs are potentially subject to critical scrutiny on our part, just as they can be called into question intersubjectively. If communicative interactions give rise to normative insights regarding one's moral relationship to others as conversation partners (as suggested previously), so, too, it might be said that the self stands in relation to itself as a conversation partner extended in time, which can give rise to normative insights regarding this self-relation and the identification of critical reasoning as a virtue independent of its role in navigating intersubjective disputes. In either case, standards of rational justification and conditions of epistemic warrant apply (in whatever way these are understood by the parties in question), and in this way, there is continuity between standards of epistemic warrant

for individual subjects critically reflecting on their beliefs over time and the conditions of intersubjective rational justification when engaged in critical discourse with others as a social practice.

In this context, religious ethics can be understood as the formal discursive practice for validating the normative claims made within and among religious communities and traditions. Religious communities engage in communicative acts with the aim of social coordination. This coordination includes properly orienting members of the community toward one another and toward the sacred. These standards are communicated in various ways, both orally and through sacred scriptures. As in the case of communication generally, these claims are typically afforded prima facie legitimacy by members of the community. There are times, however, when understandings may be contested or their legitimacy doubted. Here, as in all communities, more or less formal discursive practices will emerge for sorting through such claims. Some traditions will be more hierarchical and fix limits on who is qualified to engage in such practices, particularly when the outcome involves fundamental matters of community identity. Others will take a more inclusive approach, allowing and even encouraging a greater role of non-specialists to engage in this activity. With the major Abrahamic traditions, each has developed fairly complex traditions of critical discourse around matters of dogma, practice, and ethics, where participation increasingly depends on technical expertise with regard to theology and philosophy. Insofar as these (and other) traditions seek to contribute to public discourse in modern liberal democracies that affirm the legitimacy of a plurality of religions, there is also the need for some degree of expertise in standards for secular moral discourse and strategies for navigating exchanges between religious and secular moral sources.

It is helpful to identify three areas of work that are foundational to religious ethics as a particular practice of critical inquiry. First, traditions that have formalized this type of communication will have a framework for engaging with the traditions, texts, and practices that are constitutive of the community and for clarifying and defending the moral values and commitments of that community for members. This is a form of intra-tradition discourse that arises from the need to address misunderstandings and disagreements among members of the community, both among contemporaries and for preserving continuity in that community over time. Second, religious pluralism has given rise to the need for interreligious dialogue, and those traditions that have been engaged with other religious communities in practical and speculative communication. It has been necessary to develop strategies for translation (to foster understanding across the boundary of different traditions) and for engaging in critical discourse when such cross-traditional communication has given rise to contested validity claims. Finally, particularly in what is often referred to as the modern period, there has been increasing attention to the distinction drawn between sacred and secular spheres, particularly where this involves a political response to religious pluralism and the organization of public life and the pursuit of the common good. Thus, religious ethics has developed strategies for systematically examining the normative claims of a particular religious community, for engaging in critical discourse across the boundaries of different religious traditions, and for participating in public discourse in the context of modern pluralistic, secular societies. Each of these areas disserves separate consideration.

Examples of discourse within a religious tradition related to its ethical claims would be something like the development of natural law in Catholic moral thought and the formalization and application of the principles of Catholic social teaching. The scriptural sources of the tradition express a great deal of ethical content and sometimes appear to be in tension with themselves and in need of authoritative interpretation. Some of this content is presented as directly revealed by God; in other

cases, we find the recordings of community norms for governing disputes, distributing resources, inheritance, criminal punishment, etc. Much of the moral teaching arises in very concrete social contexts, and the challenge becomes whether (and how) to generalize from those contexts to address new developments in the life of the Christian community. The tradition of natural law, carried over from Greek and Roman thinkers, provided a framework for interpreting the moral content of scripture, at least with regard to ideals of human relationships and behavior that did not rely on special revelation for their justification. The latter, however, also needed to be integrated into a complete vision of the human person, her nature and supernatural destiny, in light of both natural reason and revelation. The further development of principles of Catholic social thought provide additional examples of how the community has formalized its critical analysis of the normative content derived from scripture and natural law to provide a framework for responding to disputes about the meaning and validity of that content with respect to a range of ethical topics, including the environment, economic matters, criminal justice, the common good, family life, human sexuality, etc. Different stories could be told of the rise of formal discursive methods in the Protestant, Jewish, and Islamic traditions, among others.

In addition to the development of intra-traditional methods of discourse for critically analyzing the ethical content of individual traditions, religious ethics has developed to facilitate discourse across the boundaries of different traditions. One contemporary example of this is the practice of scriptural reasoning that has emerged among members of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths. This practice invites participants to read one another's scriptures together and to engage in a discourse that seeks to overcome hermeneutic barriers and to facilitate critical analysis of the different validity claims made by these faith traditions with the aim of achieving a better understanding of the individual traditions, their similarities and differences from one another. This relatively new practice is continuing to work out its norms, but it points to the ways in which forms of discourse (as second-order critical reflection) emerge in contexts of sustained communication as necessary for responding to challenges of interpretation and for addressing contested validity claims, whether within or between traditions. There are other examples to be found in the history of the engagement of Christian missionaries and theologians as they encountered, for example, Hindu and Buddhist communities and texts. Beyond the challenges of overcoming differences in language and culture, the political and economic effects of colonialism, racism, and imperialism have distorted communication and skewed efforts at discourse in harmful ways. Here, appeals to the pragmatic presuppositions of communicative action with regard to the moral status of one's interlocutors becomes a helpful corrective (at least in theory). Postcolonial and postmodern criticisms of modernity have been helpful for resetting this process of engaging with other communities across the boundaries of various religious traditions (and for addressing communicative distortions within communities and traditions), but it is still an ongoing effort to establish the recognition of the moral equality of all and to foster modes of communication and discourse consistent with this insight.

Finally, in modern Western democracies that have embraced the legitimacy of religious pluralism, there is the challenge of how to understand the role of those religious traditions and their beliefs and values in the context of public and political discourse. Because of its long history of dominance in the Western democracies, Christianity probably has developed the most extensive and complex responses to this topic. The idea of religious freedom and the rhetoric of the separation of church and state have generated tensions of various sorts and a variety of responses, ranging from the insistence that public

discourse be secularized, on the one hand, to explicit appeals to religious sources as a legitimate foundation for law and public policy, on the other. Efforts have been made to articulate standards of public discourse that are more or less inclusive of religious perspectives from the point of view of secular philosophers and political theorists, and representatives of different faith traditions have advanced counterproposals for preserving the legitimate role of religious insights regarding public life and policy matters. Here, too, we see how efforts to achieve social coordination through communicative acts in a context in which traditions and community norms are not shared has given rise to various modes of discourse for reflecting critically on the validity claims being made by the various interlocutors. Participants in this conversation increasingly require significant expertise in legal, political, theological, philosophical, and ethical modes of reasoning and debate in order to understand the complexities involved and to communicate effectively among the various participants.

Discourse as a second-order practice of critical reflection on claims made in various modes of communication emerges naturally and by necessity to address misunderstandings and disagreements about the validity of those claims. Religious ethics is an example of this second-order social practice that emerges first as an intra-traditional practice (more or less formal) and, when conditions allow, develops into a strategy for interreligious dialogue concerning human values as found in those traditions when their members seek to communicate with one another. In the modern age, with the rise of pluralistic democracies that affirm the legitimacy of religious diversity, religious ethics has further expanded to promote critical reasoning with regard to navigating the line between the sacred and secular when it comes to the political life of religiously pluralistic communities.

Part II

Transmission

1 Texts

CHAPTER 27

Text and Canon

Michael Fishbane

Introductory Considerations

A characteristic feature of the great historical religions is the formulation of their teachings, laws, and norms into collections of authoritative teachings. The status of these diverse instructions varies, depending upon the status of the teacher (e.g. prophet, priest, or wise man) and their putative source (in divine revelation, guild esoterica, or experience and tradition). Moreover, these "text ensembles" (be they oral or written) are variously deemed to be sealed and sacred by their societal stewards, such that their classical content is closed and their transcription or recitation are part of the ritual order. Hence, distinctions are regularly made between the primary or foundational sources of authority and subsequent secondary traditions that deal with their meaning and ongoing significance. The closure of the initial teachings gives them all a fixed, canonical status, and whatever the form of their initial presentation (oral or written), the end result is the emergence of a written scripture which has the status of a holy object, to which nothing may in principle be added or removed. On the other hand, the secondary traditions remain theoretically open and subject to ongoing modifications or revisions through interpretation; though, in time, these oral instructions are also written down and develop their own canonical status, thus requiring explications of both their own meanings as well as how they are assumed to explicate the scriptures. Such is the recurrent dialectic, and it produces a type of sensibility that we may well call "canon consciousness." Its effect upon religion, and upon the ethical life practiced within its contours, is considerable and merits reflection and analysis.

Among the Western religions, the Hebrew Bible is a paradigm example of the processes just noted. It is a massive anthology of foundational instructions, memories, and traditions from ancient Israel, recording in written form a variety of divine and human teachings, as well as a large assortment of practices both official and popular (and rooted in physical or verbal performance) that in one way or another were preserved and deemed worthy of transmission. In the process of tradition-building that developed, diverse narratives, laws, and practices were variously integrated, wherever possible, or were collected in self-contained units. The editorial result preserves a great mass of materials, even on the same subject, covering a time expanse of a millennium and more, and collated from various cultic, legal, and royal centers, as well as from a variety of scribal schools and wisdom traditions. Certainly, hierarchies of authority and instruction may readily be observed (in both the category of divine revelation and in the category of human wisdom): the teachings vouchsafed to Moses and the prophets were topmost; and below them

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

come any number of legists and priests who claimed to teach the older laws, as well as individuals whose proverbs and reflections were grounded in reason or experience. The upshot is a welter of instructions, quite often tangled and contradictory. This is particularly evident from the internal evidence of scripture itself, where authoritative teachings were interpolated with secondary instructions – for further clarification, qualification, or harmonization of the historically diverse materials; or for purposes of revisions and correction on the basis of new or competing values (see Fishbane 1985).

We might therefore note the existence of modes of canon consciousness within the canon-in-formation. Much was at stake. Insofar as the separate teachings all provided warrants (of different types and authority) for action, or their enforcement, the precise meaning of these teachings would have to be clear, as well as their interrelationships (insofar as they were complementary, supplementary, or contradictory). Interpretation is therefore an inherent component of the emergent biblical "text culture," though matters are much more simple when the traditions were still open to change and circulated in separate units. With the closure of the canon, the multiplicity of teachings on any subject increased, raising the thorny issue of just what the warrant of scripture was on any given point. Conversely, the delimitation of a canon fixed the formulations themselves, but these then required interpretation to make them livable – either because the received formulation was too loose and ambiguous, or because its values appeared to be problematic to later eyes and sensibilities. The sources were thus understood to project certain legal or ethical standards and values that could be variously accepted, rejected, or transformed on the basis of the norms, standards, or values of later readers. These intersecting "value vectors" are of immense hermeneutical and cultural importance. Paradoxically, the linguistic conditions for one set of ethical values and action (the canon) may also provide the site for their exegetical revision – in whole or in part. In this way, the authority of the ancient canon is both sustained and honored in the breach. One might even contend that the strength of a traditional culture (or one rooted in the language of precedents) depends upon its capacities to utilize the inherited formulations of a canon, without sacrificing its ongoing ethical will or judgment.

In the ensuing discussion, Jewish law and ethics will provide the paradigmatic cases to illustrate modalities of how certain Western religions have negotiated their values in and around an authoritative scripture. They will hopefully also provide a paradigm for a certain mentality and sensibility in which ethical action is part and parcel of a larger realm of religious duties – be these authorized by divine revelation or human reason, or both. In the present discussion, texts will be chosen largely from the classical collections of ancient rabbinic Bible interpretation, called Midrash, during the second to fourth centuries CE. Their explicit hermeneutical character will best allow us to see how scriptural exegesis negotiated the vectors of values just noted – deftly authorizing the new as a species of the old, and the old as encoding ensuing meaning. The following examples are meant to serve as models only, and not by any means to characterize the full range of types of ancient Jewish religious ethics and values. Rooted in the canon of Hebrew scripture, we find here a privileged witness to a mode of moral reasoning or justification through textual exegesis.

Models and Cases

Reactions and Revisions

Among the "hard cases" bequeathed to later tradition is the rule found in Deuteronomy 21: 18–21 concerning a "wayward and rebellious son who does not listen to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother." It goes on to state that "they reprove him," but he heeds them not; and then "they seize him

and take him out" to the local elders at the gate. They say to these persons that their son is rebellious, does not heed them, and indulges in gluttony. The sentence for this crime is that all the men of the city shall stone the guilty son to death, so that this evil will be eradicated and "all Israel will heed and fear." Clearly, a certain measure of procedure is presented in the conditions that are to ensue before and during the trial. Presumably, the issue of rebellion is deemed a repeated offense of insubordination that also includes reproval or warning before the son is taken to the judges; and it is notable that the offense is unspecified and that it is against both the father and the mother (probably intended to mean either one of the family order, and not just the father). However, at the trial itself, the matter of reproval is not specified, leaving the impression that this is not a separate condition, but a feature of the repeated attempts of the parents to make the son obey; and further, the vague category of rebellion is supplemented by references to gluttony, suggesting that this represents the need to specify the type of rebellion, and probably not to delimit it entirely. Withal, we see that the son has no judicial say or defense in his trial – possibly because he is a minor or because the parents have complete hegemony. Either way, the parents have total discretion about whether the offense is actionable, and can press charges without prior restraint or subsequent court investigation. Moreover, it is notable that the penalty of death is executed by all "the men of the city" and does not specify the parents at all (and it certainly does not include the mother); and that this harsh verdict is intended to serve as a public deterrent to such misdemeanors.

The rule as formulated is thus puzzling and problematic in many places, even on its own terms. Later commentators accentuated these matters in their discussions of the canonical rule, and their different attempts to justify or delimit it reveal aspects of their moral concerns and sensibilities (Halbertal 1997). The rule in this religious source thus sets the template for certain features of ethics bearing on family law, whereas the cases of exegetical reasoning revise the absolute warrant of the text and refocus the ethical issues involved. A spectrum of issues emerges.

The first matter to be noted in the earliest stratum is moral outrage at the gap between crime and punishment: "And because [the son] ate and drank [a specified overdose of] meat and wine he is to be stoned [to death]?!" (Finkelstein 1966, 253 [pisqa 220]). Such a query sharply exposes an unethical dimension of the law, and thus requires a response. One tack is to protect the law and its overall moral purpose, and this is done by transforming the initial exclamation into a rhetorical question. Since for this position the unethical character of the law is unthinkable, the solution is to see the law not as dealing simply with a rude and uncontrollable son, but with an offender whose sociopathic character has hereby been revealed, such that the law must impose a harsh penalty at the outset (when the person is relatively innocent) in order to prevent a more dangerous crime in the future (Hoffmann 1908–1919, 131). The tactics of proof offered vary: in some cases they are simply asserted or presented (Hoffmann 1908–1919, 131), in other instances the procedure is exegetical and uses traditional forms of hermeneutical logic (Finkelstein 1966, 251 [pisqa 218]). In both cases the underlying ethical concern of the ruling is clear and firm, its intention being to protect the social fabric as a whole through a precautionary action: just as one may kill a real attacker in self-defense, so must the law protect the people from the real or imminent danger of a rebellious son. The culprit is thus moved out of the category of a family nuisance into one that justifies the use of preemptive legal force to protect society. Through this reasoning, the punishment of death is made to fit the crime. But in the effort to provide an ethical justification for the authoritative divine law, the new rule becomes readily subject to abuse by less than omniscient human legislators. The paradox is here pressing, and may serve to highlight a danger for religious ethics when it settles on strategies of exegetical justification – rather than taking on the language of difficult laws and defanging their force.

More decisive in this regard are those interpreters who turn the formulations of the old rule into pawns of their new moral purpose. Several strategies occur. One of these is to take on the term "son" and so delimit its age range (between youngster and pubescent young adult) as to make it of fleeting applicability (M. Sanhedrin 8.1). A second strategy is to pick up on the apparently redundant phrase "the voice of his father and the voice of his mother" and turn this into a razor's edge to reduce the applicability of the law. Thus the clever interpreters said that this clause means that the son has to be warned by the voice of both parents – which has to be identical; and just as their voice must be identical, so also must their size and appearance be the same (M. Sanhedrin 8.4; B.T. Sanhedrin 71a). Clearly, this is an absurdity, and only marks the need to take an offensive but ineradicable law and make it practically inapplicable and void. A similar tack is taken by others who so define the nature of this gluttony (in terms of consuming vast quantities of meat and wine simultaneously) as to make the conditions for its performance humanly impossible to execute. Indeed, in all this, the moral will of the later tradition subverts the rule entirely. Perhaps for this reason, if not just for reasons of absolute outrage, the opinion is even given that the law of the rebellious son was never meant to be applied, but was only given as an exercise for exegesis – and that just this is the sole merit of the rule and the sole basis for a divine reward for its fulfillment (B. T. Sanhedrin 71a). Hence, if at one end of the foregoing spectrum of interpretations we saw an attempt to discern the deeper divine purpose in a rule whose punishment does not seem to fit the crime, at the other is an attempt to see a divine pedagogy that confirms the moral will of the interpreters themselves. Indeed, herewith the canon has itself provided the culture with a case that can be used to teach exegetes how to subvert its own applications when these are deemed ethically improper. Thus, while the canon of divine scripture is formally honored, the canon of traditional interpretations shows repeated attempts to displace its effectiveness through a casuistry that honors the moral will of the sages even more. In the process, the canon can even become the site of ethical reflection and reform.

Delimitation or Expansion of Operative Conditions

The ensuing cases continue some aspects of the preceding model, but show in a unique manner how the formal features of a law can be applied in ways that promote certain moral values or alleviate certain immoral situations. In these instances, the moral will of the interpreter provides new warrants and conditions that allow the law to rise to its highest value potential. I choose two polar instances from the rules of witness: the case of the abandoned wife (*agunah*) and the cases of capital crimes. The legislators revise the same rules of testimony in two opposite directions in order to safeguard and even serve moral values of the legal culture as a whole. Indeed, they show the potential flexibility of a canonical culture where the moral will is determined to be flexible for the sake of the dignity of its citizens and the value of life as a whole.

Biblical legislation is absolutely clear on the requirement of two witnesses to produce valid testimony; and a great amount of rabbinic discussion attempts to determine just how the witnesses are deemed to complement one another. With respect to married women, rabbinic law is also precise and clear on the point that a woman is permitted to remarry only if she has received a valid writ of divorce, or if there is valid testimony that her first husband is dead. An *agunah* is a married woman in a limbo and potentially irremediable situation, insofar as she may have been abandoned by her husband, or otherwise put in an intolerable predicament by virtue of the fact that she has no divorce document (either because the man cannot be found or refuses to do so); or because there is no valid testimony from two witnesses that her

husband is dead (as, for example, in cases of soldiers missing in action, or as was recently the case with unconfirmed deaths at the World Trade Center). This rule notwithstanding, rabbinic law went to exceptional lengths to protect a woman from a life of solitude due to the circumstances just noted. With respect to a missing husband, the normally rigorous application of the rules of testimony by courts that had no means of proving the death of the husband were relaxed and made more lenient. For example, Rabban Gamliel the Elder (first century CE) resolved the problem by adjusting the rules of evidence themselves, and he gave a rule (now codified in the Mishnah) that in cases of no legally certain evidence of death, the testimony of one witness was sufficient, even if that testimony was hearsay only, or even if the testimony was brought by persons normally deemed invalid to give legal evidence (like a bondswoman or a slave) (M. Yebamot 16.7). Thus, hereby, a difficult rule was suspended owing to circumstances, and canonical law (of written scripture and rabbinic tradition) was revised owing to a certain moral temperament. And once that happened, a permanent loophole was left open so that judges could remedy other difficult cases of a similar kind. An example from a millennium later proves the point, for we have at hand a *responsum* of Maimonides (thirteenth century CE) concerning a case where there was only the testimony of a non-Jewish woman that a certain man had been killed, and this testimony was brought to the court as hearsay evidence. Maimonides decided that this testimony was sufficient and that the Jewish woman was free to remarry. In support of his ruling, he articulated a fundamental principle that came to serve as a canon for moral rectitude in such cases thereafter. He noted: "We do not enter into lengthy and detailed examinations of the testimony offered on behalf of an *agunah*. Moreover, whoever adopts a stringent position in such cases, and subjects the evidence offered to a detailed investigation and examination, *does not behave properly*. [Indeed,] our sages are displeased with this conduct, since it was their specific rule that we are to take the most lenient position with respect to an *agunah*" (Maimonides 1934, 157 [no. 159]).

Clearly, the application of the canon is left to judicial discretion, and Maimonides not only made his own moral position clear, but also gave it further warrant by attributing this sensibility to the early sages, whose revision of the rule was taken as a sign of moral probity as well as the warrant for further remedies in the same spirit. The complex dialectics of text, canon, and morality are fully played out in this case.

But the wheel of testimony can turn in the opposite direction as well, when the values of life impose themselves on the will of a custodian of the canon. For example, as against the maximalist relaxation of rules of testimony just noted, cases involving capital punishment could produce highly stringent applications of the rule in order to minimize, if not eradicate, the possibilities of issuing a verdict of death. Indeed, in some circles, antipathy to the death penalty was so severe that the details required for valid testimony were taken to extreme lengths. Normally, the need for two eyewitnesses to produce absolutely congruent testimony established a very high judicial standard, and it was very rigorously enforced. But while this procedure ensured the probity of the court, in certain hands the rules were also used to subvert the process itself. Such is the case when Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai (first century CE) was faced with a murder case, and he required the witnesses to provide detailed descriptions of the stalks of the figs on the tree near which the murder was alleged to have taken place (M. Sanhedrin 5.2). This made the application of the testimony virtually impossible, for the judicial conditions he imposed were in fact a razor's edge for the sage to cut off the necessary testimony at its root.

What can be learned from these contrary cases, which bear on cultures that are locked into canonical formulations of rules that one would not want to tamper with, but are faced with potential and actual instances where these rules might produce or aggravate some unwanted situation? These formulations not being readily amenable to exegetical revision, they were variously suspended or reformulated in

order to remedy difficult instances, or they were so applied as to produce the desired result. The point to stress is that the requirement to save and conserve the authority of the canonical law need not prevent or frustrate the cultivation or application of moral values and value judgments that might contradict the normal or formal enforcement of a rule. These values may come from within the canonical system itself or from the outside, but their bold applications show that a cultural system remains alive by virtue of the vigor and manner with which it addresses difficult issues and allows the same text to provide the warrant for alternate actions. It is in the arena of this debate that religious laws and ethics are tested and proved. One might even say that the received formulations of a canon provide a framework for an ongoing cultural pedagogy, whereby the conservation or cultivation of the laws may be ethically enacted and evaluated.

Tensions between Ethics and Norms

Another significant dimension of the relationship between text, canon, and ethics is where there are tensions between the strict formulation of a rule and the guiding ethical dimension that may be overridden by comporting with such a formalism. Indeed, it brings to the fore the fact that ethical principles must guide the application of the law in order to safeguard the overarching norms of justice and equity. We may take an example from the law of sales, where the basic rule is that one does not acquire proper title to moveable property, even if money has been exchanged, until the purchaser of the goods performs an act of drawing the object (actually or symbolically) into his possession. Such an action derives from an older customary stratum of sales, but it was retained as a component of gaining title. However, in the process, a gap could arise of a moral nature, as when two persons enter into a verbal agreement and even exchange money, but the buyer has not performed the requisite ritual of "drawing" the goods into his domain. Now in the rule as canonized in the Mishnah, the vendor formally has the right to withdraw from the purchase agreement with no penalty (M. Baba Metzi'a 4.2). But the Mishnah goes on to say that it is improper for anyone to take advantage of this loophole simply on formal grounds; one may have a legal right, but this is not the morally right thing to do. To stress the point, the text states that God will curse such a person "who does not stand by his word" (M. Baba Metzi'a 4.2). The higher principle is therefore stressed, in order to strike down a narrow application of the law. Maimonides summarizes the case a thousand years later, and gives a further moral dimension in his codification of it. He says that a person "who changes his mind" after an agreement has been struck, be he the vendor or the buyer, "has not acted in a manner befitting a Jew" (M. Torah, Hilkhot Mekhirah 7.1).

This becomes the standard, and introduces a principle of ethical rectitude that overrides the strict letter of the law. A more specific articulation of what that principle might be is stated in a commentary on Deuteronomy 6:18. The words "you shall do what is right and good (*ha-yashar veha-ṭov*) in God's eyes" seem initially puzzling, since they appear both too vague, on the one hand, and apparently irrelevant on the other (since the biblical canon is full of very specific rules of behavior). But this is exactly the point, says Nahmanides (thirteenth century CE). On the one hand, scripture (the textual canon) could not state every single possible rule of behavior that might arise; hence, the phrase is not empty, but a statement of the overarching principle for all unspecified actions. Moreover, this same phrase is actually a specific formulation of the principle with which one should enact every rule and law; namely, with a spirit of equity and compromise and decency. Absent such a standard, and one can justify improper actions by appealing to the law itself. Elsewhere, in a trenchant rebuke, Nahmanides acidly states that a

person who exploits gaps in the law without any principle of restraint is simply "a crass vulgarian with the permission of the Torah" (Leviticus 19:2). Clearly, in the tension between formalism and virtue, religious ethics must condition and set the standard of action. In the Mishnah itself, and subsequent Talmudic discourse, this guiding principle is referred to variously as "the ways of peace" or "the ways of pleasantness." (The Hebrew idioms are *darkhei shalom* and *darkhei noʿam*, respectively. For examples, see M. Giṭṭin 5.8–9 and BT. Sukkah 32b and BT. Yebamot 15a.) Hence, the canon may teach the law and even ethics, but it is also clear that the overall moral tone that a religious ethics propagates may have much to say to some specific laws, and to the spirit or manner by which they should be applied. These are seen as the higher warrants of behavior, and become the measures of justice itself.

Some Conclusions and Considerations

Religious ethics finds its duties and their warrants in authoritative texts, of divine and human authorship; it also finds ongoing duties and their warrants in ongoing reflection on the meaning and implications of these texts, thus producing new texts and traditions of various degrees of authority. This process is at the core of traditional societies, grounded in scriptural canons; and the measures of cultural strength are directly related to the comprehensive authority of the primary canon, on the one hand, and the correlative boldness and assertiveness of its cultural inheritors on the other. The tension is necessary for the ethical matters to retain a transcendent and *a priori* claim upon those who accept the canon as one stamped with a divine and traditional imprimatur, even as this latter is subject to creative transformations based on ethical imperatives which impose themselves upon the cultural conscience. Hence, the heteronomous character of canons does not subvert the play and power of autonomous reason, but rather subordinates its activities to itself through acts of legitimate exegesis, which uphold the canonical sources while revising their contents in often bold and radical ways. Canonical cultures thus have various voices of authority. The ongoing ethical voice of the interpreters speaks through the shape of the authoritative words of scripture, so that by donning the mask of exegesis the authoritative texts speak anew, as the old and ever-new world of moral and religious authority. Split the sacred bond between a scripture and its interpreters, and the scripture becomes a historical relic and its interpreters mere rhetoricians. Joined together, the imperatives of the canon may be renewed in unexpected ways.

The canonical texts and their ethical teachings and values provide the framework and terms of an ongoing moral pedagogy that variously imposes itself upon and challenges the conscience of the interpreters. The mark of a culture is the nature and substance of its ongoing responses to its authoritative teachings, and how these are carried over or changed for new generations. Indeed, readers provide the canon with new moral valences and warrants for action. "Normativity" thus emerges as a negotiated and constructed entity. For whatever be the content of the original norms imposed by the canonical sources, their normative force cannot be separated from the power and character of their reinterpretation. Ethical freedom is thus conditioned by the content of canonical texts and constrained by the modes of exegesis available. But it is repeatedly clear that where there is a will there is a moral way. Canonical cultures meet the challenge and raise their traditions to the standard of their new ethical insights through the instruments of exegesis and unwavering integrity. Mere (legal) formalism is repeatedly resisted.

We thus acknowledge a paradox: the coexistence of "hegemonic texts" and "hegemonic interpreters." Strong texts can withstand strong readers; and strong readers can withstand strong texts. Authority and integrity are at both poles of the dialectic, as also are ethical imperatives and their cultural challenges. But in the end, ethical readers are the true "spirit" of the law, animating it and giving it vitality for new generations. In this way, the present recreates its past for the sake of its future.

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CHAPTER 28

Hermeneutics

William Schweiker

Definition, Task, and Purpose

"Hermeneutics" designates the theory, method, and art of interpretation, paradigmatically of written texts but likewise of any experience, event, or sign that bears meaning. Taken from the Greek god *Hermes*, a wing-footed messenger between the gods and humans but also a trickster, hermeneutics has developed throughout the centuries and in different cultural forms to deal with the ambiguity and confusion inherent in the attempt to understand what claims to be meaningful. The purpose of interpretation thereby is to achieve *understanding* of the *meaning* of whatever individuals or communities care about in their acts of communication. In this light, the paradigmatic form of interpretation, as explored below, is the act of dialogue or conversation seeking understanding. There are many forms of interpretation among the religions, for example, divinization, exegesis, reading of animal entrails or bones, mystical reading of texts, that, nonetheless, aim at attaining an understanding of the meaning of what is of religious importance.

The centrality of hermeneutical theory for ethics, religious or not, can hardly be doubted. Insofar as every moral situation, action, or relation takes place at some time and in some place and claims to be both important and significant, it bears hermeneutical scrutiny. Any act of violence, for instance, might, under careful consideration, be interpreted as an act of murder or an act of self-defense. This is why virtually every religion and culture has developed some form of an ethics of war in order to interpret human conflict. Likewise, highly literary and textual traditions, say, Buddhism and Judaism (among others), have generated millennial-long conflicts among traditions of interpretation, say, about the Buddha's teaching on mindfulness or Rabbinic debates about *Torah* teaching (Wright, 2009; Fishbane, 2003). Hermeneutical reflection bound to religious sources and cultural forms is inescapable in the conduct of life.

In defining hermeneutics as a discipline, its central task must be differentiated from but also related to other branches of philosophy in terms of its focus and distinctive claims. In terms of focus, hermeneutical reflection must be differentiated from empirical reflection that is, the fact of *perception* or sensible experience, and also *conception* as the attaining of an idea (general or not) that can organize thought. Throughout history, many epistemologies, that is, theories of knowing, have been proposed about the relation between precepts and concepts in human cognition. Examples include beliefs about the "Agent Intellect," among Jewish, Christian, and Islamic medieval thinkers to explain the relation of the divine to human minds, Immanuel Kant's clarification of the unity of consciousness in the transcendental unity of apperception and in the twentieth century, the so-called linguistic turn in Anglophile and

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Continental thought. The question of the relations among precepts and concepts have given rise to different traditions in philosophy, specifically empiricism focused on experience and sensible facts and rationalism as the attempt to provide some rational system of knowledge.

Hermeneutics rests on the insight that in addition to perception, conception, and their relations in knowing, human beings seek understanding through the interpretation of signs, symbols, narratives, experiences, rituals, and events. In its contemporary form, it is related, but not delimited, to the linguistic turn in thought. Yet hermeneutics arises from attention not just to language systems, but also to human beings as communicators across boundaries of space, time, language, and even forms of being, divine or otherwise. In this respect, it is a distinctive way for philosophy to resist being reduced to mere empiricism, even if it is concerned with empirical, interpretable objects (e.g. texts, rituals), rationalism, (although here too there are connections insofar as the concern is with coherence of meaning), or linguistic systems. In other words, human beings are hermeneutical creatures who, like fleet footed Hermes, carry meanings across boundaries because human meaning is unexplainable solely within empirical or conceptual frameworks of thought.

This claim about distinctly human understanding distinguishes – but can also relate – hermeneutics and other branches of philosophy: *ethics*, as noted, focuses on the conduct of personal and social life, *epistemology*, as a theory of knowledge, *linguistics* which explores how languages create and convey sense and reference, *phenomenology* as the study of consciousness and the description of objects of direct experience, *ontology,* the study of "being," and, finally, *metaphysics* as the examination of the most general features of reality and also first principles of thinking. Of course, each of these branches of philosophy can be and often are related. However, insofar as hermeneutics is related to, for example, "ontology," the concern will be with the *meaning* of being explored through the interpretation of cultural forms, that is, human artifacts. To use another example, hermeneutic phenomenology is the description and interpretation of the meaning of phenomena by engaging consciousness of objects of interpretation. Structuralism and Post-Structural philosophy (deconstruction) explore the way languages and cultural forms depend on some deeper structure, or, conversely, continually undoes itself as a system thereby producing meaning. The important insight for hermeneutical thinkers, as Edward Said noted, is that human beings reach understanding through the interpretation of what they have made (Said 2004). Or, more basically, as medieval theologians noted, things are known according to the mode of the knower. Insofar as human beings are language and symbol using creatures, our mode of knowing others, our world, and ourselves is inescapably interpretive in character.

This entry cannot explore every possible connection among the branches of philosophy listed above, although the connection between hermeneutics and ethics will be addressed in the following pages. For more on this point see Volume II of the *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics* which contains articles on the modes of interpretation found in the ethics of particular religions of the world.

Major Concepts

The following pages focus on hermeneutics in connection to ethics insofar as the religions are especially concerned with meaning, understanding, and interpretation for the sake of orienting human conduct. Next, we examine major concepts in hermeneutical inquiry.

Meaning and Text

Some of the major concepts of hermeneutical inquiry have already been mentioned in passing, but they require further examination. "Meaning," in this context, indicates that some thing (say, a text, symbol, ritual act, experience) has both *import* – it is has importance and is cared about or valued by some group of people – and also *significance*, that is, it fits within and deploys the lexicon of signs of a culture, namely, its language and symbolic codes. Only the conjunction of import and significance denotes "meaning," hermeneutically speaking. In the terms of linguistics, meaning is the conjunction of "sense," the intelligibility of some text, experience, or action within a cultural code (language) with reference, that is, what the sense is about, its intended content or import. Even more generally, we can use the term "text," which unites import and significance, as a term for any object of interpretation. Action, ritual, and experience can each be seen as a "text," from this perspective (see, P. Ricoeur).

Furthermore, human cultural forms ("texts"), as domains of sense or significance, make understandable the objects, experiences, or events that claim import. However, things often have *significance* even while their *import* is disputed, vague, ambiguous, or confused. Think, for instance, of imaginary animals or playful, fantastic tales (e.g. *Alice in Wonderland*). Similarly, something – a text or experience – may have *import*, and so value and refer content for people in terms of what they care about, and yet fail to have the adequate *significance* needed to articulate the sense of that *import* thereby leaving an individual or community mute about its importance for their lives. The reality of "death" is one paradigmatic example where import exceeds significance. Importantly, religions have complex myths and beliefs about death, the after-life, spiritual enlightenment and salvation. In this respect, one purpose of hermeneutical inquiry is to articulate *import* that is as of yet mute, implicit, obscure, and valued within some culture's language and symbolic system (see Taylor 2016).

Hermeneutics, then, is a response to the ambiguity of claims to "meaning" with the aim of attaining human understanding. Little wonder that the religions concerned with complex matters of ultimate *import* (life, death, worth, love, joy, suffering, gods or God, heaven or enlightenment, etc.), and *significance* (myths, symbols, rituals, etc.) have always, in different ways, been engaged in the work of hermeneutics, whether called that or not. While Greek in origin, the work of hermeneutics is not limited to one linguistic horizon, but is a necessary feature of existence for human beings insofar as they are creatures who communicate *import* through *significance*, that is, beings who are meaning seeking and creating creatures.

World and Horizon

One should note that inherent in the term hermeneutics is the idea of moving between "worlds," as Hermes did in Greek myth. These different worlds might be separated by time, for example, the teaching of the Buddha and contemporary life; or space, like the realm of the gods and human existence; languages, namely how to move from ancient Hebrew to modern English in the translation of *Torah*; experiences, say, life in a global media age and rituals developed for an agrarian society; and, of course, socioeconomic boundaries of class, gender, sexuality, and race. Hermeneutics, then, entails the possibility and necessity of *translation* that of course is itself wily, sometimes deceptive, readily open to misunderstanding, and thus marked by Hermes as a trickster. Yet despite the trickiness of translation,

human beings for hermeneutical thinkers are not trapped within the confines of their cultural, historical, and linguistic worlds. To be human is to have the capacity to translate and move between worlds (see Schweiker 2004, 2019). We return to this crucial point at the conclusion of this entry.

What then is meant by a "world?" Like "text" the idea of a world is used analogically in hermeneutics. It is meant to denote how human beings are always thrown, found, created, or dependently generated, within some determinate domain of meaning. To be human is to be in some world and in fact many worlds (Gabriel 2017). Certainly, the idea of a "world" does not mean the empirical reality of planet earth since that is a perceptible fact. And while the concept "world" does help us to think about our place in time and space as a unified reality, it also designates a spatial-temporal horizon of meaning and a domain of understanding. A "horizon" is both the limit to understanding, that which, might or might not be transcended, and thus that upon which human meanings are projected. Although some horizons can never be reached since they recede before us, a "world" denotes, for hermeneutical thinkers, a boundary of import and significance that can be crossed, even if that crossing is exceedingly arduous (Heidegger 1962). As will be explored below, for some hermeneutical thinkers the "meaning" of a text is "in front of it" in terms of the possibilities it opens up for the interpreter. So, the twenty-first-century interpreter can, for example, enter into the "world" of the biblical "text" even if it remains, in some important degree, a foreign land. In order to grasp debates about this boundary crossing work of hermeneutical inquiry, we have to examine other concepts basic to hermeneutics, specifically, interpretation and explanation.

Explanation and Interpretation

Interpretation is the labor of boundary or world crossing, and must therefore be distinguished, from empirical explanation of the kind found paradigmatically in the natural sciences as well as "historicism." Explanation, in the strict sense, seeks to identify the cause of some effect in order to justify and clarify that effect. In the natural sciences, explanation is sought by identifying causal relationships through experimentation with the aim of validating a specific hypothesis or theory. In ethics as well, people ask for the reasons, decisions, or impulses that "caused" an agent's action and how that may, or may not, justify the action. Important in legal cases, this logic of explanation is also crucial for the moral evaluation of the consequences, or intended consequences, of an action. Granting the difference between the causality of nature and the causal force of intentions, in moral thought, explanation has been crucial in utilitarianism and other forms of consequentialism as well as virtue theory. Explanation thereby assumes that one can reason from effect to cause and vice-versa. However, it is not clear that such reasoning is really possible in the domain of understanding and meaning, which is the focus of hermeneutics. Why might that be the case? Unless history is ruled by an iron law of cause and effect – that is, determined in some complete way by a god or nature or human genes – the hunt for *determinative causes* is impossible.

Hans-Georg Gadamer notes, some texts, what he calls "classics," have the power to speak across time, space, and language to be fused with our own horizon of understanding (Gadamer 2004). This possibility has led to fundamentally different conceptions of the work of interpretation within the human sciences, namely, historicism and interpretation theory or hermeneutics. Historicism is the view that the "meaning" of a cultural artifact is completely inscribed in its historical situation. In other words, it claims that once we determine, as some forms of biblical and textual criticism do, the author's supposed intention or the work's historical *Sitz im Leben* (situation in life), then we have explained, as much as possible, the work's meaning. It might be the case with the religions that a community's tradition bears the text

through time via ongoing interpretation, but that fact means that the "text" is unendingly read and reread often with different meanings.

Interpretation, rather than explanation, might include a moment of explanation and even a critique of ideology but its aim is to discover the meaning of a cultural form not just in itself and in its *Sitz im Leben*, but for the interpreter(s)' understanding (Habermas 1998; Ricoeur 1976; Ricoeur 1981). The various theories or types of interpretation are ways to understand the meaning of objects that make a claim to exceed or transcend their context and even the author's intention, assuming the author is identifiable.

Types of Hermeneutics

Having clarified the definition of hermeneutics and some of its basic concepts, we can now examine the central types of hermeneutical theory by attending to the relation between understanding and interpretation. As already noted, the distinctive object of human understanding, as opposed to perception and conception, is meaning as the unity of import and significance achieved through interpretation. Generally speaking, interpretation theory has been divided between (1) general hermeneutics and (2) special hermeneutics, the more ancient of the two, at least in Western thought (see Klemm 1986). After exploring this distinction, the entry will end with prospects for future work in religious ethics.

Special Hermeneutics

Special hermeneutics is a product of highly textual religious traditions rather than those without canons of sacred texts or authoritative collections of stories and myths such as those focused on ritual, shamanism, or inspiration. This does not mean, as noted above, that non-textual traditions are somehow non-interpretative. There are complex patterns of interpretation and practice in every religious ritual, and the original meanings of those practices, like the Christian "Eucharist" (the Lord's Supper) or Zen practices, are endlessly disputed. Nevertheless, special hermeneutics arose out of the demand to interpret and understand confusing, obscure, ambiguous, or even morally questionable passages within a community's sacred writings. In each case, the aim is to clarify the meaning of a text for the sake of orienting the life of a community and its members. Using Christian examples, although parallels are found among Jews and Muslims, we can briefly note four types of special hermeneutics, what we will call the allegorical, the exegetical, the theological, and the sociological theories.

One the most ancient of hermeneutical theories is the so-called allegorical method. Arising in the Greek world from the interpretation of Homer's works, this theory of interpretation assumes that there are different levels of meaning in a text in addition to the literal or plain sense. The task of interpretation is, first, to grasp the plain sense or meaning of the text. When difficulties arise with the plain sense, for example, ambiguity or seeming contradictions, then the interpreter explores one or more "spiritual senses": the tropological or moral meaning, the allegorical or symbolic meaning in the narrow sense, and/or the anagogical or mystical/spiritual meaning, say in Jewish *Kabbalistic* or Muslim *Sufi* poetry. The allegorical method thus provides the interpreter or interpretive community considerable latitude in determining the meaning(s) of a sacred writing, a fact that has led to the misuse and abuse of the method. The allegorical method as a whole implies both a cosmology and also an anthropology. Reality itself has literal, moral, and spiritual meaning because allegory is written into the nature of things as itself a system

of signs, and the same is true of human beings. Humans have a hidden meaning, say, created as images of God, but also a literal bodily being with moral and spiritual dimensions. In this way, the allegorical method is actually a way to educate the human mind and soul to its truest spiritual meaning. Interpretation is a pedagogy of the soul; understanding is moral and mystical union with the text's meaning.

Given the possible excesses of allegorical interpretation, the rise in the West of Renaissance humanism and Protestant thought put renewed effort into distinguishing the original text from the additions that had been made to them over time. This new focus on accurately translating the Bible into the vernacular (Martin Luther and others), as well as correcting the original Latin text (Erasmus), cast a critical light on the allegorical method. Among Protestants there was a concern with the "Plain sense" and also the "canon within the canon." That is, in order to discern the coherence of the Bible, itself a collection of diverse texts, theologians, like Luther, argued that wherever does not bear Christ and so the promise of salvation is not properly Christian teaching. Other theologians argued for different canons within the canon to bring coherence to the Bible's meaning.

Protestant and humanist thinkers thereby focused not on levels of meaning, but, rather, the import, the *Sache*, of the text. This new focus ushered in further developments in the theory of interpretation. First, it advanced the work of interpretation by distinguishing *exegesis* (the critical explanation and reading out of the meaning of a text) from *eisegesis* (the imposition of the reader's meaning on a text). The concern to avoid imposing meanings on a text, the constraint danger of the allegorical method, led to the use of different forms of criticism (source, historical, textual) that sought to grasp the "original" meaning of the text in its *Sitz im Leben*. Here the danger is wooden forms of historicism that lock the meaning and text into its time and place. However, the focus on the subject matter, actually opened up, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a shift from hermeneutics in its allegorical or exegetical forms, to what is now called general hermeneutics with its theological and sociological emphases.

General Hermeneutics

The transition from special to general hermeneutics finds expression in several seminal thinkers. Given the vast reach of scholarship on hermeneutics, these figures will provide orientation to the topic.[1]

The so-called Father of modern hermeneutics is Friedrich Schleiermacher (1786–1834), the nineteenth-century German theologian, philosopher, and translator of Plato. In his "Lectures on Hermeneutics" he isolated a number of dialectical relations, most notably between "grammatical" and "technical" interpretation. According to Schleiermacher, the work of interpretation requires that the reader know the author better than the author knows themselves, through the mastery of the language and historical context of the text. However, the work of interpretation must go beyond exegesis. Schleiermacher, and other Romantic thinkers, argued that the interpreter, through the power of empathy, must "divine" the import of the text and thereby grasp the mind and intention of the author. Hermeneutics, then, is a general account of the human ability to understand another. With this move, Schleiermacher, in his 1809/1810

1 Importantly, the four figures noted do not include the work of Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) the originator of so-called Deconstruction. The reason to focus on thinkers centrally involved in the development of general hermeneutics is due to the simple fact of the antagonism between Deconstruction and Derrrida himself with the project of hermeneutics, an antagonism beyond the scope of this entry (see Michelfelder and Palmer 1989).

lectures on "General Hermeneutics," initiated the focus of hermeneutics on human understanding as such and thereby changed the landscape of philosophy (Schleiermacher 1977).

The shift from special to general hermeneutics was decisively made by Martin Heidegger (1884–1976) in his landmark *Sein und Zeit* (1928). Heidegger undertook to analyze and interpret the meaning of being through what he called *Dasein*, human being in the world. Working from phenomenology into hermeneutics, Heidegger introduced crucial concepts into interpretation theory, including "world" and "horizon," as well as indicating that the meaning of Being is, from this perspective, time. That is, human beings project the meaning of Being onto the horizon of time as the inner possibility of their existence in being towards death. Heidegger only produced the first half of the projected work and subsequently turned his focus from an existential analytic of *Dasein* to how, in his thought, Being presences itself through history, technology, art, and poetry.

It was with Heidegger's renowned student Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) and his seminal work *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) that hermeneutics was fully established as a branch of philosophy focused on human understanding. Unlike Schleiermacher, Gadamer utterly denied the possibility of empathetically identifying with the mind and intention of the author or artist. Rather, the work and interpreter each have their own horizon (or world) of understanding. Interpretation's object is correspondingly a disclosure of meaning as "truth" rather than any "method" of explanation. The paradigmatic act of interpretation is a dialogue between interpreter and the work in which the aim is to return the work to the lived reality of speech. This is possible because the focus of interpretation is the *Sache*, the import or subject matter, which is the object of inquiry rather than the work's author or its *Sitz im Leben*.

Gadamer's understanding of the text or work of art does not mean, as it did for historicists, a sharp break between the past and the present work of interpretation. History, of which a text or work of art is part, has in fact, especially in the case of "classic" works, effects on human consciousness, effective-historical consciousness (*wirkungsgeschitchtliches Bewusstein)*, as he called it. Instead, the work of interpretation, seeks a "fusion" of horizons between the world of the text/work of art and the world of the interpreter. The fusion won through careful historically informed interpretation is "understanding" whose object, as noted, is truth as the disclosure of meaning. Thus, understanding through interpretation is not empathetic unity, as for Schleiermacher, nor a means to explore the meaning of "being," as Heidegger argued, but, rather, how truth appears as meaningful and understandable for us (Schweiker 1985, 1990). In this way, Gadamer sought to reclaim truth for the human sciences in the form of meaning freed from the dominance of scientific method as the paradigm of truth where truth is a claim about a factual state of affairs open to explanation.

A final figure important for the development of modern hermeneutics was the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005). Ricoeur sought to mediate the debates between historicists and hermeneuts by articulating a productive relation between explanation and interpretation. One of his central insights is that human understanding involves a three-step process beginning with a first naiveté where the meaning of a text, event, or myth is taken at face value, what was called the plain sense in special hermeneutics (Ricoeur 1984). However, there is the need, after the rise of various forms of critical analysis, to submit the work to critical explanation or exegesis. This moment of explanation creates a distance between the work and its origin, whether in an author or community, as well as between the interpreter and the work. Critical distanciation, as Ricoeur called it, can be achieved by several critical methods ranging from historical analysis to Freudian explanation as well as structuralism and post-structural methods of explanation. Yet Ricoeur insisted, in the way historicists and other do not, that after the work of criticism, the interpreter seeks a "second naiveté," a critical grasp of the work's meaning, opening possibilities now.

The possibility of a second naiveté won through the dialectic of explanation and interpretation must be situated within the context of Ricoeur's thought about the import and referent of a work or text. He argued that a work opens up a world *in front of itself* rather than disclosing the mind of the author (Schleiermacher) or offering a fusion between the world of the text and our own historical horizon (Gadamer). For Ricoeur, the text projects a world of imagined and real possibilities for the interpreter's existence. We fashion our narrative identities with respect to two horizons of time: death but also "eternity," by which he meant that the future has a priority in human life rather than just being a terminal horizon on life.

A final contribution that Ricoeur has made to general hermeneutics is found in his Gifford Lectures, *Oneself as Another*. In this work, Ricoeur demonstrated that human beings have basic capabilities related to a self in relation to others (Wall, Schweiker, and Hall 2002, 279–290). His vision of the "capable human" entails two important insights for ethics. First, the ground of human capabilities is a fundamental attestation that it is good to be alive. Being human is an affirmation of being and thus a testimony to the worth of life itself. Second, and relatedly, Ricoeur argues in his "Little Ethics" that the ethical aim of human existence is "seeking the good life with and for others in just institutions" (Ricoeur 1992). In this respect the ethical life not only affirms the goodness of existence within an open future, but also that the ethically good life must pass through the moral claim of others on us and the task to build just communities.

The shift from special to general hermeneutics has opened up new paths in philosophy in terms of history, ontology, and ethics. Taken together these developments clarify the centrality of meaning and understanding in human existence, but also that human beings as thinking, acting, and symbolizing creatures are themselves "hermeneutical" beings. Our capacity to cross boundaries opens up fundamental reflection in the various branches of thought. With that insight, we can turn to the importance of hermeneutics for religious and philosophical ethics.

Hermeneutics and Ethics

Having discussed the definition of, major concepts within, and basic types of hermeneutics, the entry will now conclude by briefly isolating five ways in which interpretation theory is important for the work of ethics and moral theory.

First, as shown, questions of meaning, understanding, and action always take place in some "world" (real or imagined) and with respect to the horizon of that world. It is crucial, then, to interpret those circumstances of action, often construed by the religions in terms of their cosmogonies, eschatologies, and metaphysical beliefs and theories. Even within "secular" moral philosophy, how the context and horizon of human existence is construed bears on the meaning of human actions and relations as the subject of ethics. This is especially true in an age of global interaction and climate crisis since how one interprets people's worlds relates to their obligations to respect and enhance domains of life.

Second, insofar as practical ethical reflection on human relations and actions must consider the meaning of human acts and relation in the "world" in which they take place, then one is always engaged in the work of interpretation. Since a basic question in ethics is "what is going on?" interpretation is inescapable (Niebuhr 1999). This is especially true because human purposes and relations depend on ques-

tions of the meaning and worth of those purposes and relations. Further, practical ethical reflection, especially within the religions, is embedded within traditions that have authorities, practices, community, rituals, texts, and myths, but also, as shown above, different patterns and types of interpretation theory. Not only is it important to grasp the significance of these theories, usually the task of the historian, but also, for ethical thinkers, it is necessary to adopt or develop a theory herself or himself in order to contribute to the ongoing life of the community and its tradition. This is the work, as we have seen, of special hermeneutics.

It also seems, third, that the hermeneutical turn in ethics bears on the account of the meaning and worth of human agents. As seen in the development of general hermeneutics, to be human is to carry meanings across boundaries and furthermore to act into a future, variously construed, with an affirmation of the capacity for agency. This suggests, meta-ethically, a basic affirmation of being and acting which undergirds ethical traditions that teach compassion for all who suffer (Buddhism) as well as traditions of justice (Islam) and love (Christianity), to name a few. This is not to deny the profound difference between, say, Buddhist and Christian cosmologies, but rather, to show how basic moral attitudes and commitments of the religions come to articulation within hermeneutical inquiry through the human capacity to seek, create, and understand meanings across boundaries.

Fourth, hermeneutical inquiry implies a broadly humanistic stance as a normative perspective within ethics, and in two ways. First, insofar as the objects of interpretation are human cultural products (texts, actions, rituals), then whatever other divine or sacred origins are imputed to them (say, divinely revealed or ultimate teachings) they still require interpretation. This fact opens for ethics the various types of special and general hermeneutics in the quest to understand the relevance of religious sources for the orientation and evaluation of human conduct. Second, a broadly humanistic stance in ethics does not in itself imply an invidious anthropocentrism. It does mean that ethical reflection as the work of human beings cannot and should not escape or critique the human search for meaning and understanding through the work of interpretation.

Finally, hermeneutical theory wrestles with the relation between meaning, as the object of the human sciences, and "truth," the seeming domain of the natural sciences. This history of hermeneutics aims to complicate that division of labor between meaning and truth and with it meta-ethical questions about the validity of an ethical position. In this respect, a hermeneutical perspective in ethics seeks to validate or invalidate moral orientations for the guidance of human conduct within specific traditions of interpretation.

The importance of hermeneutics, of whatever sort and within any tradition, is that it provides the tools to articulate the ways in which human beings and communities understand meanings that sustain and orient their conduct. In this respect, interpretation is a basic element in ethical reflection.

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CHAPTER 29

Contested Canons and Counter Traditions

Victor Anderson

Leaving Africa Behind

The West has largely ignored the rich textuality of moral practices and rituals, customs and manners, and wisdom traditions of sub-Saharan African peoples. Thinkers such as Hume, Kant, Jefferson, and Hegel find little value in turning to Africa for clues to the progress of Western historical consciousness. Hume surmises, "I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation" (Hume 1985, 208). Kant compares differences between global populations, including Spaniards, French, English, Arabs, and Negroes. This leads him to observe, "Not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any praise worthy quality" (Kant 1960, 110). Jefferson notes, "Their love is ardent, but it kindles the senses only, not the imagination. Religion could have produced a Phyllis Whately; but it could not produce a poet" (Jefferson 2001, 97). Hegel offers a culminating judgment, "Negroes are to be regarded as a race of children who remain immersed in the state of uninterested *naiveté*." They are "the compact, *differenceless mass* [*my emphasis*] of the African continent" (Hegel 2000, 40). These thinkers shoulder the weight of Western sentiment, respecting the non-importance of Africa to Western civilizing forces in science, arts, industry, religion, and morality. They reveal an anti-black racism produced and preserved in Western philosophical, theological, humanistic, and scientific manuscript canons and traditions, culminating in the encyclopedia of human knowledge, which leaves Africa behind in the currents of forgetfulness.

Black Religion

But Africa is not forgotten. Its moral universes preserve its peoples and lands, customs and manners, and moral cultures and wisdom traditions against decimating forces of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Among the religious traditions to survive the mutating forces of the slave trade, Yoruba constitutes one of the largest religious groups in West Africa. Its influence is felt even today among Afro-religions in Cuba, Brazil, Jamaica, Haiti, and the US.

Peter Paris finds this influence widely spread beyond Yoruba religion throughout the spirituality of African peoples. "The moral understandings of African peoples cannot be understood apart from their common cosmological understandings," which are integrated into the whole fabric of African realities

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

(Paris 1995, 25). Paris provides a cosmological scheme. The spirit world includes the Supreme Deity, lesser deities, and ancestor spirits. Through them, the cosmos is preserved. Communal life is balanced with the spiritual, and this harmony is the moral end of human life. Family life is the basis of personal identity, which is guided by the spiritual forces of the spirit world and the moral culture of the community. To live one's life in harmony with this moral universe is the striving of the individual's soul (Paris 1995, 25).

The African transatlantic slave trade decimated ancestral lines, religious practices, moral cultures, and kinship bonds by mixing and interbreeding peoples from indigenous regions, tribes, villages, and societies. However, Raboteau details how African slaves transported their deities, ancestor spirits, and aspects of their traditional religions and moral cultures to the Americas: "The gods of Africa were carried in the memories of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic. To be sure, they underwent a sea change" (Raboteau 1978, 16). African slaves preserved and modified aspects of their indigenous religious traditions within their New World situation. This transformation helps to understand and appreciate the moral cultures and universes they produced in the Caribbean Basin: Santeria in Cuba, Shango in Trinidad, Voudoo in Haiti, Candomblé in Brazil, and Slave Religion and the Black Church in North America. These new religions throughout the Americas cluster under the umbrella phrase, Black religion.

Black religion is a cultural emergent from the cosmic violence inflicted on African peoples through contact and conquest, chattel slavery, anti-black racism, and white supremacy. Black people transformed the traditions they encountered, whether Islam, Catholicism, or Protestantism, "by 'bluing the note' and producing a sound that was recognizable but different" (Hart 2008, 193). Black religion transformed the existential situation of transplanted African peoples in diaspora into moral cultures of hope, resistance, and freedom that would send shock waves throughout all of Europe in the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804).

Although Black religion is not restricted to the standard narrative of slave religion and the Black Church tradition in the US, this narrative, beginning with the "invisible institution," is an expedient entry into the contested canons and traditions of Black religion in the US. It was invisible only due to its having been neglected by religious historians prior to the second half of the twentieth century as a legitimate province of study (Raboteau 1978, x). "By largely ignoring this tradition, much of which had been preserved, historians have rendered an articulate people historically inarticulate, and have allowed the record of their consciousness to go unexplored" (Levine 1997, 59). However, slave religion reveals close connections to African practices, modes of thinking, familiar customs, and the manner in which African slaves understood their situation and forged an economy of black existential hope.

Slave Religion

Appreciating the moral universe of slave religion requires turning to the concrete, situated moments of black suffering. Black existence is situated, determined, and already characterized as the Western "problem" as we saw with Hume, Kant, Jefferson, and Hegel. Where they engage in a politics of black forgetfulness (the eradication or subordination of black peoples by white hegemony), Black religion encodes situational moments of black lived experience into shapes of freedom, anguish, responsibility, embodied agency, sociality, and liberation (Gordon 1997, 3). Within this economy of black existential

hope, "Africana peoples' being-in-the-world is the question of value raised by people who live the situation," says Gordon (Gordon 1997, 3). This economy of hope, produced and experienced by slaves, guided their ethical perspectives on the world and presentations of their experiences in tales, prayers, letters, journals, sorrow songs, sermons, autobiographies, manifestoes, worship, political activism, and more.

Earl Jr. describes how slave religion came to express the slave community's moral and religious significance through his analysis of slave songs, conversion narratives, autobiographies, journals, and folklore. "Each genre of the folk sources produces its own conceptual paradigm for looking at the fundamental ideas of self, God, and community" (Earl Jr. 1993, 8). These sources collectively and individually inform African Americans' identities, help towards understanding how African slaves navigated their ethical duties, and exhibit complexity among slaves in their understanding of the self, God, and community.

Slave religion produced a remarkably resilient moral universe of deep spiritual and ethical significance, which sustained the slave community against the death-dealing effects of the transatlantic slave trade and the dehumanizing plantation system. Their economy of existential hope offered spirituality, conjuring practices, and folk wisdom, which are articulated and preserved in black folk-cultural productions. Through these sources of moral insight, slave religion did not only emphasize the slave community's ambiguous and contradictory relation to white Christianity. They also centered the community's confidence that justice and freedom would triumph over oppression. Webber concludes, "most of the values, attitudes, and understandings that whites taught their slaves were rejected by members of the slave quarter community" (Webber 1978, 246), and this contradicted whites' view of slaves "as a people without a culture, without themes and educational instruments of their own" (Webber 1978, 249).

The Black Church Tradition

The economy of black existential hope, produced and preserved in the moral universe of slave religion, was a repository of human creativity and moral wisdom that exerted its moral influence within the Black Church tradition. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) interpret the moral universe of the Black Church tradition symbolically as the black sacred cosmos. As a covering term, the Black Church represents "independent, historic, and totally black controlled denominations" represented by 80 percent of black church memberships (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 1). Although identified mostly by Protestant denominations, Lincoln and Mamiya see conceptual and moral connections between the Black Church and traditional African religions. The black sacred cosmos designates black people's "unique and distinctive forms of culture and worldviews as parallels rather than replications of the culture in which they were involuntary guests" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 2). "The core values of black culture like freedom, justice, equality, and African heritage, and racial parity at all levels of human intercourse, are raised to ultimate levels and legitimated by the black sacred cosmos" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 7).

The black sacred cosmos is incarnational, stressing the immanence of God and Christ in the lived situation of black people; Jesus symbolizes black people's triumph or transcendence over the death-dealing effects of anti-black racism and white supremacy. Universal egalitarianism and freedom are norms of all inter-human relations. Ecstatic worship signifies a realized eschatological hope and fulfillment of union with God, Christ, and ancestors through the Spirit. The black sacred cosmos "reflects

the deepest values of African Americans, giving primal consideration to the necessity of freedom as an expression of complete belonging and allegiance to God" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 17).

Paris derives a substantive ethics from his account of the Black Church as a "surrogate world" that parallels the sacred and moral universe of white Christianity where the absolute moral norm of black moral agency is the biblical view, which regards all people as equal under God, and is "the final authority for all matters pertaining to faith, thought, and practice" (Paris 1985, 14). This first principle of practical reasoning in human relations, governed by this universal and egalitarian principle, "has tended always to be life-protecting, life-enabling, and life-respecting" (Paris 1985, 14). These norms substantively constitute the virtue tradition of black self-reliance, self-support, self-determination, and self-respect. "These virtues constitute racial and moral virtues, the validity of which has never been disputed by blacks" (Paris 1985, 15). The universal reach of Black religion's categorical imperatives, absolute equality before God and justice for all, would be most tested by black liberation ethics.

Black Liberation Ethics

James H. Cone is widely regarded as the unsurpassed representative of the black theology of liberation trajectory emerging from the late 1960s. Its moral fervor was fueled by the shifting grounds of black liberal politics and liberal ethics of universal egalitarianism to black radical politics and its black revolutionary consciousness in movements such as Black Power, the New Black Aesthetics, and the black student movements of the 1960s. Cone insisted that the theological problem of American culture was white racism, and that the task of black theology of liberation was to critique it through a new, black revolutionary collective consciousness. This new black consciousness was an emergent from the "the black community, the pain and joy it derives from reacting to whiteness and affirming blackness and the mythic power inherent in [its historic religious] symbols for the present revolution against white racism" (Cone 1991, 27).

Cone's is a classic statement on the meaning of black existence for black theologies of liberation. Black existential hope is turned on black survival and black revolutionary consciousness, which seeks "to interpret the theological significance of the being of a community whose existence is threatened by the power of non-being" (Cone 1991, 16). Understood as an economy of black existential hope, blackness expresses self-determination, self-reliance, and self-assertion in shapes of self-love. Black pride, respect, and loving blackness means rejecting inhuman living conditions and a social order that debilitate black youths' life expectations through mass incarceration, crippling education, and murderous policing. The "Black Soul" centers the economy of black existential hope, which "comes from the totality of black experience, the experience of carving out an existence in a society that says you do not belong," says Cone (Cone 1991, 70). The moral supports, which fund this economy of hope, are black experience, black expressive culture, black history, the Black God, and the Black Christ. "The test of truth in black theology," says Dorrien, "was whether a statement or action served the end of black liberation (Dorrien 2009, 402).

This moral imperative led many black theologians (many former students of Cone) to return to slave religion as a source for black theology. They were in search of the radical impulses of self-determination and self-empowerment in these sources, which they held had become quieted in the Black Church's liberal politics and ethics. The economy of black existential hope, which Earl Jr. discovers in the moral

universe of slave religion and culture, was given theological interpretation through the moral demands of black theology. From this spiritual and moral economy, slave narrative theologians (Hopkins and Cummings 2003) construct a theological and moral economy of black existential hope from which today's generations of black people may find enough faith and hope for liberation praxes against white oppression. Where slave religion transformed the situated moments of the slave community's live experience into shapes of freedom, resistance and even revolts, a return to this moral universe, these theologians had hoped would empower contemporary black lived experience in forms of resistance and liberation praxes.

Black liberation ethics stresses the prophetic character of Black religion. Its essential message is derived from the biblical Exodus story and the proclamation of Jesus (Luke 4:18ff.) to set at liberty the oppressed. It insists that the work of liberation is the radical transformation of individual and systemic power structures in harmony with God's preferential option for the poor and resisting forces of white supremacy. It joins global liberation movements, which also seek to free the oppressed from the demonic forces of global capitalism and all forms of authoritarianism. Black liberation ethics, thus, rejects abstract, universal egalitarianism, while insisting that the liberation of the poor and oppressed, wherever, always remains the unfinished work of the spirit of freedom (Hopkins 2006, 6–7).

Womanist Ethics

The later decade of the 1990s saw black liberation ethics advancing in keeping with debilitating social forces beyond anti-black racism and widening its scope towards the intersections of classism, sexism, and heterosexism. Womanist ethics contextualizes this sprit of freedom in situated moments of black women's experience. Katie Geneva Cannon's *Black Womanist Ethics* (1989) "signaled new beginnings in several ways," says Mitchem (Mitchem 2006, 69). Womanist ethics foregrounds black women's realities in distinction from white feminists, where black women's lived experience had long been overlooked as a space for the study of ethics. Cannon also called into question the ways that white, male, Christian ethics construed individuals, power structures, and moral agency (Mitchem 2006, 69). From sources of black women's literature, spirituality, and experience, womanist ethics constructs an economy of black existential hope that sustains black women and the whole community from systemic intersecting assaults from racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism. The black women's literary tradition provides a deep repository for preserving black women within the economy of black existential hope created by and nourished in Black religion and a moral universe that, says Cannon, "allow them to prevail against the odds, with moral integrity" (Cannon 1988, 75).

Williams (1993) articulates this economy of black women's existential hope as one of struggle, survival, resistance, and quality of life demands. She morally reflects on the biblical story of Hagar and her wilderness trials, as well as the ministerial vision of Jesus. Williams finds them existentially anticipating situated moments of black women's wilderness experience, which leads her theologically to conclude that God cares, meets black women through their life of prayer and struggles, and provides resources and support for ongoing resistance against black women's oppression. However, God does not liberate. Liberation, says Williams, must be the work of black women themselves for themselves (Williams 1993, 238–239).

Mitchem succinctly details the womanist economy of black existential hope. It attends to the ordinary theologies of black women's lives, Christian and non-Christian; stresses the communal aspects of black

women's experiences, including social activism and their creation of safe spaces; insists on being interdisciplinary, while keeping all aspects of black women's lives central; is the starting point for womanist theology and critical social analysis; and dialogue and openness are essential virtues for keeping womanist ethics open to situated lived experience of others, sometimes even serving as a corrective to theologies that undermine black women emancipatory potentials. The moral universe of womanist ethics gathers up the histories, social constructions, activism, and faith of black women within shapes of freedom that preserves and transforms the ever-expanding economy of black existential hope in Black religion.

In conclusion, the traditions, which constitute Black religion in the US – from slave religion to black liberation ethics – remain vital yet expanding, deepening, and constantly being reconstituted among newly emerging and challenging contexts and trends in twenty-first century scholarship. Economies of black existential hope expand with each emergent generation, creatively and boldly urging each generation to resist social forces of anti-black racism and white supremacy, while articulating the generative relevance of black religion albeit beyond the standard narrative.

The 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century have been shaping African-American religious ethics in widely, sweeping directions. Once almost singularly cultivated under the rubrics of theological education and American social ethics (Wilmore 1989; Dorrien 2009), the passing of the twentieth century has witnessed African-American students of religion and theology being introduced to and working from within "A New Cultural Politics of Difference" (West 1990). This cultural move unsettles any grand metanarrative or essentialist interpretations of nature, the human, or the self, including our structural understandings of race, class, and sexual-gender politics in black lived experience, in favor of "multiplicity," "plurality," and "difference." bell hooks describes this as a turn to "post-modern blackness," where scholars "dialogue about everything, make spaces where we can engage in critical dissent without violating one another" (hooks 1990, 19).

Presently, in our postmodern moment, African-American religious ethics has unhinged itself as being a strictly Christian or theological discipline. Students are being educated in theories and methods derived from anthropology, the social sciences, postmodern philosophy, physics and natural sciences, cultural studies, and more. Books are being published that pushed beyond racial and religious essentialism toward the priority of difference (Anderson, 1995, 2008; Hart 2008, 2011); race and science (Holmes 2002); sociology and economics (Floyd-Thomas, 2006; Day 2012); and sexual-gender politics (Pinn and Hopkins 2004; Griffin 2006). Doing justice to this emergent bibliography in African-American religious ethics awaits further watching and research into this encouraging multiplicity beyond the standard narrative of Black religion in the US.

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CHAPTER 30

Revelation

Mark Douglas

Definitions

The complexities of revelation in religious ethics begin with definitions. When revelation has been defined as the process of divine wisdom being conveyed to human beings, it has tended to imply theism, a human capacity for receptivity, and an active relationship between the divine and human beings. Theism situates the divine as distinct from the world while also having attributes associated with agency: divinity is neither diffused nor inert but instead finds itself concentrated in an intelligent being with both a will and the capacity to act. As such, revelation will play a more significant role in the Abrahamic traditions, for instance, than in Eastern religions. Human receptivity is a precondition for the meaningful translation of divine wisdom into moral direction: revelation assumes not only that human beings (or at least some human beings) have the receptors through which they can be attuned to divine wisdom but that they can translate their experiences of divine wisdom into directions for action in the world. As such, revelation will play a more significant role in religious anthropologies that highlight complex capacities for spiritual discernment and moral reasoning than in those that treat human beings as determined by their material existence or blind to the forces that motivate their actions. An ongoing relationship between the divine and human beings establishes the coherence and trustworthiness of divine wisdom for human action: revelation is a two-party event that reaffirms, reinforces, and reshapes divine-human relationships. As such, revelation will play a more significant role in religions that highlight the continuing quality of divine actions and the imperfections of the world than those in which the divine has withdrawn or that assume either the insignificance or completeness of the world as it is.

Where revelation has been defined as the shock of discovery at understanding the world in a new way or seeing something that had previously been shrouded, it has played a more prominent role in Eastern, naturalistic, humanistic, and Deistic religions as well as those in which divine presence is either obvious or diffused. Within such a definition, revelations in religious ethics manifest as epiphanies about better ways to live in the world or clearer reasons to behave in some ways rather than others. This broader definition of revelation not only allows the term to function in a wider range of religious traditions, it also shapes possibilities for interreligious engagements – including around shared moral concerns – and projects in comparative theology that are either precluded or foreshortened within the more restrictive definition above. Yet such a broad definition invites questions as to the very utility of the term. If revelation can be so expansively understood, what – beyond an epiphenomenal and morally insignificant moment

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of pleasure about a new insight – distinguishes such revelations from the insights that come through careful *a priori* reasoning or *a posteriori* reflections on experience?

Toward a fuller description of the roles that revelation has played in the moral claims of particular religious traditions, this entry leans toward the first definition of revelation because of the work that revelation does in the religions where that definition is meaningful. It does so, though, weakly, recognizing that the very project of referring the many to the one is always fraught and never an innocent or apolitical project. If, at its end, this entry has prioritized the role of revelation in some religious traditions and perspectives more than others, it hopefully has done so in a way that is consistent with the way that and energy with which those particular religious traditions and perspectives understand revelation.

If defining "revelation" is a first problem, defining "religion" is a closely related second one, made more complicated by recent scholarship on the modern origins of the concept. First, there are any number of life-ordering traditions that carry metaphysical weight and may or may not count as a religion, depending on who is doing the defining: does Confucianism count as a religion? Not only are definitions disputed, those disputes align with debates about the definition of revelation revealing biases toward Western religions and modern constructs throughout. Second, the organic quality of religions makes distinguishing religions from each other complicated. Is the Church of Latter-day Saints a kind of Christianity or a unique religious tradition? Do Lingayats in southern India practice a version of Hinduism or is theirs a religion distinct from Hinduism? How many Traditional African Religions are there and what makes them distinct from or connected to each other? Paradoxically, this organicity also reveals the mobility of ideas about revelation and moral authority: religious construals growing out of revelatory insights not only birth new religions with distinct moral systems (as was the case for Christianity's growth from Judaism) but connect religious traditions to each other conceptually (Hinduism to Buddhism), historically (e.g. Candomblé's joining of West African religions and Roman Catholicism), and morally (so, e.g. the moral foci of Bahàí and Unitarian Universalism share substantial overlap although the traditions arise from very different sources). And, third, there is great variety within recognized single religious traditions. So, for instance, the three major streams of Christianity (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) break down into innumerable smaller and distinct branches and those three major streams still exclude recognizably Christian communions like the Nestorians or Jehovah's Witnesses. Moreover, distinctions within a single religious tradition seldom align with distinctions in the way those streams understand the moral implications of revelation: many streams may share significant overlap about understandings of revelation and morality (as is the case for Islam) or overlapping understandings of the moral authority of revelatory events may link otherwise disparate streams of a single faith (e.g. the apocalypticisms of the Fifth Monarchists and the Millerites).

With those definitional complexities in mind, this entry first turns to an overview of the role revelation plays in some of the world's major religions before exploring the moral purposes of revelation in religious ethics and naming some abiding questions about revelation in religious ethics.

Revelation in the World's Religions

Judaism

Neither the Hebrew Scriptures nor the Talmud speak abstractly about revelation or offer abstract reflections on revelation. Nor do the Hebrew Scriptures analyze the type of communication that revelation is. They begin, instead, in stories about particular revelations – either as "unveilings" (*glh*) or "communications"

(*nggd*) – from the God of Israel to particular persons or groups of people, whether those revelations occur orally (Genesis 12), in dreams (Genesis 37), via theophanies (Exodus 3), or even, paradoxically, in the absence of such things (1 Kings 19). The two inherently linked fundamental revelations (*yd'* or "proclamations") within Judaism – the ones around which all other revelations revolve – are the liberation of the Hebrew people from Egypt and the giving of the law on Sinai (Exodus 5ff.). In this story, revelation functions not so much to give evidence about the reality of God or the superiority of the God of Israel in comparison to other gods but as a display of God's particular concern for a chosen people and the covenant's insistence that the revelations that bind the people and their God to each other are fundamentally moral. The moral form of these revelations, expressed as law, shows only limited concern about distinguishing between laws ordering divine-human relations ("You shall have no other gods before me") and those ordering inter-human ones ("You shall not kill"); between laws that apply only to the Hebrew people ("the pig ... is unclean for you") and those that apply to all people living in the land ("you shall not oppress a resident alien"); between laws that pertain to ceremonial rituals and those that pertain to public life. The revelation of the law by God on Sinai is a single revelation of the many laws that constitute a covenantal relationship between God and Israel. The enduring significance and sufficiency of this revelation has manifested itself in suspicions within Rabbinic and Orthodox Judaism about the need for any other revelations from God (see, e.g. the Babylonian Talmud *Yebamot* 49b). New revelations, when they happen, are subsidiary revelations that help interpret the Torah; indeed, the sufficiency of the Torah as revelation is so great that even if God chose to reveal Godself and offer new wisdom, that revelation could be rejected as immaterial. As rabbis participated in divine revelation by reflecting on the Torah, these new revelations were captured first in the Mishnah and then in the Talmud. Following Aristotle, Maimonides understood the revelations of the oral law in the Talmud to be natural phenomenon; as such, the meaning of "revelation" within Jewish thought contains though distinguishes between the two definitions of the term offered above.

Christianity

Christianity finds its center in the revelation of Jesus, the Christ, and his incarnation, teachings, works, death, and resurrection. Jesus is the embodied revelation of God; to understand God, God's sovereign reign, and humanity's place within that reign, one looks to Jesus as he is described in the Bible and his will and purposes are discerned through the movement of the Holy Spirit. Locating its central revelation within a person (rather than, e.g. a set of laws or a particular event) complicates and diversifies how Christians have understood the moral import of that revelation. Scripture – and particularly but not exclusively the New Testament – gains its own revelatory status such that many Christians not only treat the Bible as a revelation but believe that reading it can stimulate new revelations. Given the variety of moral codes, ideals, visions, analogies, narratives, and implications contained within the text, Christian disagreement not only about which parts of this revelatory text are morally authoritative, but to whom these texts are authoritative, and how these revelations apply in new contexts were inevitable. Moreover, appeals to the Holy Spirit as a means of ordering these disagreements have only multiplied the ways Christians understand the revelation of Jesus and the moral life that follows from belief in him as Lord. Believing that the Holy Spirit still moves in the world and that the revelation of Jesus as the Christ only finds its completion upon his return, Christians find themselves perpetually open to new revelations about how to live. In their most vigorous forms, including the one described by theologian Karl Barth, these new revelations manifest as divine commands and Christian ethics become a project of discernment and obedience. Other expressions of Christian

ethics, such as the one described by Thomas Aquinas, distinguish natural revelation (what can be discerned of God and God's will and work in the world by all persons) and special revelation (insights into that will and work that are given only to some through the work of the Holy Spirit). For the most part, discernment of revelations is a project of the church, though individual revelatory experiences can function to shape personal moralities and initiate new moral projects.

Islam

Muslims believe that God had given revelations (*Wạhy*) to prophets since Adam, including those to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, but that God's final revelation came verbally through the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad. This revelation is expressed in the *Qur'an*, which is the literal and perfect revelation of Allah to all humanity, given word-for-word by Allah, and which will endure until the end of time. The content of this revelation in the *Qur'an*, combined with the sayings of the Prophet (the *Hadith*) and descriptions of his daily practices (the *Sunna*), constitute the law (*Sharī'ah*) that orders Muslim life. The *Qur'an* consists of rules and wisdom for living along with warnings and a description of final judgment. These rules are most clearly expressed in Arabic but can be translated to other languages because Allah is not only the God of Muslims but of all people. Revelations, given only to the prophets, complement reason and sense experiences and make human life coherent. Other people cannot receive revelations, no revelations have occurred since Muhammad, and none of God's revelations can be altered. The righteous – regardless of religious faith – can, however, receive inspirations (*Ilham*) to aid them in their moral journeys. The perfect and encompassing qualities of Allah's revelations to the prophets and, especially, in the *Qur'an* mean that all other authorities used when making normative claims (e.g. appeals to natural capacities for human reasoning or personal experience) are subsidiary and only legitimate to the extent that they conform to revelation. Following this revelation, Muslim life is ordered by the Five Pillars (profession of faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca). Collectively, these pillars shape daily moral life and display the Islamic resistance to distinguishing between faith and actions: what one believes and how one acts are of a piece and all actions carry moral weight.

Hinduism

Revelation in Hinduism begins with the Vedas, a collection of writings which human beings heard (*śruti*) from the gods. They are *apaurusheya* (supernatural) and have always existed, having been passed along by seers from the beginning of time. The Vedas shape the processes of *bhakti* (devotion) through which human beings come to discover knowledge of the *brahman* (the supreme or ultimate reality) and *ātman* (the self that continues through the processes of reincarnation) and they order the *dharma* (rules for right conduct) for all things. Those who seek after such knowledge will discover the permanence and ultimacy of *brahman* and the fleeting/illusory/transient qualities of everything else. Most theistic forms of Hinduism favor the idea that God (Ishvara/Brahma/Shiva/Vishnu) promulgated the Vedas but that each promulgation is only a manifestation of the Vedas' already existing quality. In these Vedantic forms, God uses karma to rule over the world: beings collect merits and demerits according to how they fulfill or fail to fulfill their *dharma* and their karma determines their next incarnation. In non-theistic forms of Hinduism, however, the effects of karma are, themselves, sufficient as natural processes that determine the next incarnation.

Buddhism

The clearest expression of revelation in Buddhism is in the Four Noble Truths revealed to Siddhartha Gautama through his reflections on the Four Passing Sights which he saw as a young man (an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and an ascetic) that led him to reflect on human existence and its meaning. These truths – that life is suffering, that suffering comes from desire, that suffering ends when desire ends, and that to end desire, one should follow the Eightfold Path – are revelations according to the second definition offered above. Following the Eightfold Path, which lays out moral practices designed to reduce suffering in the self and others, will eventually lead one to Nirvana and the *anatman* – the non-self – in which persons escape the cycles of desire and suffering by seeing through them to reality, itself. Various components of the Eightfold Path carry varying degrees of revelation with them so, for example, right understanding is a fleeting recognition of the impermanence of things (and so contains a revelatory quality), whereas right thinking or right speaking are disciplines that make right understanding more likely.

Chinese Moral Traditions

While they are associated with ancestor worship and a pantheon of gods who can influence everyday events in human life, Chinese moral traditions (especially Daoism and Confucianism) might more properly be understood as sets of moral practices through which one becomes wise as one lives in harmonious relationships with all around them by attending to the interconnectedness of all things. Whether these harmonious relations are expressed through balance (the yin and yang of Daoism) or moderation (the Doctrine of the Mean in Confucianism), the moral commitments of Chinese moral traditions are grounded in practices associated with virtues like kindness and duty to family. Ancestors and gods do not impart wisdom for the pursuit of moral ends so much as exist as participants within interconnected reality; as such, revelation functions in ordinary rather than ecstatic ways in these traditions. That said, there are components of some Chinese moral traditions that include ecstatic encounters (the *Yuanyou* of Daoism) or control over supernatural forces (the *I Ching* of Confucianism) that might be identified with the first definition of revelation.

African Traditional Religions

Standing in for a variety of indigenous spiritualities that preexist both "Western" or "Eastern" religious traditions in Africa, the phrase "African Traditional Religions" has been used to describe a wide variety of beliefs, rituals, and practices associated with ethnic groups throughout the continent (e.g. Akan, Bantu, Yoruba, etc.). Though they vary widely, ATRs might be understood as a way of life in which there is no separation between the spiritual and the physical. Deities and spirits are a part of the world and no special revelation is required to discern their existence; participation in rituals and ceremonies recognize and reinforce their places in the universe. A few persons, though, can divine the purposes of the deities and spirits and convince them to take on certain tasks that help those who properly request their aid. Whether such divination and supplication can be understood as either expressions or products of revelation is more likely to reveal the limited usefulness of the term "revelation" than point to any role that revelation plays in ATRs.

Humanist/Modernist Traditions

Not all interactions between religion, revelation, and morality have led to or deepened faith. Claims about revelatory events or visions have also undermined religious convictions. Perceived contrasts between reason and revelation shaped Western Enlightenment and Modern traditions that rejected any insights that could not be arrived at through empirical or logical means. Natural disasters like the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 led thinkers like Voltaire to reject any religion which linked divine purpose to human suffering. Great moral evils like the *Shoah* led religious thinkers like Emil Fackenheim to hold God responsible for human suffering when no revelation of divine self, power, or instruction was forthcoming.

While this tour of the world's religions and the role revelation plays in them is cursory and leaves many unnamed, it offers some sense of the breadth and range of the ways that revelation and morality can relate. Just as importantly, it joins the conceptual connections between revelation and morality to the histories and practices of actual religions.

Morality and Revelation: Relations and Questions

Revelation, then, can be related to morality in a variety of ways. As is the case for Christianity, revelation can found a religion by providing a previously undisclosed vision of the cosmos which either includes or mandates a particular set of moral reflections and practices: revelation grounds morality. As is the case for Judaism, revelation can give reasons for a particular set of reflections and practices that might otherwise seem arbitrary or incoherent: revelation clarifies morality. As is the case for some versions of the Abrahamic faiths, revelation can mandate an action or set of practices that might otherwise be rejected: revelation determines morality. As is the case for other versions of the Abrahamic faiths, revelation can open receivers up to a wider vision of the cosmos, inducing the human senses of *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinans*: revelation relativizes morality. As is the case for Hinduism, revelation can promote an openness to thinking in new ways about living a moral life: revelation expands morality. As is the case for Buddhism and some forms of Chinese moral traditions, revelations can provide additional support for particular practices: revelation supplements morality. As is the case for African Traditional Religions, revelation can make some practices or actions easier or more fruitful: revelation aids morality. And as is the case for modern humanist traditions, revelation provides dubious moral authority (at best): revelation undermines morality.

To the extent that a religious ethic can be understood to include a degree of second-order reflection on moral claims, each of these relations between revelation and morality shapes a range of questions that warrant further reflection. Though the types, structures, emphases, goals, and lexicons of these questions will be distinct for each religious tradition – and may differ within various forms of these religious traditions – there are points of connection and overlap between them. Among overlapping sets of questions about the relation between revelation and religious ethics, one might include at least the following:

- What is the weight of the authority of revelation in shaping morality and how does it compare to other authorities/guides (e.g. scripture, reason, tradition) that shape morality?
- How much freedom does one receiving a revelation have in interpreting that revelation and/or accepting the moral injunctions that may come through that revelation?

- What is the relation between revelation and reason? Does revelation supplement, confirm, or challenge reason? Does it come before reason, after reason, or exist as an authority parallel to but disconnected from reason?
- Who has the ability or permission to interpret a revelation and how is such ability or permission gained? And how ought we to account for increasingly acute criticisms of traditional forms of religious ethics as voiced by feminists and other oppressed persons, especially when appeals to revelatory experiences have funded such persons' claims to their own unique moral authority?
- How do new revelations – especially about moral life – replace, supplement, or confirm old ones? For that matter, can there be new revelations?
- What are the differences between revelations that are, in principle, available to all persons and those that are given only to and for particular individuals or groups? What are the implications of those differences for the way persons and/or groups order their moral lives and relate to others?
- How authoritative can or should moral claims discerned via revelation be in the lives of those who did not, themselves, experience that revelation?
- How are revelations experienced? Are they experienced through the senses, do they occur in dreams, or are they intuited? And how can the means through which they are experienced shape moral claims about, e.g. the value of the human body or the significance of the natural world?
- Does one prepare for a revelation through, e.g. participation in particular rituals or the use of psychotropic substances? If so, who is allowed to participate in such rituals or use such substances and how are either those rituals or substances regulated?
- What social forces or psychological conditions make revelations more or less likely or coherent? What might it mean, for instance, that conditions for revelation are both produced by and made less coherent in what philosopher Charles Taylor has called the "immanent frame" of Western modernity – especially when that frame reinforces the primacy of morality for conceptually ordering the social imaginary in which the citizens of Western modern systems live? (Taylor 2007, 542ff.).

This list of questions is neither comprehensive nor sufficiently complex. Taken in concert with the discussion of the way revelation relates to the religious ethics of the various religious traditions described above, though, it starts to get at the untamable qualities of revelations as they shape and are shaped by religious ethics.

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2 Institutions

CHAPTER 31

Law and Religion

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Law is an expansive concept with resonance across the many domains of human society and culture. Law is also an enormously diverse social fact, present in all human communities. This chapter briefly introduces "law" in relation to "religion" and to "morality." A short chapter such as this cannot hope to do justice to the varieties of law and of its varied relationship to domains as large as religion and morality across space and time. The prejudice of this chapter will be that adequate consideration of these interrelationships could be generated only from a generously inclusive consideration of the discursive histories of these terms and their cognates in cultures across the globe. Instead this chapter will introduce several persistent themes in the study of law, religion and ethics today, and gesture to further lines of inquiry.

Law, religion, and ethics each, among other things, concerns itself with the problem of how one ought to live and how communities ought to be governed. They might be seen, in fact, as alternative but deeply interrelated systems, or structures, within which to reflect on the appropriate occupation of humankind. These alternatives are differentiated insofar as persons are to be understood to be defined primarily by their relationship to government, to their gods, or to each other. No person lives exclusively within one of these systems. An individual human being inhabits these various realities simultaneously and in community, fielding the competing demands of the systems in different ways. Individuals and communities both shape and are shaped by various and often multiple blendings of law, religion, and moral traditions. From an analytic point of view, however, and for the purposes of discursive clarity, the three may be held apart provisionally and be seen as having had varying relationships to one another and to have taken various forms at various times in history and in various places. Law, institutionally and culturally, may at times be seen as the carrier of moral principles, which in turn may or may not be expressed in a religious idiom. Or law may be seen as autonomous, independent of the other two. Religion and morality likewise. Religion in some contexts may be expressed through law or prescribe rules of morality. In others, religion seems to be both antinomian and amoral, leaving law and ethics to the secular domain. Morality may be embodied in formal law, or not. It may be explicitly religious, or not, in its foundation and expression.

Law, the rule of law, if you will, has a very high value in the contemporary international order. But "law" is a deceptively easy little word, one that is worth pausing to reflect on. What is law? Is law a list of rules made and enforced by an always essentially violent and ideologically oppressive sovereign power? Or is law more properly understood as the collective will of the people – alwauys negotiated with realities on the ground. Is the sovereign itself subject to law, or not? If so, where is the law to be found that governs the sovereign? What about the sovereignty of God? Is coercion a necessary component of law? Is

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

law better understood as a particular kind of process – rather than as a list of rules – a culturally specific system for mediating the inevitable anomalies of life? Does law require courts, judges, and police? How is law affected by economic realities? What is the relationship of law to justice?

Law and Culture

The Massachusetts Bay Colony was founded in 1629 on what was to be the east coast of the United States. The English men and women who constituted the members of the colony struggled over the first few generations of their corporate existence to construct a society founded in a religious vision *and* governed by law. Determined to leave behind them a corrupt British establishment, they sought, using little more than the Bible and human reason, to create a Christian place governed by Christian laws and ethics. The initial shape of the colonial government was explicitly biblical. There were distinct religious and civil institutions, but men who claimed to know God's will ruled the community. The right to vote depended on proof of religious conversion. The Bible was the source of all law, religion, and ethics for these New England Puritans. But they had endless debates as to whether the Bible was self-interpreting or whether it could be interpreted by men, and, if it could be interpreted by men, who was the appropriate interpreter and what was the appropriate method of interpretation. Several different positions contended for supremacy, and these various positions are revealed in the legal controversies of the young colony. Whether debating the presence of the cross in the colony's flag or of Anne Hutchinson's legitimacy as a religious leader, the rulers of Massachusetts Bay simply could not agree. They also had debates about the jurisdictional reach of their governing institutions, church and state. The Ten Commandments, for example. Should both tablets be enforced by the civil authorities or only the second? The first four were commandments as to one's duty to God. The remaining six expressed one's duties to other people. There were also different opinions as to the advisability of referring to English common law for guidance.

Legal historians have been fascinated with the history of this small band of idealists and of their efforts to invent a new legal system – to discern law for themselves – and how their experience affected later iterations of American law. They now trace what seems to have been a gradual abandonment of the rule of God in the face of, not only differences about biblical interpretation, but also of growing diversity of other kinds within the population and the press of social and economic change. Within the first twenty years of the colony's history the biblical ideal was discarded in favor of came to be called a government of laws, not of men of God. The long story that is told is that law was secularized while religion and morality were gradually privatized – although there are those who would nuance this version.

What is obvious from this historical example is that how one understands "law" affects how one understands its relation to religion and ethics. For some, law is to be understood as a humanistic discipline, a set of practices and a language of persuasion and argumentation that is continuous with other linguistic institutions such as theological and moral reflection and debate. If law is seen as rhetorical in this sense, as James Boyd White and others would argue, then it necessarily engages religion and ethics as other such cultural discourses, an engagement that can range across time and place but is always embedded in local culture. The words law uses always implicate ethical positions and depends on religious anthropologies and cosmologies. For others, law is to be understood as autonomous and self-contained, either as universally ordained by God (in which case the role of the human is to implement God's purpose), or as a tool of social engineering, one that should be governed by "scientific" principles.

If law is about social control then religion and ethics tend to be excluded from discussions of law or to be simply employed in service of what are understood to be essentially utilitarian ends. Law in this latter sense has no culture and no history except as a laboratory for what does and does not work. A study of law in Massachusetts Bay can teach us how better to understand American Puritans, or the early history of American government, or it can help us to understand when law is or is not successful or it can be fruitfully studied as revealing the complex ways in which the three are connected.

Through most of human history and in most places, law, religion, and ethics have shared a largely common culture, whether religious or secular. So, roughly speaking, law in Morocco speaks a language that assumes Moroccan Muslim ethical principles, Moroccan Muslim understandings of the motivations and capacities of the human person, and a Moroccan Muslim picture of the universe and of causation. Law in Thailand speaks a language that assumes Theravāda Buddhist ethical teachings, notions of what it is to be human, and understandings of the nature of the universe and of causation. Within a particular society, of course, different segments, distinguished by gender, class, occupation, etc., may be understood to inhabit different legio-religio-ethical subcultures depending on their social and geographic location. So, for example, a poor woman in nineteenth-century New York City may have lived a life structured by very different notions of the nature of the human person and of causation than her well-to-do counterpart, but the identity and choices of each were largely circumscribed by an integrated legal, religious, and ethical system particular to her social location.

But these integrated systems always interacted and affected each other. Legal, ethical, and religious pluralism is the norm rather than the exception. Particularly in imperial formations there have been interestingly mixed legal, moral and religious complexes. (See, for example the work of legal historian Nandini Chatterjee on the legal pluralism of the Mogul Empire.) An interesting example for students of law and religious ethics is the history and experience of the Jewish Diaspora. Since the first century of the common era, Jews lived in most countries as self-governing enclaves, tolerated more or less by various state authorities, from the Roman to the Ottoman empire and then to early modern Europe. But, as Natalie Dohrmann and others have pointed out, Jews did not simply live in a world defined by Jewish law and ethics alone. The early rabbis, beginning in the Roman empire, largely without political or police power with which to effect enforcement of their rulings, elaborated a legal and religious system for their community but with one ear out for both neighboring communities and the law of the ruling regime, modifying their rulings to enable their people to live both apart from and within the cultures in which they lived. Eighteen centuries later, one sees the same dynamic at work in Isaac Bashevis Singer's description of his father's law court in early twentieth-century Warsaw. His father's jurisdiction is greatly circumscribed. His cases concern the regulation of ritual activity and marriage, for the most part. A delicate balance is achieved in the family and in the community between assimilation and conformity to Russian law, on the one hand, and, on the other, fidelity to an everadapting Jewish law.

In the modern period, however, by and large, law, religion, and ethics have in most places been progressively differentiated in conception and institutionalization, being understood, both socially and rhetorically, to inhabit different domains, while debates about their interrelationship have provided the framework for an ongoing conversation about how society ought to be governed. Law has been a prime mover in the production of a modern secular consciousness, whether of the repressive or of the liberating sort.

In the economy of the modern academy, law, religion, and morality may, roughly speaking, be considered from a philosophical or an historical/social-scientific perspective, depending on whether one wishes

to argue abstractly about law as a part of the nature of things or whether one wishes to understand and describe law as embedded in human society and culture, now and in the past, in all its messiness. In either case, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, law, religion, and morality, and reflection upon them are, by and large, seen by most scholars to have plural forms. It is not enough to understand the relationship of a single system of law, a single religion, and a single moral tradition in one place and time. One must seek to understand how they relate in a state of radical pluralism and rapid change. And one must ask whether pluralism and radical change are modern phenomena or whether they characterize all of human history, so that cultural essentialism is inappropriate in understanding the past as well.

The Study and Practice of Law Today

The academic study of law today is in the midst of change. Understandings of law in the modern academy, arguably achieving their high water mark in the work of H. L. A Hart and others, were, beginning in early modernity, increasingly positivist. That is, law was understood to be a deliberate human construction. Legal authority was understood to reside solely with the sovereign. Law was what the sovereign said it was. Law had no debt to religion and had no morality of its own. Law was understood to be autonomous. Law functioned as a closed system and was studied as a closed system. It had its own modes of thinking and a specialized profession of those experts in such thinking. Its goal was largely utilitarian, efficient social control producing the greatest good for the greatest number. Law that did not fulfill these criteria – what was denominated religious law, for example – was simply not regarded as law.

Over the last half century there have been a number of different critiques of legal positivism. Beginning with legal realists who imported social scientific thinking into the study of law, but more rapidly thereafter with rights theory and critical legal studies, among others, the modernist pretensions of the law have been devastatingly deconstructed. Law, and the study of law, is in considerable disarray. Law is studied using the tools of all of the disciplines of the modern academy. It becomes difficult, then, when relating law to another academic discipline such as religious ethics, to know of which "law" to speak. When the internal critique of law is combined with the enormous expansion of "law" through a globalizing of legal practice and scholarship, it is a daunting task indeed. It is one that also faces an academy that largely assumes an irreversible secularization of law.

The necessary and progressive secularization of law has been taken for granted as a mark of progress and of modernity until very recently. Beginning in the medieval period, law, like politics, business, and education, was, in many places, gradually divided from the workings of the church. There were different theories as to how the relationship should be understood, and the extent to which law depended on religion for its moral foundation and anthropology, but law gradually developed a life of its own. Such a separation continues to unfold around the world, for the most part, particularly with respect to international and commercial law. (Family and criminal law remain in most places still heavily indebted to local religious and cultural understandings of the human.)

A notable and sustained critique of this growing separation has come from several quarters in the last 25 years. Religious thinkers and actors across religious traditions seek to reverse the trend and to link explicitly religious values to state law. They seek to reintegrate what they see as a dangerously atomized and degenerate society around shared creeds and structures. Some Muslim thinkers build such a theory on the idea of Sharīʿa. Sharīʿa, for them, serves as a complete legal system, religiously sanctioned and

more than sufficient, appropriate for the governing of a modern society in all its aspects, private and public. Some Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and indigenous thinkers make similar arguments, to take just a few examples. On the other hand, some religious thinkers have seen the employment of law as the antithesis of true religious conduct. Law, for these people, constitutes a threat to moral values and to the duty one voluntarily owes to God. Discipline should be internal.

Other challenges to modernist notions of law as universal, transcending social and cultural boundaries, come from critical theorists who see law as always implicated in exercises of power and/or as always local, embedded in and particular to the realities, religious and otherwise, of a single community. International human rights conventions and other transnational agreements struggle to express universal human values while protecting self-determination, religious and cultural. Martha Nussbaum and others have attempted to justify universal human rights philosophically, while critics argue that universality is impossible, that most international law simply encodes concealed Western assumptions, religious and secular, about anthropology and cosmology. These critics would have modern Western law acknowledge its religious and cultural bias, coming to the international negotiating table as a local, rather than as a universal, system.

Complicating the multiple legal, religious, and ethical layers of contemporary life is rapid technological and scientific development. Increasingly, a serious and thoughtful theory concerning the relationship between religion, law, and morality depends on a defensible scientific theory of human behavior. Why and how do people do what they do? How does law work? Why do people obey laws? Do they, in fact, "obey" them? Is nature and/or culture and/or religion a more significant element in determining human behavior? And are law, religion, and ethics to be thought of as nature or culture? Is religion to be understood as a universal aspect of human culture structuring the human imagination or as a narrative in service of ideology?

A rapidly evolving science of human behavior suggests a continuum of possibilities. Evolutionary psychologists may argue that human behavior is largely programmed by longstanding species adaptations to survival. On this reading, law, religion, and morality are simply epiphenomenal, ways of explaining or describing what would be done in any event. Those on the nurture end of the spectrum would argue for a heavy environmental component as a conditioner of human behavior. People are not simply born hardwired for life; rather, their behavior is molded and shaped by their experience, both external and internal, intentional and not. Law, religion, and ethics would for the environmentalists assume a more important role in actually structuring and changing human activity. Law's own self-understanding, for the most part, falls into the environmental end of the spectrum. It assumes that law is an important conditioner of human behavior, that it does affect what people do and can be used as a tool of societal reform, because people obey the law out of fear of sanctions. Religion works with a range of explanations for human behavior. Religion may or may not assume free will. It may have access to force as a means of ensuring compliance with its norms, or it may rely on promises or threats to be enacted in future lives. Systems of morality depend on the reality of human intentionality and, when they cannot rely on law and religion, must depend on exhortation and persuasion.

In the United States today, and many other places, one issue that falls at the intersection of the three systems under discussion is the regulation, or not, of sexual behavior and of reproduction. The laws of the various states until recently prohibited sexual relations between members of the same sex and have limited marriage to one man and one woman. Until the Court's decision in *Roe v Wade*, abortion was prohibited in most states. Can these laws be defended in purely secular terms? Are they rather grounded

in a particular Christian anthropology which understands homosexual activity to be sinful, marriage as ordained by God, and a fertilized egg as having a human soul? (See Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Love the Sin*.) If the latter is the case, does the Constitution prohibit such arguments for laws? Must laws be publicly justified, whatever the motivation of the legislators, on purely secular grounds?

In *Bowers vs. Hardwick* (1986) the Supreme Court of the United States held that there was no Constitutional right to privacy protecting homosexual behavior. In response to the argument by the challengers of the statute that it had no rational basis, Justice White, for the majority, said: "The law ... is constantly based on notions of morality, and if all laws representing essentially moral choices are to be invalidated under the Due Process Clause, the courts will be very busy indeed." Concurring, Justice Burger added: "Condemnation of those practices is firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian moral and ethical standards ... To hold that the act of homosexual sodomy is somehow protected as a fundamental right would be to cast aside millennia of moral teaching." In dissent, Justice Blackmun, citing the ecclesiastical origins of anti-sodomy laws, argued: "The legitimacy of secular legislation depends ... on whether the State can advance some justification for its law beyond its conformity to religious doctrine ... A State can no more punish private behavior because of religious intolerance than it can punish such behavior because of racial animus."

In part the debate in the court, and in American public discourse generally, reveals a community split about basic issues. Is homosexual identity biologically based? Can homosexual identity be modified through law, religion, or ethical exhortation? Should modern secular state law in a pluralistic nation be justified in "scientific" or in religious or ethical terms? Is it possible to somehow craft a law which simply "keeps the peace" and leaves religious and ethical choices to the individual and her chosen community? This is a loud and contentious debate, one that is magnified at a global level. While the 2015 decision in *Obergefell v Hodges* found a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, public acceptance of that decision, as of the decision in *Roe*, remains tenuous.

While the regulation of the family and of sexuality dominates the headlines in these areas, the proper relationship between law, religion, and ethics is a matter of debate across contemporary institutions. Today's many migrants face the competing demands of multiple legal, religious, and ethical cultures and multiple layers of authority – local, national, and international. A Laotian man is imprisoned in the United States for abduction when he attempts to enact his tradition's way of marriage through engaging in bride capture. Muslim schoolgirls in France were dismissed from school for covering their heads. In Israel religious orthodoxy controls the marriage laws and mixed marriage is prohibited. Christian conversion may curtail the civil rights of Indian dalits. But all of these essentially cultural ways of understanding human identity, however different, contend with materialist explanations as a basis for law.

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CHAPTER 32

Schools and Monasteries

Christine Luckritz Marquis

For much of history, the idea of "schools" was less likely to conjure our modern notion of a building in which instruction occurred. Rather, schools consisted of a master and his disciples. In the Greco-Roman world, the schools where moral inquiry took place were the philosophical ones, such as the Platonists, Aristotelians, Stoics, and Epicureans. We might also include Cynics in this collection, though they did not tend to function as much like schools as the other philosophies. (For a good summary, see Bénatouïl 2009.) Regardless of which philosophy one adhered to, transmission of moral knowledge often occurred via a mixture of spoken discourse (including lectures) and didactic writing exercises. Moral inquiry focused on what constituted the "good" life and how best to achieve it. While an interest in constructing a civil society might be a value of a given philosophical school, discourse emphasized moral behavior in the individual. Situated around a dynamic instructor, such schools continued and expanded through students teaching (and often adapting) the lessons of their master. Thus, we can image moral knowledge spreading through generations of teachers like the limbs of a tree spreading from the trunk.

Early Christian

Christianity, emerging in this Greco-Roman context, likewise developed around the model of a foundational, charismatic teacher (Jesus) and his students (his disciples). After Jesus's death, transmission of the Christian message continued partially through the teacher-student relationship. Moreover, some early Christian groups quickly clustered around the memory of one or another of Jesus's first disciples. That Christian communities might look like philosophical schools, with a leader who sought to convey moral knowledge, highlights the hazy delineations between "schools" and what we moderns tend to retrospectively call "religions." The places where these porous boundaries are most visible are the major cities, especially Alexandria. Across the second and third centuries CE, alongside the emergence of house churches, interpretations of Christianity would pop up around charismatic teachers (e.g. Marcion, Valentinus, Irenaeus). Often the individual was a prominent presbyter or bishop, but sometimes – as with Origen of Alexandria – the teacher was just an educated church member. All interpreters sought to understand the growing body of Christian texts with the goal of explaining existing practices and justifying new ones.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

These competing interpretations are often referred to in scholarship as "schools," as they paralleled (and likely developed in conversation with) other Greco-Roman philosophical schools in the region. So, for example, the Alexandrian Christian "school" became known for its allegorical interpretation of Scripture in contradistinction to more literal readings of sacred texts (Watts 2008). How one read Scripture had important implications for how questions and answers regarding morality were framed. Swirling around these early schools were questions of authority (could an unordained but educated Christian interpret with validity for others?) and questions about legitimacy (which understanding of Christ's message and which practices were correct?). At stake in many of the debates was not merely access to power but also concern about living "correctly" – morally – in order to achieve salvation.

Late Ancient Christian Monasteries

From the fourth century on, Christian education increasingly was situated in monasteries. Churches continued to develop catechetical training of some sort for the entire community, but higher preparation became increasingly the purview of the ordained and/or the holy man. That is, in-depth moral training occurred in a manner and locale set off from the daily lives of most Christians. While the most famous late ancient monk may have been the Egyptian hermit Antony, many who chose the monastic life opted to live communally under a shared rule. Several such monasteries developed in and around Gaza across the fifth and sixth centuries, preserving the traditions of past Egyptian ascetics (Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky 2006). The prominent place that the gathering, copying, and study of texts among these monks held indicates how highly valued education and its transmission were. It was quite plausibly these Gazan monks who gathered the various wisdom of past monks in the famous *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. While the sayings may have originated as oral knowledge passed on from master to disciples, under the rigorous Gazan school the sayings became a text-based guide to ethical behavior. The monasteries expected some degree of literacy from its members and used the sayings as school exercises to instill the skills of reading and writing. In particular, extant variations among copies of a particular saying indicate that such short apothegms were malleable enough to be useful as rhetorical exercises (Larsen 2006). But their content makes equally clear the importance of the sayings in the moral formation of the monks. Multiple sayings attest to the aspirations of the monks to live properly in relationship with their neighboring brethren. They likewise attest to monks' continued struggles against the vices of anger, jealousy, greed, apathy, and the like. The copying of such aphorisms functioned to internalize the expectations of the monastic community. Given that most communal monasteries placed a premium on silence, it is perhaps unsurprising that texts took on a more prominent role in moral formation. Through reading and copying the wisdom of long dead monks, the new generations of Gaza were able to maintain a link to a nostalgic past.

Rabbinical Schools

Comparable traditions, in particular the rabbinical schools and later Islamic schools, emerged in the ensuing centuries. In the third to sixth centuries, alongside monasteries like those at Gaza, Jewish teachers developed amoraim, the earliest rabbinical schools. As later pedagogical models have largely obscured their first pedagogical examples, how precisely such schools functioned is difficult to unearth. What is clear is that near the end of this era, a document similar to the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

developed: the Babylonian Talmud. Although oriented more toward religious laws than the *Sayings*, the Talmud shares not only a general ethical concern for the properly comported life, but also particular themes (e.g. prayer, anger, forgiveness, and particular interpretations of biblical figures) (Bar-Asher Siegal 2013). Thus, both the *Sayings* and the Talmud should be understood as arising out of educational contexts concerned with codifying in text the wisdom of past teachers and with instilling in students the textual, interpretive, and ethical practices needed to impart that wisdom.

The schools that succeeded the rabbinical schools of the Talmudic era, the geonim, arose under Islamic rule in the seventh to eleventh centuries and inherited a fixed Talmudic text. They remembered their predecessor schools as strictly distinguishing between what was written and what was taught orally and attempted to continue that traditional framework. Scripture and private notes could be written, but all interpretations were to be taught orally. Listening to their teachers' lessons, the students, in turn, would memorize them, and then orally repeat and question each interpretation. Such a process meant that face-to-face interactions between teachers and students were the means through which decisions, including moral ones, were learned. In this mode, the Talmud alone was not considered an adequate source for moral formation. Rather, the ethics of life focused on engaging and, where appropriate, adhering to past teachers' rulings and interpretations. As the Jewish diaspora spread over a larger geographic area, the people had a harder time accessing the later geonim, and the Talmud increasingly became a written source from which one might learn. Although teachers still played a role in later rabbinical schools, the transmission of oral wisdom that created a chain of teachers through the generations gradually lost importance. In its place, the Talmud as a written artifact became a solidified, authoritative body of knowledge to which not only students, but also anyone who read, could appeal (Fishman 2011).

The geonim had flourished early under Muslim rule. For the first two centuries of Islam, both Christian monasteries and rabbinical schools found themselves as continued loci for conveying several types of knowledge. Christians and Jews taught fields such as mathematics, astronomy, astrology, science, and (in particular) medicine to their new Muslim neighbors. Study of these topics was eagerly sought by many of the Abbasid court, but was delineated as "foreign" knowledge, distinct from specifically Islamic wisdom. For study of the Qur'an and hadīth, early Muslims attended teaching circles held in the first mosques. That is, Islam from its foundation was concerned with educating all its practitioners in its own sciences. Throughout Islamic history, mosques have remained important sites of knowledge transmission. In this way, the boundaries between a locus for worship and a space for schooling blur. But in the ninth century, as Arabic became the common language of the empire and the Abbasid rulers cultivated a textual culture at and around Baghdad, Islamic schools displaced their Jewish and Christian counterparts as the main centers of knowledge production. Many texts that had originally been in Greek, Syriac, or Persian came to be translated into Arabic. (See the works by Hill, King, Pingree, and Isaacs in Young, Latham, and Serjeant 1990.) Christian monasteries and Jewish geonim continued to function, but without caliphal support they were greatly diminished in both size and influence on the larger culture, serving only their own minority communities.

Islamic Schools

With Abbasid support, the establishment of Islamic schools, or *madrasas*, developed in and around the capital city of Baghdad. The phenomenon quickly spread to surrounding regions under their rule. Often translated as "colleges," these schools were where individuals trained in one or more of the four Sunni legal schools (Hanafī, Shafi'ī, Mālikī, and Hanbalī) as well as in exegesis of the Qu'ran and the hadīth.

These legal schools played a vital role in Islamic daily life, their teachings informing the broader Sunni Muslim population's notions of what constituted the moral life and how it ought to be enacted. Although the proliferation of *madrasas* emerged slightly later in Cairo, its schools highlight both the continuity with and innovation of past pedagogical models that occurred (Berkey 1992).

Under the Mamluk regime (1250–1517 CE), Cairo grew to become the premier intellectual center of Islamic learning by the thirteenth century. A plethora of schools full of teachers and students bloomed in and around Cairo, and intellectuals fleeing Mongol-ravished Baghdad soon joined them. As was the case for most of the previous examples, students sought out highly reputed teachers rather than particular schools. Like their geonic counterparts, it was the teacher (*shaykh*), not books, who was truly understood to be the source of knowledge. A renowned teacher could point to a lineage of past teachers through whom information had been transmitted on how to live the proper Muslim life. Both the names of particular teachers in such a chain and the relative length of that chain bolstered the authority of a given teacher's claims to legitimacy. Because students attached themselves to a teacher rather than a school, not only the instructor's lessons, but also his comportment inculcated his followers. For the larger institutions this was especially true, as teachers and students often lived alongside one another within the school's walls.

Endowing a school in Mamluk Cairo carried a significant amount of cultural cachet, and thus schools became a way for local elites to showcase their wealth and their piety. Depending on a given funder's wealth, schools might be quite elaborate with extensive library resources or more humble with limited manuscripts with which to engage. That each school was individually funded meant that while certain constants were held across schools, there was room for innovation as well. So, all schools tended to also function as worship sites, but whether or not such worship included Sufi rites depended on who established the school. Teachers, especially famous and sought after ones, also might play a prominent role alongside the endower in determining what was and was not taught. The preferences of the endower of the school also surfaced in the curriculum and sometimes the architectural design of the building, the larger legal school tradition to which a patron subscribed being given a more dominant place. In this way, school structures physically marked portions of the landscape as loci of more intense ethical formation. As with many of the past exempla, schools still relied on the reputation of a given teacher or several teachers, but what is noteworthy here is that buildings also were now designated a role, however minimal, in the education process. That funding could come from either men or women also allowed more access, though still decidedly limited, for women alongside their male peers. The entire system was a dynamic one, students being taught ethics by teachers both in lessons and the lived moments in between, within and through the architecture of a given school. Throughout the Mamluk era, such diversity among schools was allowed, if not actively encouraged.

Medieval Christian Monasteries

Such a rich and diverse educational culture stands in stark contrast to Christian models that emerged in the West. As elsewhere in the Christian world, monasteries were the primary centers for education and moral formation. After the fall of Rome, many noblemen, especially the younger ones, joined monastic communities. In fact, across the western half of the Christian world, monasteries soon served as major education centers for most young men of means, replacing the older rhetorical and philosophical schools that had existed in the Greco-Roman world since before the emergence of Christianity. What made

monasteries distinct, both in the western ones and their eastern counterparts, was that the emphasis on literacy and education more generally meant that knowledge and focus on the ethical life were not solely the purview of the wealthy elite. If a poorer individual should commit himself to a monastic community, then he too might receive an education, one he otherwise would never have had access to.

As noted earlier, Christian monasteries established and enforced common guidelines for their occupants. While these rules were meant to negotiate daily life, they also served to instill particular ethical values. Such rules dictated appropriate thought and prayer processes as well as proper bodily comportment. The dynamic interplay between physical and mental control was meant to mutually support each goal. At first, rules varied from region to region, and sometimes even from monastery to monastery. *The Rule of Benedict* is noteworthy among these variants because of its author's overt intention to be not only a guide for monastic life, but also a "school for the Lord's service" (White 2008, 9). That is, the *Rule* makes explicit that monasteries and schools were often perceived as interchangeable categories in the medieval West. While the *Rule* developed in the sixth century, its popularity reached new heights under Carolingian rule. Under Charlemagne and then his son, Louis the Pious, Benedict's *Rule* became the rule by which all monasteries were to be managed as an attempt to centralize authority and limit diversity. It also served to produce a flourishing manuscript culture in Latin. Whereas translation into Arabic under the Abbasids had established and promoted a range of Islamic schools, such a translation movement in Latin was made possible by limiting monastic innovation.

In the ensuing centuries of the medieval era, Benedict's *Rule* maintained the importance if not absolute prominence Charlemagne had envisioned. Although Benedict's *Rule* had been designed for male communities, it also came to be instituted in the parallel structures that emerged for women. Given the emphasis of the *Rule* on study, its use in convents meant that women also might have access to an education. Despite the opportunity, medieval nuns were rarely taken seriously as authors or teachers in their own right. Hildegard of Bingen, first a nun and later Benedictine abbess, stands as the notable exception, having capitalized on her educational privilege to become a theological force in her own day (Newman 1998). While she is perhaps more famous for her written visions, the *Scivias*, Hildegard was also an author of homiletical, natural historical, and medical texts as well as poems in Latin. Beyond her writings, she was an equally skilled artist and musician. In fact, she wed her literary and musical skills in a moral play, *The Play of Virtues* (Kienzle 2000). Hers is the only known moral play written and performed by a woman in her day. While it clearly celebrates chastity as a higher good than marriage, the play more generally encourages all its hearers/viewers to abandon whatever sin might plague them and deepen their virtues. The nuns of the convent performed the play at least once a year themselves. Thus, each nun was assigned to embody a virtue in relation to her fellow sisters/virtues. The play in particular highlights how Hildegard transformed her own skill and access to knowledge into an educational tool meant to transmit moral wisdom to the nuns under her guidance.

The Rise of Universities

While Hildegard represents a pinnacle of women's educational achievements, the twelfth century quickly brought such opportunities for women to a close. In the last decades of Hildegard's life, a new type of school rapidly began to emerge: the university. Universities were outgrowths of cathedral schools, parallel educational institutions that had existed alongside monasteries, serving to educate clergy and

some portion of the nobility. The cathedral schools and monasteries had complemented each other rather than competed in the educational sphere. Monasteries were the primary sites of moral formation, with the cathedral schools directing their students both in theological and daily practicalities. With the development of universities in Paris, Oxford, Bologna, and other major cities, monastic education was somewhat diminished. While individuals still might receive their initial education in the monastic context, the university came to be seen as the place where one went if they desired more rigorous training. That theology was one of the three major areas of inquiry one could pursue, indicates the central role that Christian ethical formation played among the educated elite. What was novel in the new university system was the increased importance placed on the institution rather than the teachers. While certain "schools" of thought continued to compete within these structures, being tied to a particular school name itself came to carry value. This attention to where rather than who one studies with has been bequeathed to our modern educational system.

The exclusion of women at universities meant that convents maintained their roles as loci of education, albeit much dampened in rigor or extent. The famous example of the abbess known as Julian of Norwich highlights how such education continued primarily in vernacular languages rather than the more highly valued Latin. Moreover, her role as a visionary speaks to the increasing emphasis placed on mystical visions as an alternate way to experience the divine and perform one's morality. While Sufi visionaries were cultivated alongside other educational models, Christian visionaries often emerged among women excluded from the university system, nun and secular alike. In particular, Julian served as a spiritual guide not only to the nuns under her, but also to spiritual women like Margery Kempe. The relationship between Margery, a secular woman who both begat children and had her own divine visions, and Julian, a reclusive abbess, speaks to the ways in which the new educational model of the university fostered and enhanced educational alliances among women of different stations.

This historical tour de force of schools and monasteries across fifteen hundred years indicates both institutional commonalities and innovations in how moral knowledge was conveyed in multiple religious traditions. Training in schools and monasteries shared the fundamental goal of conveying moral knowledge. Underlying the various models described above was a desire to socialize individuals in a particular approach by gathering them for intense exploration. In many of the examples discussed above, students were expected to devote their lives to not only a particular philosophy but also the very locus where training occurred. That is, such formation was not restricted to particular hours of the day, but rather was understood as necessarily one that required full immersion into a communal, pedagogical ethos. Such still is the case for Christian monasteries, where adherents are expected to live within the confines of the community for the remainder of their days.

Another common thread that weaves through most of the schools and monasteries described above is that they originally placed emphasis on teachers as lines of transmission rather than on individual study of texts. In each school or monastery, the teacher had a great deal of latitude in how they conveyed the tradition handed down to them. As noted above, some schools were more willing than others to allow an equal amount of freedom in interpreting past wisdom. The centrality of the teacher's role meant mimesis not only of the teacher's lessons but also of his or her daily life practices. The ability of a teacher to model proper morality and correct errors in understanding resulted in bounded knowledge. The combination of orally conveyed and embodied knowledge helped maintain the boundaries of what was considered ethical ways of being within a given tradition. Such approaches tended to be more conservative than

interpretations yielded by individualized study of texts in later periods, which allowed students to produce a wider array of readings.

In most of the examples above, there was a slow but perceptible shift in how moral knowledge was conveyed. For each tradition, the codification of oral knowledge only gradually leads to the creation of texts. Such textualization might limit the manner in which a teacher conveyed information, but it also opened up access to knowledge to a greater swath of individuals. Moreover, translation movements invited more individualized study of texts. The proliferation of texts possible after the development of the printing press only served to accelerate the ways in which texts themselves came to serve as teachers, introducing readers to this or that particular school of thought. In this way, the embodied knowledge that was conveyed through teachers and students living in community has increasingly been decoupled from the conveyance of ethical wisdom only over the last several hundred years. With the Internet, the role of self-teachers has accelerated exponentially. Once more, we find ourselves in an era of "schools" of thought as much as actual schools serving as loci of knowledge. The difference from the past is whether individuals also have a teacher helping them distinguish facts from fiction.

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CHAPTER 33

Communications and Media

Günter Thomas

Introduction

No human being or any human society is conceivable without communication and media. The *animal symbolicum* (Cassirer) is also a *homo medialis*, a creator of media, by which social life is not only enabled in its diachronic and synchronic dimensions, but continuously reshaped. Communication media are the object of moral evaluations as well as the means for the transmission and dissemination of moral orientations for people. From the early development of societies onward, religions have dealt with the problem of communication with transcendent realities. For that reason, they are laboratories for the development of media and for means of their control. Given these conditions, any concept of the human being, society, and spiritual life entails an implicit vision of the place and function of communication and media.

Philosophical and religious traditions are sources for media and communication ethics. In light of the crucial importance of communication and the use of media it is not surprising that their regulation is not left to moral practices, but is often embedded in legal formations. Due to the materiality of communication, significant resources are needed for the creation of media. Hence communications and media become a matter of economic calculation and control. Since modern democracies depend on free communication processes and access to media, both "old" and "new" media are socially embattled. When technological advances allow a wide-ranging observation of communication and the processing of the generated data, the moral implications of such an "all-knowing" entity become an intensely debated issue. Against the background of each of these richly textured and powerful social practices, media ethics has a strong descriptive as well as a normative branch. And yet, faced with the pace of techno-cultural innovation, any ethical reflection on communications and media tends to come "too late." The complexity of the level of communication and media practice leads then to two consequences. First, any ethical reflection is embedded in a more encompassing social theory. Second, there exists no comprehensive media ethics for all communication processes in which media play a role. Instead, the field of media ethics is highly differentiated and compartmentalized.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Communication and the Multiplicity of Media

Four types of media need to be distinguished:

1) *Media of communication* (M1) are the basis of social life: language, sound-clusters, gestures, smell, smoke, but also more sophisticated ones like narratives, architectural symbols, rituals, and clothing patterns. Often analyzed as signs or symbols, media of communication are bound to interaction in distinct spaces at distinct times. Plato's arguments about orality versus literacy as well as Aristotle's discourse about the impact of fictional communication in the theater provide examples of these early ethical controversies about the media of communication.
2) *Technological media of transmission* (M2) allow communication to transcend space and time. Writing in general and particular forms like letters, books, the telegraph, the radio, the telephone, newspaper, television, the cinema and eventually computers, the Internet, and the cellphone fall into this category. Rituals as replicable performances had been powerful media of transmission in early empires. All media of transmission rely on the existence of media of communication (M1) and at the same time selectively transform them. Movies, sitcoms, or series consist of complex multimedia packages of media of communication which can be stored, streamed, and traded.
3) *Generalized media of exchange* (M3) are developed in modern functionally differentiated societies (Luhmann 2012; Habermas 1987, steering media) and in most of society's subsystems. If something is communicated through the specific medium of a given sphere – as inappropriate as it might be outside the respective sphere – it tends to be accepted in that subsystem. Power in the political sphere, money in the economic sphere, or love in the sphere of intimacy are prime examples.
4) *The media system* emerged in the twentieth century as one of society's subsystems (Luhmann 2012) or sphere of value (M. Weber) (M4) operating on its own code and rationality (besides law, politics, religion, sport, etc.) fulfilling a unique function for society. In this sense, the so-called media system is often considered to be a fourth estate or power side-by-side with the three powers of the state (executive, legislature, and judiciary). Any efficient media system utilizes a variety of media of communications (M1) and media of transmission (M2), which are then modulated in recursive processes. However, not every use of media of transmission – like the reading of the Bible in church, the use of films in school, or fax machines in university offices – can be considered part of the media system.

The so-called new social media which became prominent after the turn of the millennium embody hybrid forms. They make use of transmission technology for the sake of connectivity which is extending social interaction and is simulating physical presence. Because of this feature, new social media not only permeate everyday life but also profoundly shape it.

Ethical reflection aimed at moral analysis and orientation can focus on all four types of media. For instance, questions about the role of school uniforms or the place of dance in worship as well as about the threshold separating polemics from hate speech, each relates to the level of primary *communication media*. Debates about the role of reading for citizen education, about the amount of TV-viewing among and cellphone use by junior-high school students, as well as about the place of digital learning at universities, concern moral issues on the plane of *transmission media*. Discussions about the role of money and power in the life of education institutions or about appropriate bodily communication in situations of intimacy relate to a

social ethic of *generalized media of exchange*. When people debate the role of the media in politics in general and in elections in particular, when the role of broadcasting in the organization of the Olympic games is disputed, when teachers complain about students' lack of attention on Monday mornings, or citizens of other countries feel misrepresented in the national news, the *media in their systemic* setup are the focus of ethical reflection. In the social practices of a given society, the types of "media" are deeply intertwined.

Ethical Approaches Related to the Communication and Mediation Process

The various kinds of media ethics can be clustered according to an overly simplified model of communication processes: sender, mediated message, and receiver. First, there are agents as producers of communicative offers on the level of media of communication (M1), moral agents choosing specific media of transmission (M2), initiating agents using generalized media of exchange (M3) and eventually also agents and agencies forming and shaping the institutionalized system of the media through their actions (M4). Second, there is the utterance or statement in a specific communication medium (M1), the packaged product in a medium of communication (M2), the communication or action using a medium of exchange (M3), and also an overall impact a media system has on the subsystem of politics, religion, education, and so on (M4). Third, there is the recipient of an utterance (M1), the people buying and watching a packaged product in a transmission medium (M2), agents who accept a communicative offer in a medium of exchange (M3) or agents and agencies who accept the impact the media system has on their sphere of responsibility (M4).

On the side of what can be called, for the reasons of simplicity, the "sender," moral orientations are often embedded as tacit forms of knowledge in more fluid forms of social tact and the public recognition of situations (M1). What can be said in a courtroom or classroom differs from the dinner table, for example. Beyond that, among professional speakers, such as lawyers, journalists, psychiatrists, preachers, teachers, or politicians, professional ethics have developed. In professional ethics, the most influential ethical models are virtue or deontological ethics. When journalists start lying, a whole profession can be thrown into crisis. When politicians stop embodying virtues like courage or respectfulness, democratic processes can be jeopardized. Since representatives of a profession are endowed with a high degree of social trust, apparent violations of responsibility can radiate through large areas of social life. Sexual misconduct of priests, trainers, producers, and politicians are current and painful examples.

Compared to the ethical analysis concerning the sender, the discourse on the receiver is underdeveloped. On the reception side and in the case of communication media (M1) the moral issue is – among others – reflected within an ethic of self-respect and responsibility for one's own life. The communication media in which someone wants to be involved depends on her or his vision of flourishing (Booth). On the level of technological media of transmission (M2), consumer ethics is emerging that reflects the insight that through feedback loops, that is to say, recursive processes, the recipient can influence the behavior of the sender. Whoever listens stipulates what is and can be said. Consumer ethics is often embedded in cultural practices and varies significantly across social strata. The place where the implicit moral practices become an object of ethical discourses is education within the family. The transmission of conflicting moral orientations by the use of TV, the Internet, the cellphone, or social media opens up discursive spaces in which an ethics of goods and deontological ethics as well as utilitarian approaches to moral actions collide. Consumer ethics demonstrate how many moral orientations rely on the texture

of role models in the social environment, education, broader visions of life, and the formation of individual responsibility. On the recipient side of communication, moral orientations support responsible individual choices.

Ethical discourse on what, in the current simplified model, is called "message" is a highly contested area. Several overarching principles become visible but are difficult to harmonize. In fact, normative frameworks for the whole field of media communications come to the forefront. In Western societies indebted to Enlightenment traditions there are two fundamental rights highly valued. The freedom of speech is an individual and communal right (i.e. for newspapers or broadcasting stations) and the social precondition of constitutional democracies (Ward). In addition, audiovisual entertainment but also traditional forms like theater or musical performances claim freedom of artistic expression even though they might be critical of political or religious institutions and policies. In addition, in international affairs, the freedom of trade concerns packaged media products. These three forms of freedom, however, can be in conflict with other moral goods. To what extent the freedom of expression allows a critique of religion without violating the right of freely practicing religion is frequently discussed. In recent years, the claim that certain portrayals of religion hurt the feelings of religious followers has sparked intense debates about constitutional and civil rights. The widely accepted claim that media communication and especially packaged media communication should respect human rights has a strong positive and an yet also a questionable effect. On the positive side, moral orientations in the field of communications and media can be compared with other areas of social life. However, it remains difficult to specify which communications violate human rights and in particular the rights of particular peoples. The danger is that under the umbrella of a human rights any kind of strong critique of inherited social practices can be silenced. Most Western societies tend to value the freedom of speech so highly that they allow far-reaching (but not totally unrestricted) critiques of opposing views and worldviews.

Moral Challenges in the Field of Communications and Media

The breadth and depth of the ethical field of communication and media can be comprehended by considering crucial issues that are timely and timeless.

Blurring the Border Between Reality and Fiction

Since people tell stories to narrate their experience and to explore their lives, the distinction between truth as factual and truth as fictitious has been debated. In modern communication, this distinction is reflected in the difference between information and entertainment. Even a seemingly rigid separation of these has to acknowledge that a fictitious story can be true and any fact-oriented communication has to add elements, often fictitious, to catch the audience's attention. Most contemporary debates hardly move beyond two ancient arguments. The Enlightenment criticism of communicating fictions goes back to Plato's philosophical critique of the mythic imagination in his ideal state. He held, in the *Republic,* that fiction erodes the moral formation of the youth based on the assumption that the uneducated cannot properly distinguish between fact and fiction and hence they imitate immoral acts of the gods narrated in stories. Aristotle's *Poetics* takes the reverse stand. The partial identification with a tragic hero through the poet's making of a plot can provide a *catharsis* of pity and fear that benefits the moral life of citizens. However, there is a legitimate moral concern with the marginalization of fact-oriented communication

within entertainment culture. Equally important is the concern that invented information be labeled "true" can undermine democratic processes.

The Mediation of Distant Suffering Through Media of Transmission

Even though people in the past were not utterly tied to their locality, the Internet (including social media) has changed the social imaginary of localities and social presence. Communication technologies permit specific forms of technically mediated social co-presence across spatial distance. The space of social interaction is decoupled from the range of perceiving life. This decoupling has far-reaching consequences for a media related ethics of responsibility "regarding the pain of others" (Sontag 2003). Communication technologies (M2 and M4) make the spectator a witness to distant events, injustices, needs, and pains. Media can turn spectators into voyeurs who have to negotiate proximity and distance. Through media technology moderns become "travelers in the landscapes of pain" (Boltanski 2008). Even though these vistas can mobilize aid and political solidarity, the connection between others' suffering and the possibility for spontaneous help is systematically decoupled. Seen alternatively, the enormous expansion of perception by means of audiovisual media technology is only possible on the basis of the decoupling of perception and social space, and, therein, taming the tide of the negative news. Given that any help remains disproportionate to the suffering and the horrors of injustice seen around the world, some moral observers think that this media constellation might cause an exhaustion of compassion. Undoubtedly, there is an unbridgeable gap between a vague feeling of responsibility based on media-facilitated perceptions and the disproportionately limited options for concrete action.

The Choice of a Medium as Moral Act

Every medium facilitates and at the same time restricts what can be communicated. Every medium creates both sight and blindness. This concerns media of communication (M1), transmission media (M2) as well as media of exchange (M3). The bouquet of flowers says both more and less than the spoken promise. For good reasons, the vow of marriage should not be made over the phone. Political advertising by means of TV-spots cannot say the same as a written political program. Every medium embodies a specific rationality to a certain extent. In a sense, "The medium is the message" (McLuhan), or at least a meta-message and an impacting entity. Without any doubt, the spread of the radio was a factor in the rise of fascism in Europe. The advent of audiovisual media like television sparked the discussion about the extent to which political discourses can be carried out in visual media. Is visualization a way to trivialize the complexity of political matters? Given that the chosen medium or even a set of media have a distinct effect on both the possible content and the receiver, the choice of the medium is inevitably an act of personal or institutional moral responsibility. This problem reflects ancient debates about the power of rhetoric and its choice of morally appropriate linguistic and performative tools.

Conflicts about Religious Media of Communication and Transmission

Religions have always been creative cultural laboratories (1) for the development of multimedia performances (rituals, worship) (M1), (2) for media through which the (absent/transcendent) divine can communicate (M1), and eventually (3) for bridging time and space among the community of believers and to

reach out for mission (M2) (Horsfield). In particular, what serves as media of divine communication belongs to the peculiar ontology of a faith community. Many interreligious as well as intrareligious conflicts can be understood as conflicts over media preferences. Since the media for divine communication are the most holy material objects in religions, not only is their spatial location heavily disputed, but they can become the target of interreligious hostilities and destruction as well. When mosques, relics, churches, bibles, crosses, or the Qur'an are destroyed, the aim is also the other material medium of religious communication. In a similar vein, intrareligious conflicts about the role of Mary, the ordination of women, the furnishing of religious buildings are media conflicts. The Pope in the Catholic imagination is not just the highest representative of the Catholic Church, but also a literally outstanding medium of divine communication. Not only the materiality of religion, but also most of the history of theological imagination is a media history with far-reaching moral choices. The secular cult around icons of sport or music is a faint resemblance of this aspect of religious communication.

Medialization of Life

The increase of media of transmission for transcending time and/or space has an ambiguous double effect: it increases the reach of interaction through mediated interaction. At the same time the mediation of interaction is a substitute for real interaction based on physical co-presence (Lundby). This process of accelerated substitution characterizes late modern society and provokes much media criticism with tragic undertones. While it may be preferred to visit one's mother on her birthday in person, media of real time transmission allow Filipino women employed in Saudi Arabia to stay in real time contact with their children at home. Through this shift in the media ecology, physical co-presence becomes an even more valued asset. The process of increasing mediation raises questions about how essential physical co-presence is in social subsystems: the courtroom in law, the stadium in sports, worship in religion (Horsfield), personal encounters in medicine, summits in politics, performances in the arts.

Mediatization Inflicting in other Rationalities

Mediatization in late modern societies is a process in which social systems other than the media system transform themselves according to the supposed expectations of the media system. This can happen either through strategic planning or it might be more or less preconscious or even unintended. Based on such expectations of media, politics or sports can change their operations in order to attract media's attention: changes in statements, the provision of attractive photos, the scheduling and structuring of events, the showcasing of media-savvy personel, and so on. The transformation of politics by means of the media is well studied. Even sciences have to adopt some media logic in order to attract political attention and receive public funding. An issue debated worldwide is the presence of cameras in the courtroom. The fact that cameras have an impact on interaction in the courtroom is beyond question. The ethical question is whether this is or would be a change for the better or worse and what would be the criteria for judging such. The public streaming of educational events makes them subtlely shift toward sensationalism. In a word, moral orientations concern not only individuals but the formation, the maintenance, and the development of societies' institutions. Media's observations are never innocent or objective. On the level of organizational life, they change the object under observation.

The Fight for Attention

The investment of attention is a prerequisite for any form of communication and media use. Modern societies produce an enormous overflow of communicative offers compared to the amount of attention which can be invested in communication. Due to this asymmetry, attention becomes an embattled and scarce resource (Thomas; Couldry/Linvingstone/Markham). This battle for attention moves several moral issues to the forefront: what means for attracting attention are morally appropriate and how much blood needs to be shown in reports from warzones? Moreover, democratic societies need public debates. The ancient trope bread and circuses draws attention to the fact that attention can be exploited, wasted, and distracted. In the economy of attention, attention can be absorbed in ways that weaken citizenship. Particularly in democracies, the steering of attention is a prime locus of power. Thus, several moral questions arise: Who is deserving of and who gets attention? Are corporate moral agents (NGOs, churches, etc.) mobilizing and steering attention or do they imitate the media system's attention? In paid advertising, consumers are selling their attention in order to subsidize what would be more expensive without advertising. What are the personal or social standards for trading attention as a commodity? Are there thresholds beyond which advertising ought to be considered a pollution of public space? Interestingly enough, many countries have institutionalized forms of moral oversight of advertising and regulate what can be advertised.

Disappearance and Retrieval of Solitude

The obvious fact that human beings are social beings can lead to the conclusion that being connected by communication is essentially good. To communicate seems to be morally more valuable than not to communicate. Accordingly, being connected and being accessible for communication with others is the marker of life dominated by social media. The dominance of this social imaginary raises questions about the place and creative function of de-coupling communication and solitude (Booth). Religious, but also artistic and educational traditions, offer ethical resources for a retrieval of solitude in the life of the mind.

Global Communication Creating Unity and Division

It is a widespread opinion that communication as such is something good; that it furthers understanding, agreement, and respect and, so, eventually leads to a more peaceful world. The social image for the expansion of broadcasting and audiovisual media in the 1960s was the "global village." This image suggested that media of transmission create proximity which then equals familiarity and understanding. The same optimism was found in the emergence of the Internet. These visions did not become true because they are based on a twofold misunderstanding of communication that point to moral conflicts.

First, communication can deepen conflicts. Often, understanding, not misunderstanding, feeds conflict. Any communication takes place against a much broader background of tacit as well as vague suppositions of agreement. Communication is always risky, because it transforms the vague and mostly implicit background to explicit knowledge. Whoever can understand another person or community not tacitly but through communication might have more reasons to disagree. Social life, not only in close relationships but also in institutions and even more on the level of international

politics, works on the basis of untested and hence presupposed agreements. Given that fact, communication is never without risk.

Second, the possibilities of global communication do not necessarily create global aspirations and cosmopolitan consciousness. As seen in the last couple of decades, the Internet and the new social media became the means to reinforce chauvinistic group identities. These media mobilize and spread reasons for deepening divisions and fueling conflicts. Enhanced means of networking through hybrid new media can be used to do both: to enlarge the group of like-minded people and to spread markers of difference to an even larger group of less like-minded people.

That said, the very same media of transmission can be used for building trust and familiarity. In a moral view of these processes, the media function like a magnifying glass for existing divisions and for weaving bonds of solidarity.

Big Data

At the turn of the millennium, new technological developments gave rise to a new moral challenge in the field of communication and ethics: the comprehensive technological observation of individuals and large-scale populations' communications (Couldry; Mejias). This concerns every level of communication media described above. Through the processing of data gained by means of technical forms of observation, two goals are achieved. First, there is a comprehensive and precise image of a person's communication practice. Second, there is the databased predictions of peoples' behavior in the future. This raises several moral questions. Some of the data are collected secretly. And yet, many people trade their data in exchange for digital services, namely free apps for cellphones. Do persons have the right of information self-determination? Is the individual person entitled to determine what is done with their data, because that person owns them in the first place and they are in some way part of their identity? The diversity of answers given to this question reveals how culturally-bound the conceptions of individual freedom and dignity are.

Metaphorically speaking, the graven image of God is now replaced by the digital image of human beings. The all-knowing God of classical metaphysics appears to be replaced by an all-knowing digital superstructure. Defenders of data-collection point to many moral goods resulting from this observation of communication: crime prevention, economic efficiency, preservation of environment, and peaceful social interaction. Critics point out that the misuse of economic interests and political control eventually mean a massive assault on human freedom. The ethical handling of these moral issues will determine the fate of liberal democracies.

Conclusion

Insofar as we now live in an age of global communication, it is essential that theologians and philosophers consider the moral demands and possibilities of communication and media. This entry has tried to enumerate these as well as signal points where theoretical and practical reflection is needed about this ever evolving field of human conduct. Of course, what the future holds for new kinds or types of media remains unknown. What is certain is that insofar as human beings are media creatures, ethical reflection will remain of importance and increase in urgency.

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3 Practices

CHAPTER 34

Practices

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Practices and Moral Change

Theory follows upon practice; theories are rethought in order to undergird practices to which a community remains committed, and ethical analysis is primarily about practices generative of theories, not theories eventuating in practices.

People normally do not determine first what they think and see as their values and then, on that basis, decide what to do. Most of the time, they instead articulate ideas and values in conformity with what they already do; they begin with and do not merely conclude to expectations about proper ways of acting religiously. They belong to traditions already in place; concepts, explanations, and modes of behavior have been settled in the past. The boldest thoughts and most consistent logical conclusions are constrained to conform to what people already do and want to keep doing. Radical change, as distinct from claims about the desirability of radical change, is unlikely, and conclusions about the rightness of particular actions become predictable once we attend to the requirements generated by practices already in place before the reflection begins.

These persistent patterns of action, understood and explained within communities, are what I mean by *practices* – not merely actions, but actions as invested with explanatory and supportive meaning through continuity of tradition (as prior to their current practitioners), habit (as regular, insinuated deeply enough so as to function smoothly without overt attention on the part of their agents), and interpretation (as plausibly explaining actions in discourses which are in some way public). As practices, such actions survive changes in justification by generating new explanations allowing for continuity even when other factors might commend other practices. While practices change over time, most often explanations change to support of persisting practices (MacIntyre 1981; Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Reynolds and Tracy 1992; Yearley 1990).

As traditional, habitual, and (even if open to new interpretations) already explained sufficiently well, practices require little by way of explicit comment. Evident to their practitioners, they remain unspoken in conversations about communal values and function perfectly well without overt attention. Perhaps inadvertently, their very centrality may be concealed from the view of newcomers, because other things with less foundation in tradition require more discussion. The persistence of practices may be all the more unnoticed in a comparative context where explanation and practice are both unfamiliar, and where it may be tempting to treat explanations – available in conversation, in books – as determinative of

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

behavior, causes rather than results. While causal inquiries are useful, realizing that conceptions and words normally follow upon practice illumines how people act, how they think in relation to what they do, and how we can best assess both practice and theory.

It is in times of controversy that the justifications attached to practices become explicit, vulnerable to review, and available for an analysis able to distinguish theories from underlying practices. Proposing new explanations calls practices into question by threatening the reasons traditionally supportive of them. Proponents of established practices may merely defend contested theories but, since the practices are more important than the theories, such proponents may also invent new explanations able to support old practices in a new situation. Innovators may lay claim to older and truer versions of the practices in dispute, and to more honest explanations, but in order to gain credence for their new ideas they may have to attenuate those ideas' effectiveness and diminish their potential actually to change practices. Accordingly, it is a key area of ethical reflection to notice how practices are debated and explained in times of stress when (at first) new practices seem likely but when (in the end, most of the time) established practices endure.

This chapter elucidates the preceding reflections on practice by pointing to three controversies highlighting how religious practices resist change and stimulate new supporting theories when the practices are under stress and seemingly about to change. First, I consider a familiar Reformation dispute: the argument over meritorious works, justification, and atonement as argued by Lutheran Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) and Roman Catholic Tommaso de Vio Cajetan (1469–1534). Second, I turn to the south Indian Hindu context and examine differing views on the religious significance of birth status and religious class – "caste" – according to Piḷḷai Lokācārya (1205–1311) and Vedānta Deśika (1270–1369). Third, in a sense combining the preceding cases, I consider how Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656), a Jesuit intellectual missionary in south India, chose to characterize caste as cultural but not religious practice in order to make it compatible with conversion understood as religious but not cultural practice. These instances of practice – religious works (such as the confession of sins, the Mass, the veneration of relics); caste behavior (such as restricted patterns of marriage and dining, and of the study of sacred scriptures) resignified in light of divine love; conversion (as abolishing caste practices and replacing them with alternative Christian patterns of behavior, or as complementary to caste) – are complex and require much more detailed analysis than is offered here. My aim is simply to exemplify how thinkers moderate new ideas to make them consonant with practices likely to endure whatever the supporting reasons.

Does the Death of Christ Make Good Works Unnecessary?

The early Catholic–Lutheran debate over faith, merit, and good works was a fierce contest with broad social, political, and religious roots. It was also a serious theological dispute about how traditionally esteemed good works might be relevant to the accomplishment of human salvation if, as Protestants and then Catholics came to admit, salvation is achieved through the death of Christ and not by human accomplishment. In the Catholic–Lutheran context the debate was also a delicate negotiation in which both sides had already decided not to drop the key practices in question, but sought ways to accommodate those practices to the logic of new supporting theories (for this section, see Melanchthon 2000; Cajetan 1978).

In "The Lutheran Apology of the Augsburg Confession" Melanchthon argued for a realignment of the language of salvation, so that primacy is accorded to justification by faith. God's saving initiative is primary; humans must simply recognize this and take it to heart, rejecting notions of self-salvation and also the related merits of works and other forms of self-justification. He repeatedly emphasized God's initiative in Christ and the role of faith as the proper human response to God, and he denounced Roman Catholic defenses of merit and satisfaction as perverse justifications of self-aggrandizing actions merely portrayed as pious. Despite the rancor, however, Melanchthon's overall agenda was conservative. He respected tradition and ecclesial structures, and left no room for a life lived so purely by faith that there would no longer be any recognizable normative Christian practices. If reliance on faith is the foundation of the Christian life, it can also yield a proper sense of the worship, duties, and pieties that continue to be obligatory. Although Melanchthon called for a radical recalculation of values, he left no room for truly radical innovation in the living of the Christian life. Confession and absolution are to be retained even if they occur in the context of God's activity and not as signs of the human achievement of sinlessness; baptism, the Mass, prayers, alms giving and other acts of charity, all were to be maintained in the new Lutheran dispensation. A new theology in fact confirms much of what was already in place.

In "Faith and Works" Cardinal Cajetan refuted Melanchthon's "poisonous" charges about superfluous customs and superstitions in the Catholic community. To safeguard the faithful from doubts about or laxity in the performance of Catholic practices, Cajetan shifted the argument away from Melanchthon's appeals to personal experience and conviction, emphasizing instead the faith of the church and its tradition. However satisfying personal convictions may be, the church is a more reliable guide to the Christian life. In an ecclesially regulated context one will be able to understand clearly the dynamic of salvation: God's love works in particular persons who are transformed in ways that become evident as they perform good deeds approved by God and the church. Even a person mired in mortal sin, if he or she has some inkling of the better life arising in repentance, can profit from performing good deeds which make one more responsive to the divine initiative.

Although Cajetan could not bring himself to dismiss any of the disputed church practices, he actually aimed for a middle ground that accommodates Melanchthon's concerns. He refused to base practices merely on authority or the sheer fact of tradition; instead, he revalued meritorious works, purifying them of the appearance of merit construction or the incremental achievement of salvation. Like Melanchthon, he forged a more spiritual and Christocentric foundation for his position, adducing scripture texts acknowledging divine grace while confirming traditional practice. It is true, he said, that scripture, tradition, and the revered practice of the church all testify that it is Christ who offers salvation by his singular and perfect self-giving action; good works are a response to Christ's salvific act. Works are important, but they remain essentially secondary to the work of Christ. Catholic practices are reinterpreted in order to preserve them.

Differences aside, Melanchthon and Cajetan agreed that scripture and ecclesial authority had to be respected and important practices preserved. Both reject (real or hypothetical) antinomian alternatives leading to radically truly different ways of acting. Meritorious works are not conceded primary status, but the notion of merit is adjusted so that key practices are allowed to continue. This compromise worked in the Catholic–Lutheran context – old practices, new theories – because the theories about good works and merit were not the cause of the debated practices; rather, theory was for the most part conformed to already-existing practices which were to endure, even if purified in some way or another. For Lutherans and Catholics alike, just as practices provoke debates, they also marked off boundaries within which reflection should rightly begin and end. Changes in theology did not necessarily change practice in any

radical fashion, and more often preserved it. There were surely some Catholics who did simply repeat old explanations in favor of the debated practices; some Reformation theorists and practitioners did adopt more radical stances which led to the abolition of hitherto settled practices. But the classic argument between Melanchthon and Cajetan more modestly and typically clarified debated issues and eliminated abuses in order to preserve practices central to both the Catholic and Lutheran traditions.

Does Love of God Make Caste Irrelevant?

Like other Hindu theorists writing in Sanskrit or in heavily Sanskritized vernaculars in medieval India, the thirteenth and fourteenth-century Śrīvaiṣṇava theologians of south India sought to combine new religious values – such as devotion to Lord Nārāyana (Viṣṇu, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa) – with the traditional and pan-Indian elite practices connected with brahmanical orthodoxy, including the caste practices calculated according to birth status (*jāti*) and religious class (*varṇa*). Birth status, assumed to be innate, regulated "natural social" activities related to birth, dining, marriage, and education; the theory of religious class served as a theoretical explanation of these regulations. Birth status was understood to mirror the reality of the universe, and the categories of religious class articulated the meaning of the innate differences. The system of *varṇa-āśrama* (class, state of life) *dharma* framed in ideal terms the life of the male according to stages of life (āśrama) and class hierarchy (varṇa), reaching from (theoretically) religiously and intellectually privileged elite brahmans down to (theoretically) inferior and uneducated manual laborers, *śūdras* (for this section, see Lokācārya 1979: vv. 194–233; Ayyangar 1956; Mumme 1988).

Along with the observance of caste practices, however, new devotional movements brought to the fore a new theistic and interpersonal religious calculus, according to which relationship to God was the first and foremost measure of relevance. Pillai Lokacarya, a founding leader of the emerging Teṅkalai sect of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, was a foremost proponent of the new turn to a theistic perspective. In his *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam* he established the absolute priority of love of God and divine favor over against any other criteria for religious value, superseding previously settled orthodox standards for religious value, including caste. Were divine love really to become the sole measure of social practice, then caste would be stripped of its significance and its practices would lose support. Piḷḷai Lokācārya did not go so far, since he also implanted religious values in a context of settled religious practices, and accordingly maintained a delicate balance between new religious insights, radical rhetoric, and traditional practices. On the one hand, he argued as vigorously as possible that radical dependence on God is indeed the core value by which actions are rendered religiously significant; religious identity and prestige within the community of believers can no longer depend on birth status and religious class. On the other, he in fact also remained committed to caste practices. While he valued exceptions to caste rules, he offered no comprehensive alternative; he seemed interested more simply in insisting that divine love is primary while status and class are secondary. Norms for purity, eating, ritual performances, etc., were not discarded, but only treated as secondary, and as liable to important and occasional exceptions. In his *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam* he moderated a potentially radical language of devotion which might have overturned caste entirely by replacing it with stress on the interior quality of individuals surrendered entirely to God; the overall impact of Piḷḷai Lokācārya's argument was to suggest that devotees should learn to live in an ordered world where caste differences did not really matter but were still to be observed. Devotion triumphs, but caste practice endures.

Vedānta Désika, a theologian of the next generation and of the reputedly more conservative Vatakalai sect, placed stronger emphasis on the value of caste practices. He may have had Piḷḷai Lokācārya's arguments in mind when he strongly defended caste in several of his writings, particularly in Chapter 25 of his *Śrīmadrahasyatrayasāra*. As he saw the matter, even if overly excited devotees suggest that there is some conflict between devotion and caste, there is in fact no real problem, once devotion and caste are properly understood. Just as Cajetan accommodated Melanchthon, Désika conceded much of the ground contested by Piḷḷai Lokācārya, agreeing that devotion and relationship to the Lord are the primary religious criteria – but he then used the new values to support the old practices. Caste was not religiously odious, but existed according to the will of God. People who love God should have no problem in adhering to practices which continue to please God. Old practices were thus preserved, precisely by a cooptation of the originally troubling logic of devotion. For Lokācārya, the new devotional calculus did not actually change caste practices, but simply moved them to a secondary position; for Désika, those practices were maintained by investing them with new religious values. Both of them, even in the heat of debate, agreed to exclude the possibility that practices such as marrying, dining, or studying would really change, as if to occur entirely without consideration for caste.

Does Conversion to Christianity Make Caste Objectionable? A Debate Among Missionaries

The third example builds on the first two. Roberto de Nobili, an Italian Jesuit and missionary in Madurai, south India, brought the concerns and questions of Reformation Europe to brahmanical south India; traditional practices and their (new and old) religious justifications were already an issue in de Nobili's mind before he arrived in India. By 1610, a few short years after his arrival, he had decided that the major obstacle to the conversion of Hindus was the reluctance of brahmans to become interested in the gospel; in turn, the major reason for their disinclination was their reluctance to give up the practices marking brahman status (e.g. the wearing of the brahman thread, sectarian markings on the forehead, distinctive hats, certain ablutions, and even their certainty that the Sanskrit language was intellectually and spiritually superior) (for this section, see de Nobili 2000; for general background on de Nobili, see Saulière 1995; for the controversy over caste and conversions, see Zupanov 1999).

Most missionaries seem to have had no interest in caste values, and assumed that converts should abandon them. Indeed, among practices which might be considered prototypically radical, conversion practices – promoting it, undergoing it – would certainly be among the more prominent. Brahmans opposed the missionary agenda not primarily because of any particular Christian doctrines, but rather because conversion would entail a radical departure from caste values, the mingling of castes, and a pernicious disregard for obligatory practices. They were right; most missionaries were interested in conversion and not in caste, and perhaps assumed that converts would abandon the old brahmanical practices for the new Christian ones.

In the face of seemingly conflicting practices, de Nobili sought a middle ground. He did so because he prized the practice of conversion, and did not want to see it stymied by theories of culture that would unnecessarily (in his view) encumber it. Missionaries would make no progress in converting brahmans as long as conversion entailed the rejection of deeply embedded caste practices, so a new theory was required: it had to be the case that those practices were not actually contrary to Christian identity, and it

had to be the case that conversion could be lived in such a way as to not interfere with caste. To further his own religious project, conversion, he had to develop a consonant theory of caste which reinterpreted caste practices as cultural and not religious.

For this purpose he wrote his *Report Concerning Certain Customs of the Indian Nation* in order to defend the conclusion that key brahman practices were social and not essentially religious (de Nobili 2000). Insisting that such practices were not incompatible with Christian values, de Nobili hoped to persuade both missionaries and brahmans that cultural caste practices could be combined with the religious practices of the Christian community. Both conversion and caste practices could be reinterpreted, to preserve both.

Although currently available sources do not warrant conclusions about all sides of this debate – we have only missionary writings – we can recognize at least how the several agendas overlapped in this trilateral dispute involving de Nobili, other missionaries, and brahmans. For their own reasons, brahmans defended caste and missionaries defended conversion; for his own reasons, de Nobili defended both caste and conversion. He prized conversion to the extent of stripping it of its cultural force, reconceiving it as a religious discourse compatible with Indian caste practices. Neither caste nor conversion would any longer mean quite what it had meant previously, yet the practices involved would continue. Out of necessity de Nobili thus invented the "Christian Brahman," preserving both Christian and brahman practices.

From Classic Controversy to Contemporary Ethics

In the preceding sections we have explored three moments of controversy where practices were attacked, rethought, and resignified, but still enacted: the death of Christ is recognized as central, but pious and meritorious actions are still performed; divine love is recognized as superior to practices related to birth and class, but those practices persist, for new reasons; conversion is recognized by missionaries as a foremost religious practice, but with the proviso that it not interfere with caste practices. Criticisms of works, caste, and conversion had endangered traditional practices, but at the moment of resolution potentially radical ideas and words were refashioned in order to resignify and thus preserve the practices undergoing critique. All our disputants portrayed themselves as rejecting more extreme lines of thought such as would have totally overthrown traditional values; likewise, they all rejected more stubborn defenses of tradition which would have bound practices exclusively to particular theories. Rather, particular theories are dispensable and can be adjusted or replaced so that practices could be maintained.

Practices are not eternal, however agile their defenders may be in improvising new theories to justify them. Even the most skillfully reinterpreted practices may eventually decline and fall out of favor. If supporting explanations fail, and fail to be replaced by more convincing ones, it may become impossible to continue acting in certain ways, however valuable the traditions involved. Powerfully intrusive new practices do sometimes overwhelm and eradicate older, settled ones. There are certainly instances, too, when cherished theories become in effect verbal practices to be preserved by the discovery of still further additional justifications. Nonetheless, I suggest, the fact that practices endure while justifications change is the ordinary state of affairs and rightly a primary object of ethical analysis. We need to keep asking which practices are at stake when theories are being explained, adjusted, or replaced in arguments about what is morally and religiously acceptable. Hear the words, but search out the practices.

The three examples adduced here are safely located in premodern and early modern times, and remind us of concerns to be kept in mind while studying controversies from the past. But they also illustrate patterns still operative in actual ethical decision making and central to the study of those decisions by ethicists. Today, it remains necessary to step back and identify the dominant practices likely to remain in force even after a debate about ideas and values, since what is debated is not identical with what is at stake. We must examine how theories, however radical, often simply revalue practices rather than change what people do. Debates over liturgical norms and jurisdictional control within a church, prohibitions of stem cell research and euthanasia, the relief of third world debt, and the abolition of the death penalty, etc. – all entail important theoretical issues, but we must remember to seek out the enduring practices at stake "beneath" the issues explicitly debated. We must notice how behavior does not change, while new reasons are enlisted to defend established practices. It is useful to attend to new theories which, if implemented, would change everything, but not primarily because in a few cases such theories might actually take effect. Rather, their novelty prods those with vested interests to stake out moderate positions couched in the language of the new concepts and values, to situate these positions as prudent alternatives to real or imagined extreme positions, and thus, in the long run, to maintain traditional practices by promoting new reasons for still doing them.

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CHAPTER 35

Theories of Practice

Anne Mocko

At one time, Western ethical deliberation was dominated by Aristotelian virtue ethics, which emphasize habit and practice as strategies for developing ethical capacities. European religious life, too, was dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, which taught a rich repertoire of devotional practices to shape the lives of devotees. In more recent centuries, however, embodied religious and ritual practice has tended to be downplayed or underappreciated in Western culture and thought as a mode or site for ethical cultivation.

This general move away from appreciating practice began during the Protestant Reformation. As penance, fasting, and mortifications of the body gave way to reading and contemplating biblical text, embodied practice was increasingly seen as a superficial and optional form of religious life. This change in the religious cultures of Europe inspired and was complemented by the advent of the Enlightenment, during which time Western thinkers turned resolutely away from the body and toward the mind. Descartes posited a strong mind-body dualism, and located fundamental human-ness in the capacity for rational thought. Kant, too, emphasized the importance of the deliberative rational mind, and further argued that actions could only be considered moral if they represented deliberate acts of intellectualized will, overcoming embodied inclinations and habits. Based on these deeply influential academic and institutional movements, Western scholarship on ethics and religion for centuries has broadly tended to emphasize beliefs, attitudes, rational deliberation, and literary texts as the core sites of forming ethical humans.

Starting in the late nineteenth century, however, scholars interested in religion gradually began to regain appreciation of the ways that embodied practices – public and private, religious and non-religious – can be important modes of orienting humans to the worlds they live in. These modern theorists of practice have examined the political, social, and moral valences of practice, and they have variously demonstrated ways that habituated practice locates selves into sociocultural realities and institutional power structures. They have also attended to the ways that scholarship itself is a form of practice that is particular, contextual, and invested in non-neutral ideologies.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Colonial Ethnography, "Primitive" Practice

The institutionalization of the academic study of religion in the nineteenth century coincided with the tightening of structures of European colonialism, and substantial academic attention to practice was devoted to trying to understand the ostensibly bizarre cultural and religious practices of colonized non-European peoples. Nineteenth-century theorists were united in their conviction that human cultures followed evolutionary patterns, and that by studying the simplest, "least-evolved" forms of human practice, they would be able to "read" human history and universal truths about the human condition.

This task of unraveling the evolution of human culture was the foundational project for early anthropology, particularly early British anthropology. Early anthropologists wanted to understand how modern Europeans were developmentally related to "primitive" non-Europeans, and they simply presumed that modern Western Europeans compared favorably to evolutionary antecedents. Moreover, they commonly conflated as evolutionary antecedents both ancient people and contemporary non-Western people, and tended to assume that "primitive" people in the present were stuck in time, having simply failed to advance as far or as fast as Europeans.

Major projects in this vein include Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871) and Levy-Bruhl's *Primitive Mentality* (1923), and this evolutionary model is perhaps best exemplified in James Fraser's *The Golden Bough* (1913–1915). An "armchair anthropologist," Fraser was fascinated by religious practice, yet convinced of its basic illogic/inadequacy: for him, cultural difference inevitably provided an opportunity to observe the shortcomings of unevolved humans. By juxtaposing short accounts of bizarre practices from across the world and history, Fraser constructed a grand vision of human evolution, which he argued developed from magic to religion to science. This account was simultaneously temporal, geographical, and racial: science and reason were typical of contemporary Europe, religion was the province of contemporary Asians and historical Europeans, while magical practices characterized ancient people and supposedly unevolved peoples of Africa, aboriginal Australia, or the Pacific Islands.

Beginning in the twentieth century, however, ethnographers increasingly traveled beyond Europe, living for prolonged periods of time among the people they wrote about. As a consequence, though they still considered their objects of study broadly primitive, their theories of practice became substantively more sensitive. One anthropologist who exemplified this turn toward participant-observation was E. E. Evans-Pritchard, who lived and worked in colonial sub-Saharan Africa. His seminal work, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (1937), argues for the reasonableness and social efficacy of South-Sudanese divinatory practices. This book helped deconstruct the notion that African peoples were irretrievably unlike (much less evolutionarily "behind") Europeans.

Bronislaw Malinowski similarly aimed to demonstrate sophistication and coherence in the practices of supposedly primitive people. Malinowski lived for several years in the Trobriand Islands, and in his *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), he theorized that the local practice of gift-exchange (*kula*) was a way to construct relationships of reciprocity. Malinowski's account of *kula* would help underpin the theory of *functionalism*, which posits that every cultural practice fulfills a practical or psychological need of its performers. Though functionalism was later critiqued for being reductionist, it was important in presuming purpose, logic, and value for practices that Europeans initially found strange.

Durkheim and Social Cohesion

Like early British anthropology, early French sociology looked to the practices of "primitive" non-western peoples with the expectation that theorizing them would help identify fundamental patterns and dynamics of human society. Rather than seeking to understand cultural evolution per se, though, they examined non-Western societies to help understand how collective practice, particularly collective religious/ritual practice, created social cohesion among participants and fostered social harmony/cooperation.

The central figure of this school was Émile Durkheim. His masterwork, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), sought ostensibly to explain totemic practices of aboriginal Australian tribes, but did so in service of a grand theory of religion and social life. Durkheim focused his discussion on the ways that practice can create the distinction between "sacred" and "profane." Durkheim argued that when cultural practices set aside or hedge in particular objects, spaces, or times, limiting how one may access or interact with them, it is those practices themselves that create a sense of sacredness. Because significances are produced through human behaviors, "sacredness" is not some higher-than-human reality or mystery, but rather the collective consciousness and the product of the sociality of the group. Religion, for Durkheim, represents a process of symbolically constructing, thinking about, and acting on one's social group, and he argued that collective religious practices foster an "effervescent" experience of group-belonging.

Durkheim's theoretical project, to understand social solidarity from primitive practice, was supported by his students, most significantly his nephew Marcel Mauss. Mauss's essays on magic (1902) and with Henri Hubert on sacrifice (1898), sought to trace reasonable patterns and purposes behind some of the most "exotic" practices of other cultures, while his essay *The Gift* (1925) theorized the role of ritualized practice in the formation of social and economic relationships. Mauss's 1934 essay on "techniques of the body" was responsible for reintroducing the Aristotelian term *habitus* into modern Francophone theory.

The Durkheimian school would provide the major foundation for the theory of *structural functionalism*. This approach, which in its fullest form is particularly identified with Talcott Parsons, hypothesizes that a society is a complex system of parts – institutions and established practices – all of which work to promote stability, solidarity, and cohesion among the members of the society. According to structural-functionalist perspectives, religion should always be analyzed for the ways that its institutions and practices promote social harmony.

This line of theory, emphasizing harmony and cohesion, has been critiqued for underestimating the significance of conflict and inequality in social systems. Competing modes of interpretation have included Marxism, social conflict theory (within sociology), and the Manchester School (within anthropology). The latter is particularly associated with the work of Max Gluckman, who directly studied rather than ignored the colonial contexts of the non-Western data that many early scholars relied upon, and who insisted that the "effervescence" and solidarity Durkheim saw in ritual practice was an ideological effort at papering over real and important social disunity.

Foucault

In the second half of the twentieth century, there emerged in French academic thought a sustained and important discussion about social practice that drew from both Durkheimian sociology and Marxist intellectual traditions, to develop powerful ideas about the ways that social practice teaches people ideologies

and draws them into institutional structures. The definitive scholar in this conversation was Michel Foucault, whose work has defined and inspired many subsequent discussions of practice.

Foucault fundamentally challenged the Enlightenment vision of an individual independently knowing his world and acting based upon rational principles. Instead, Foucault argues, people learn to be human in and through different regimes of power and discipline. Foucault's prolific work on power – particularly the complex confluences between power and knowledge – prompted a critical re-evaluation of traditional academic assumptions in many fields, and initiated new sets of questions and methods for interrogating a wide range of social practices and realities.

One of Foucault's most influential concepts is discourse, which in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) is taken to mean "language that creates the reality of which it speaks." Discourse refers to modes of thinking and speaking about the world that shape what can be perceived, and that thereby drive the ways that individuals act and react. The category "autistic" for example (though not an idea Foucault himself analyzed), provides a frame through which specific behaviors can be grouped together as significant. Once an individual's past and present behaviors are read as "autistic," then a variety of institutional mechanisms are set in motion, and that individual's future behaviors will all be scrutinized through the lens "autism" until that person is rendered a socially significant kind of being. In this way, the concept of autism enables not just the identification of but the production of autistic-ness.

The notion of discourse insists that practice and language (or more broadly, body and mind) are not separable from one another, but rather are mutually constitutive. Minds do not create themselves: they come to be in the contexts of bodies. Bodies, likewise, do not carry out practices devoid of mental content or meaning, but rather are shaped and molded by categories and ideas that are shared and enacted in social settings. Practice thus guides and is guided by the life of the mind, and vice versa.

Crucially, too, Foucault argues that neither body nor mind exist solely as individuals, but are rather inextricably embedded in social, historical, cultural contexts. In order to understand these contexts, Foucault theorized that specific institutions are organized to monitor and exert external force on people, and more provocatively, that they also persuade people to monitor and exert internalized pressure on themselves. This interest in the disciplinary capacities of institutions led to a broad variety of objects of study, particularly famously mental institutions (*Madness and Civilization* (1964)), medical institutions (*The Birth of the Clinic* (1963)), and prisons (*Discipline and Punish* (1975)).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault demonstrates the logic and efficacy of institutional practice by tracing the historical shift in Europe and America from explicitly pain-full criminal punishment (such as drawing and quartering) to intentionally pain-less incarceration. The shift in institutions, he argues, both reflects and creates a shift in the idea of crime and what it demands, a shift in the ways that bodies are made criminal and acted upon. He finds particularly significant a never fully implemented prison design called the Panopticon, which featured a central guard-tower positioned to see into and through every cell of surrounding circular rows of cells. Because the guard in the tower *could* be looking into any particular cell at any given moment, prisoners would constantly comport themselves *as if* they were being watched, even if the guard was looking elsewhere – or crucially, even if there were no guard at all. In this way, the physical layout of the prison was designed to discipline the prisoners to *watch themselves*, to internalize the power exerted over them by those in control. Foucault finds this a fundamental example of how a regime of power can be individualized and made part of someone's consciousness.

This interest in the ways that institutionalized practice can convince people to monitor themselves would subsequently develop into an interest in Christian traditions of confession. This subject was

projected to be the central frame of the never-written second volume of *History of Sexuality*, and was only partially worked out in some late essays, but nevertheless stands as a useful challenge for theological ethicists.

Theological ethicists may also find of particular significance Foucault's posthumous volume, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (1997). In this text, he puts forward a four-part theory of ethical action (here taken from Saba Mahmood's distilling of Foucault's argument (1997, 30)):

1) the "substance of ethics" (the issues which societies wish to work on, or consider to be the most significant problem),
2) "modes of subjectivation" (the authority structures that call people to feel or recognize moral obligations),
3) "techniques of the self" (the practices that an individual undertakes to become a culturally molded ethical actor), and
4) *telos* (the socio-historically articulated ultimate goals of ethical action or being).

This model usefully relocates ethical deliberation away from the ratiocination of individuals, and places it instead in embodied practice and collective institutionalized modes of deliberation and authority. It hence illustrates more broadly Foucault's insistent attention on cultural practice (its contexts and purposes) as the most fundamental object of academic thought.

Bourdieu and Althusser

Also important to mid-century French theories of practice were Foucault's two near-contemporaries, Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu. Althusser and Bourdieu extended and complemented Foucault's interests in practice as a crucial site for understanding social power, though both approached the question from more explicitly Marxist lenses.

Louis Althusser was the most explicitly Marxist of the three theorists, and the only one actively involved in communist politics. Like Foucault, Althusser was interested in the ways that individual people are drawn into power structures, and perhaps his most provocative contribution to theorizing practice was his notion of "interpellation." In his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970), he posits that people are "always-already" social subjects, inscribed into identities before they are even born. Once born, people are interpellated into an assortment of relationships and identities: they are addressed and hailed in constant ways that position them relative to other people and the world, and in being constantly hailed, each person is called into their structural identity. Althusser's theory of practice thus emphasizes the ways that people act, not as autonomous individuals so much as fulfillments of social and ideological expectations.

While Althusser has remained a somewhat obscure figure, Pierre Bourdieu became widely known for his interventions into theorizations of practice, and he is often credited as the central or even founding figure of "practice theory." Bourdieu particularly became famous for his adaptation and expansion of the term "habitus."

Like Mauss, Bourdieu describes *habitus* as the deeply engrained knowledges of the body, developed over many repetitions of practice – the often subconscious understandings of how to act and hold oneself in the world, the "socialized subjectivity" or "structuring structure" that develops from one's total history of social

interactions. Bourdieu resists the idea that one's embodied cultural knowledge is either a passive repository of personal history or a prescriptive deterministic programming, however. Instead, he emphasizes the ways in which *habitus* starts from descriptive rules or patterns regarding what has in the past been appropriate or inappropriate in particular circumstances. These internalized experiences produce "generative models of practice": repertoires of possible acceptable and unacceptable responses to novel moments, among which a social actor will creatively (and sometimes subversively) select how to actually act.

Thus for example, Bourdieu describes how people might develop a *habitus* regarding gift-giving. By observing and participating in dozens or hundreds of gift exchanges, individual people develop intuitive understandings of collective cultural norms – how gifts may be timed, how expensive they should be relative to various circumstances, what consequences might arise from not presenting a gift – but then that person does not give a new gift deterministically bound by old rules. Rather, people can strategically work within their embodied cultural knowledge to respond in a novel but culturally and historically inflected way in a new circumstance.

Bourdieu's analysis of *habitus* represents a major innovation in discussions of how individuals relate to norms and structures. It accounts for the source of norms and structures (they are the product of patterned group behavior through time), and it accounts for how individual people may be powerfully molded by, yet still act as independent agents within, those norms and structures.

Like Althusser, Bourdieu was writing in an explicitly Marxist framework, and one of his important contributions was the expansion of the idea of "capital" beyond simple economic terms. Instead, Bourdieu (1990) posited that there are three different forms of capital – economic, social, and cultural – and argued that these different forms of capital may be collected, exchanged, and transformed into each other. Social capital he identified as one's network of relationships, especially institutional relationships. Cultural capital includes the culturally significant objects that one possesses, the knowledge one holds in one's body (including how to present oneself according to group conventions), and the credentials or institutionalized forms of recognition one has received. By analyzing disparate forms of practice as "capital," he significantly expanded the types and modes of practice that could be subjected to Marxist critiques of distributional inequality.

Theorizing Domination and Structural Identity

Beginning in the 1970s, there began to be systematic recognition of the ways that society generally, and academic work specifically, have prioritized and normativized default perspectives that were white, male, and Euro-American. As the academy began to be more diverse, practices of dominance long left invisible began to be systematically interrogated. This opened up the possibility both for more nuanced studies of religious and ethical practices, and for a broader sensitivity to the ways that scholarship itself is a particular kind of situated practice.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is the systematic critique of race-based practices and systems of knowledge (as opposed to "race theory," the pseudoscientific efforts to prove black or brown racial inferiority). This important field of inquiry regrettably remains largely siloed and ignored by mainstream white academia,

but it constitutes an important site for theorizing practice, particularly for theorizing the large-scale systemic practices of full societies. Moreover, critical race theory raises a particularly crucial cluster of questions for ethicists, namely: How is it that people become acclimatized to injustice? How are people who are subjected to injustice socialized to accept it, and punished for challenging it? How are people who benefit from unjust systems taught to accept and even fail to see those realities?

White readers entirely new to critical race theory are commended as primer texts Robin DiAngelo's *What Does It Mean to be White*? (2012), Nell Irvin Painter's *The History of White People* (2011), and Beverly Tatum's *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (1997). Readers interested in improving their understanding of American racial history are recommended to consult Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* (2010), Khalil Gibran Muhammad's *The Condemnation of Blackness* (2011), and Ibram Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning* (2017).

One text that particularly clearly articulates a theory of practice is *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (2014) by Karen Fields. Fields argues that although most people assume it is the fact of physical differences that gives rise to practices of race, in fact it is practices of race that produce perceptions and illusions of physical differences. These practices of differentiation and inequality Fields names "racecraft," a purposeful play on the notion of "witchcraft": scientifically indefensible social strategies for labeling prejudices and fears, used to punish marginalized people within society. She argues that race is constantly implemented and reinvented through social practice, and that it is a profound tool for creating and enforcing social inequality.

Critical race theorists also frequently attend to the ways that different structural identities can compound the dimensions of oppression of a given individual, such that a person may variously experience *intersectional* racial, gendered, classist, and/or sexuality-based discrimination simultaneously. One foundational example of intersectional theory is bell hooks's *Ain't I a Woman?* (1981), which outlines the histories of how race and gender have compounded one another to produce complex oppression and suffering for black women from the slavery period through civil rights.

Feminism

One of the blind-spots in early theories of practice was to the importance of gender as a social category and mode of being in the world. The rise of modern feminist scholarship, though, has encouraged attention to the ways that large-scale power dynamics get asserted and learned in small, daily interactions.

Perhaps the most widely influential theorist of gendered practice is Judith Butler. Building upon Foucault, Butler argues that gender itself is a product of practice (see, e.g. *Gender Trouble* (1990)). While gender is often presumed to be a natural and biological "given," Butler insists that gender is the product of thousands upon thousands of interactions and moments of self-presentation. The body is stylized according to the expectations of the surrounding culture, and this general process – by which individuals participate in the constant reproduction of cultural expectations – she refers to as "performativity." Because Butler envisions gender to consist of practice rather than biological nature, she also sees it as fundamentally fragile: because gender relies on being constantly performed, it is vulnerable to being refused and not-performed.

There have been a number of efforts to develop ethical theories out of the experiences of women, some of the most interesting of which have focused on the ways that women experience and are expected to perform care work. Sara Ruddick (1989) argues that maternal caregiving provides a profound and generalizable ethical model, in that a mother must not just neutrally respect her child's autonomy, but actively

protect, socialize, and promote that child's flourishing. Sara Lee Bartky (1990), by contrast, argues that women are socially pushed into caregiving, some of which is affirming and life-giving but some of which is oppressive and even morally problematic. Despite their often significant differences, all the discussions around feminist care-ethics emphasize the ways that ethics emerge through practices in relationships, and this prioritization provides a powerful insight for all subfields of ethics.

Postcolonialism

The postcolonialist turn began with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which identified all the ways that European scholarship characterized and constructed the colonized world as an exotic and timeless photo-negative of European rational modernity, flattening everything from Morocco to Vietnam as part of the mysterious Orient. Writers since Said have variously sought to reclaim the historicity and local specificity of the once-colonized world, and to point out ways that academic knowledge about the non-West has for centuries contributed to the West's political domination of the rest of the world. (See, for example, Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* (2000).)

Post-colonial scholarship thus insistently theorizes the practice of scholarship itself as a mode of domination, and demands of scholars a deep consideration of the ways that they participate in small- and large-scale practices of power. In *Genealogies of Religion* (1993), for example, Talal Asad historicizes the very term "religion," showing it to be a modern academic abstraction emerging from an explicitly Christian usage and worldview. Asad questions whether such a term can be productively applied to premodern or non-Christian contexts, and thereby invites readers to see all ostensibly neutral academic vocabulary as actually emerging out of cultural and historical contexts that have clear political and social-power ramifications.

Case Study: Saba Mahmood

To close, let us examine Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety* (2005), as an example of how theories of practice may deeply inform religious ethics.

Mahmood examines the *da'wa* (personal piety) movement in Egypt, the trend toward more conservative modes of Islam that includes veiling, fasting, and mosque-based adult education. *Politics of Piety* is based upon years' worth of interviews with Egyptian women participating in the movement, and asks how and why this movement allows her research subjects not just to find personal meaning but also to shape themselves as ethical and political actors.

In particular, Mahmood focuses on the ways that the specific practices of the *da'wa* movement allow women to inhabit their bodies and worlds in disciplined, stylized, and ideological ways: "women are summoned to recognize themselves in terms of the virtues and codes of these traditions, and they come to measure themselves against the ideals furbished by these traditions" (2005, 32). As a specific example, her interlocutors:

> argue that the veil is a necessary component of the virtue of modesty because the veil both expresses "true modesty" and is the means through which modesty is acquired. They draw, therefore, an ineluctable relationship between the norm (modesty) and the bodily form it takes (the

> veil) such that the veiled body becomes the necessary means through which the virtue of modesty is both created *and* expressed. (2005, 23)

In explicit contrast to rationalist Kantian models of ethics, then, Mahmood argues that ethics are learned and inhabited in the practices of the body.

In *Politics of Piety*, Mahmood synthesizes (and surpasses) many of the theoretical themes discussed above. By focusing on neo-traditionalist Muslims, she follows a similar impulse to Evans-Pritchard, sympathetically dissecting her contemporary academy's "incomprehensible other." By focusing on women, and by locating her focus in Egypt, she disrupts the tendency for inquiries into ethical action to normativize the experiences and priorities of Euro-American white men.

Mahmood also pushes against secular-humanist modes of engaging ethics and politics, particularly feminist understandings of ethics and politics, that emphasize individual self-actualization and the disruption or overturning of traditional paradigms. On the contrary, Mahmood argues that her research subjects find meaning in conservative, traditionalist models of religiosity that purposefully erase individualist aspirations and that insistently reinscribe traditional gender norms. Mahmood critiques feminist scholarship, including Judith Butler specifically, for envisioning all practices along a binary of suppressive/subversive – and only valuing the latter as "empowering" and meaningful. She calls for scholars within the secular-liberal academy to pay more nuanced attention to the ethics and subjectivities of conservative or traditional religiosities – not because she endorses these as necessarily better or correct ways of being in the world, but because she sees them as important human phenomena that can be invisible for being uncongenial to the implicit political projects of scholars.

In this way, Mahmood avows an intention to "parochialize [her] own political certitude" (2005, xxiv), and invites her readers to do likewise.

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CHAPTER 36

Liturgy as Performance

Nicholas Denysenko

Fundamentally, liturgy is an event experienced by a local community that gathers in an appointed place. For Christians, liturgy is an event of encounter with God, and the community performs a series of acts of worship. These worship acts involve the recitation of official prayer texts (euchology), music (instrumental and singing), and the performance of diverse ritual gestures. Ritual gestures involve the body and the senses, such as beholding sacred art, hearing the proclamation of the word of God, smelling incense, lighting candles, and engaging bodily actions such as processions, greetings of peace, bows and prostrations, anointings with water and oil, and eating and drinking Holy Communion. As a multilayered event, liturgy assumes the active presence and performance of the community and of God.

The performance of the liturgy is a dialogue between God and the assembled community. God is the initiator of liturgy, calling the local community to assemble in the appointed place for worship, as evidenced by the etymology of the word ecclesia (*ek-kaleo*, or called out by God). A series of dialogical exchanges occurs once the assembly is gathered. The processional hymn is a performance of praise and gathering, completed by an initial prayer. The Bible lessons and homily proclaimed aloud for all to hear are acts of God speaking, with the assembly hearing and listening. At the Eucharist, the assembly offers God the gifts of bread and wine, fruits made by human hands from the soil given by God. God offers the gift of Jesus Christ in communion in the next part of the gift exchange. Just as God assembled the community, God dismisses them, and the community exits with a recessional, a song of praise.

While Christian Churches observe a variety of orders of the Eucharist, this brief, selective description illustrates how the dialogical performance is a gift exchange between God and the assembled community. God assembles, dismisses, speaks, offers the gift of Christ, and is present in many ways, especially through Communion. The community praises, petitions, offers, and receives gifts, and consumes the gift of Christ offered by God.

Throughout Christian history, the performative aspect of liturgy has been explained in diverse ways. From the late antique through the medieval periods, theologians of Western and Eastern Christianity have explained liturgy through the historical sequence of the life of Christ. In this scheme, each part of the Eucharist aligns with some event in the life of Christ. The reading of the word of God from the Bible lessons relates to Jesus' teaching at the sermon on the mount. The offertory, or the ritual of placing the bread and cup holding wine on the altar table, conveys Jesus' death and burial. The epiclesis (petition to God to transform the bread and cup into Christ's body and blood) symbolizes his resurrection from the dead. Liturgical mystagogy (pastoral commentaries on the liturgy and its components) that employs history was employed to catechize a largely illiterate Christian population, accompanied by sacred art depicting the life of Christ.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Some liturgical mystagogies adopt a tropological approach to explaining the meaning of the liturgy. Of these, the best known is the mystagogy of the seventh-century father Maximus Confessor, who depicted the Eucharist as an experience of the soul's ascent to God, with Holy Communion an experience of union with God. For most of Christian history, liturgical participants did not actually perform the ritual act of receiving Holy Communion, so there is a gap between the teaching and the experience.

In response to the times, an awakening occurred throughout the Christian world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that resulted in the impetus for renewal. Liturgy was identified as one of the sources for his renewal, especially since it functioned as the primary experience of Church for most Christians. The liturgical movement was an ecumenical phenomenon, with representatives from many Christian traditions appealing for reform, symbolized by significant changes to the liturgy introduced by the Second Vatican Council. Three themes stand out among the dozens of reforms proposed and achieved. Reformers lamented the alienation of the people during liturgical celebrations, observing that the people were disengaged and reduced to passive observers of perfunctory acts performed by the clergy. Reformers called for the active participation of the people in the liturgy, so that they would actually do the actions appointed to them: singing, praising, praying, acclaiming, hearing, touching, eating, and drinking.

Reformers identified the liturgy as the primary source of a renewal that would inspire the laity to embrace their vocation as God's holy people, called to apostolic witness for the life of the world. The second trend of liturgical reform was the act of revising liturgical components so that the people could engage them. With music, simpler melodies were used to encourage the people to sing the response. Many Churches authorized the use of the local vernacular language to promote understanding of the liturgy. People were encouraged to receive Holy Communion at each liturgy, including the act of drinking from the cup. Reformers encouraged creation and revival of local customs that would be familiar to the people as opposed to imposing one universal rite associated with a particular apostolic see or region in the practice of liturgical inculturation.

A selection of liturgical theologians and scholars of ritual studies attend to the larger objectives of liturgical reform, namely the transformation of the human being. Transformation was one of many terms that rose in popularity as the scholarship on liturgical reform increased, alongside terms such as divinization, deification, and theosis. Liturgical theologians appealed for a shift of attention from changes in liturgical aesthetics to the work performed by God that transforms the human participant in an event of synergy. Ritual studies scholars demonstrated how regular ritual performance contributes to the formation of the core values of communities and the development of virtues in human beings. Scholars of these fields presented their arguments through macro-and micro-level examples. The remainder of this entry will explain how the transformation of the participant occurs at the macro-level by analyzing the contributions of scholars such as Aidan Kavanagh, David Fagerberg, Mark Searle, and Kevin Irwin. The entry draws from a variety of liturgical traditions to demonstrate the cross-pollination of liturgical and domestic rituals, and how liturgy is designed to form and develop Christian virtues in the participant.

The Liturgy as God's Work Upon Us

Liturgical theologians depict God as the primary agent and initiator of the encounter that occurs at liturgy. Aidan Kavanagh is among the liturgical theologians who refers to the mystery of Christ's incarnation as a source of understanding how liturgy is an event that is not about God, but of God

(Kavanagh 1984). God voluntarily discloses God's self in the liturgy without becoming subsumed to the elements of rite, such as texts, materials, or actions. God's presence is incarnational, so the rites enacted are ordinary human actions of speaking, hearing, communicating, eating, drinking, and yet they are divine. The divine-human quality of liturgy is incarnational, God meeting the people where they are, through the idioms they can understand. The divine presence in form and matter accessible to the human is on account of human weakness, so that the encounter can happen (Kavanagh 1984). The liturgical event is powerful, as the community experiences a process of adjustment to the encounter from one liturgical event to the next. Kavanagh describes this adjustment as a process of working out, sustaining, and establishing the orders of belief and supplication in the community. Kavanagh does not explicate how the community becomes virtuous, but maintains a macro-level discussion emphasizing how the foretaste of the future life with God in the kingdom necessitates adjustment on the part of the community.

The liturgical encounter with God and the community's adjustment to the event form human action. Kavanagh writes rather generally about this adjustment without offering details. Liturgy is not limited to the appointed place, but is a universal event, with the participation of the whole cosmos. The purpose of liturgy is "reconciliation with God and all persons and things in Christ," irreducible to a specific purpose or cause, but for the life of the world (Kavanagh 1984, 153). Kavanagh emphasizes liturgy as an act, not an object to be read or studied. The human community partaking of the liturgy hosted by God is called to act by "doing" the world. As for the values of the community constituting the body of Christ, Kavanagh says only that the Church is the "embodiment in the world of the World to come, the kingdom" (Kavanagh 1984, 57).

David Fagerberg sustains Kavanagh's vision of liturgy as an act of God that makes its participants into theologians whose vocation is to do the world. Fagerberg revisited the story of Kavanagh's Mrs. Murphy, the nonexpert parishioner whose knowledge of theology is rooted in her liturgical participation and everyday life. Fagerberg takes another step in connecting liturgical participation to ethics when he claims that the laity cannot demonstrate theological knowledge by "articulating propositions," but rather by the "grammar they use to understand the world and to shape their own lives" (Fagerberg 2004, 141). Fagerberg acknowledges that this is a "macrocosmic" approach when he says the participant is "capacitated to read the world," and to "tell the world a truth about itself" (Fagerberg 2004, 151–152). Fagerberg intends to disclose the cosmic mission of liturgy, since it is not a self-contained act, only for Church people who are conducting Church business. The point of liturgy is action to be taken on behalf of everyone, a task irreducible to a specific cause or issue.

Kevin Irwin adopts an approach compatible with Kavanagh and Fagerberg in arguing that God completed the work of redemption of humankind in the liturgical act experienced by assemblies of faithful (Irwin 2018, 73). Irwin emphasizes the eschatological dimension of liturgy while cautioning that each liturgical act is provisional, awaiting fulfillment in the future life of the kingdom to come. The not-yet, in-between time is not one of passive observation while awaiting the kingdom to arrive. Irwin connects liturgical participation not only to belief, but also to spirituality, describing the formation capacitated by the liturgy as a continuous journey of deepening conversion for the participant.

Ethics form an important part of this process of liturgical formation. Irwin applies the ethical consequences of liturgy to the ordinary concerns of daily life, remarking that isolating liturgy from life makes the liturgical event an end in itself as opposed to a means. The participant, then, bears the responsibility of remaining faithful to their liturgical experiences, which means that their conduct must be consistent with liturgy's eschatological dimension, the kingdom of God. Irwin is sensitive to degree of fervor in maintaining fidelity to God's kingdom, hence the need to return to the liturgy as the source of ethical

nourishment on a regular basis (e.g. participation in every weekly Sunday Eucharist). Acknowledging the imperfections of humans who worship, Irwin cautions strongly against rigid evaluations of the effectiveness of liturgy in fostering an ethical life, and argues that regular liturgical participation should "over time, lead to forming how one looks at life and how one ought to lead the Christian life" (Irwin 2018, 591). Therefore, the role of liturgy in forming Christian ethics in the participant is a process of deepening conversion, one that remains in the present while awaiting fulfillment in the future.

Mark Searle reflected on the objectives of active participation in the liturgy by recalling the social, cultural, and political contexts of various stages of the liturgical movement. Searle reflected on the capacity of liturgy to reawaken faithful in the early stages of the liturgical movement, in countries where the Catholic Church endured decline, closures, and alienation from the state and the people (Searle 2006). Liturgical formation went hand-in-hand with social reconstruction. Searle summarizes the Benedictine liturgist Virgil Michel, who was particularly sensitive to the reformist movement within the Catholic Church that aimed to deliver social justice to workers exploited by wealthy landowners.

Liturgical formation is relevant beyond the celebration of liturgy, with liturgy functioning as a practical rehearsal for ethical action in the context of one's daily life. Searle endorses the formational quality of liturgy and identifies the transformation of the participant as one occurring in three stages. Participation in the appointed rite leads to an encounter with Christ through baptism, and the meeting with Christ brings the participant to God. Searle accentuates the vulnerability of the participant in the presence of God, as God is not "reduced to a handy-dandy, pocket sized deity or convenient friend in the sky" existing only to give participants what they want or need, but God meets participants in a place where "God can be God for us" (Searle 2006, 39–40). Contact with the uncontainable holiness of God reveals the unholiness of participants as "finite, guilty creatures, called ultimately to struggle, to suffer, and to die" (Searle 2006, 40). The seemingly pessimistic tone of Searle's point is designed to underscore the process of theosis, along with its development of an ethic, to be one that is constantly ongoing. Active participation in the liturgy does not merit a reward, or a certificate of completion because the participant is constantly engaging the process of being done unto by God.

Assenting to this encounter with the uncontainable God is possible through obedience to the order of the appointed ritual. Searle notes that the community engages the ritual together, so obedience is necessary for all to perform the appointed rite without opting out. Participating in the appointed ritual forms of liturgy is a way of conforming one's self to its set forms of speech and behavior. Regular participation in these rites denotes commitment to certain attitudes. Acknowledging the tendency to confuse emotional feeling with commitment to rite, Searle accentuates that ritual performance is formative when the performers "make its attitudes our own" (Searle 2006, 25). Searle adds that liturgy is a rehearsal for enacting relationships to God, the community, and the world. It is this notion of liturgy as a performative rehearsal for the enactment of Christian ethics that enables a select demonstration of liturgical performances that translate to ethics in everyday life. The following micro-level examples of reconciliation draw from diverse Christian traditions.

Examples of Liturgy as Performance: Reconciliation

Christian Churches have multiple rites of reconciliation during the Eucharistic celebration, including rites of penance that begin the service and the exchanges of greetings of peace. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) includes a rite of confession and forgiveness at the beginning of Sunday

worship. A variety of assembly configurations are recommended to establish the link between receiving forgiveness at the Eucharist and the remission of sins of baptism. One powerful option for churches with a visible baptismal font is to call the assembly to gather around the font for this rite. This is one suggestion of several, all designed for the assembly to see the baptismal font during the performance of the rite. This example illustrates the multiple dimensions of rite. Liturgical formation involves all of the senses, including sight and bodily posture, of gathering around the font or directing one's gaze toward the font while acclaiming a prayer that thanks God for forgiveness has the capacity to be formative. Furthermore, positioning the rite of reconciliation at the beginning of Sunday worship sets the tone for the rest of the celebration: the community confesses its sin before God, together; and the community receives divine forgiveness, together, before hearing the word of God and participating in the Lord's Supper.

A collection of related liturgical rituals from the Byzantine tradition identifies Lent as an annual school of liturgical ethics. Practicing the rituals can function as a regular rehearsal of ethics in everyday life. Two of the rituals are particularly formative. The first occurs during Forgiveness Vespers that begins Lent. Vespers continues the themes introduced at the Divine liturgy, centered on Jesus' commandment that all are required to forgive trespasses to receive divine dispensation. The hymns sung during Vespers encourage the faithful to seek and impart forgiveness. Following the dismissal, the people stay in the Church for a special rite of forgiveness. The pastor begins the rite by asking the people, "forgive me, a sinner," with the people responding, "God forgives." The pastor then performs a prostration before the people, symbolizing humility. In many parishes, a circle forms throughout the Church, with each participant approaching the other and following the same pattern: "forgive me, a sinner," with "God forgives," and a prostration following. The exchange of the kiss of peace finishes each encounter. Lent begins as a literal performance of Jesus' commandment in Matthew: forgive, and then God's forgiveness is assured. The process of granting and receiving forgiveness from each person in the assembly prepares one for the possibility of involuntary trespassing with family, friends, and strangers, especially when some people in the parish do not know each other well. It is customary for the choir to sing Easter hymns during the communal exchange of forgiveness.

The custom of singing Easter hymns during the rite of forgiveness provides a foretaste of the eschatological joy of the presence and companionship of the risen Lord shared by all in community. The Matins of Easter invites all to exchange the same kiss of peace exchanged in the rite of forgiveness. During the kiss of peace, a verse from the hymn sung by the choir exclaims the values of the Paschal community: "let us embrace each other joyously! Let us call 'brothers', even those that hate us!"

Rites of reconciliation have the capacity to facilitate a psychological change in practitioners, who can experience an improved quality of life through healing and reconciliation with one another. A survey conducted by Elizabeth Gassin and Timothy Sawchak on voluntary participants in the rite of forgiveness yielded informative results (Gassin and Sawchak 2008). Among the survey's prominent results were themes expressing an inner transformation and experiences of catharsis and purification. In their conclusion, Gassin and Sawchak assert that this ritual has the capacity to promote "relational healing within a community," which accords with the first part of twofold reconciliation, that of an individual with others in the community. The rite of forgiveness demonstrates the performative capacity of liturgy.

Similarly, the Days of Awe observed annually by Jews promote transformation and commemorate the divine act of creation and God's kingship. This season of liturgical observance begins with Rosh Hashanah and culminates with Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. Participation in the strict rituals of fasting, prayer,

and abstinence enable the observant Jew to learn the extent of their love for and fear of God (Agnon 1965, 189). The Western religious seasons of Christian Lent, Jewish Days of Awe, and Islamic Ramadan share the common feature of appointing ritual practices that sharpen one's focus on God and God's teachings.

Example: Cosmic Reconciliation and Ecological Stewardship

The liturgical traditions have expanded so that performative ethics are neither theocentric nor anthropocentric, but now have a cosmic lens. Christians embraced the movement for environmental protection and stewardship in the twentieth century, and have developed new resources to strengthen the formation of an ethic expressed in liturgy and adopted in daily life. Several liturgical scholars have demythologized the false dichotomy of sacred and profane to restore the biblical principle that God's creation is good. Liturgy requires the use of material items, and Irwin's taxonomy of symbols is helpful. For example, water, fire, and soil are natural symbols given by God to humanity, and the liturgical year presents a consistent narrative of God performing redemptive acts through the agency of water. The Jewish and Christian traditions of sacred topography privilege the Jordan as a holy place honoring the presence of God in the Old and New Testaments. Mountains, deserts, and the wilderness are also sacred places that host the encounter between the uncontainable God and humankind. The desert ascetical tradition and the hagiographical literature produced by it introduce a rule of fundamental stewardship of the environment for Christians. In cultivating the earth only for their basic necessities, the early monastic communities used water sparingly, and balanced the time appointed to prayer with caring for the earth. Their diets consisted of available resources, especially basic vegetables and fruits. Respect for the finite resources of the earth is organically connected to abstaining from overindulgence, which exploits the earth. The ascetical tradition enjoys a type of synergy with environmental stewardship.

The modern liturgical renewal began to integrate eco-centrism by enhancing awareness of the innate good in the materials used for liturgy. The major liturgical offices depending on natural resources were restored and enriched. The Eastern Churches have observed the blessing of Epiphany waters for centuries, and the Church of England adapted and integrated this office into the celebration of Epiphany, combining Jesus' baptism in the Jordan with the commemoration of the Magi on January 6. Pastors have invested in forming environmental ethics in the people through more intentional liturgical reforms. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offers several liturgical aids on caring for God's creation, including prayer of the faithful to be used at Mass, blessings for special occasions, and hymns on creation. The ELCA has prepared a Water Memorial worship resource consisting of a call to worship, hymn of praise, and several texts of thanksgiving at the baptismal font. An encouraging development in the Churches of the West is the sustained commitment to composing new Eucharistic prayers that retain traditional structures while revising the texts to accentuate the cosmos as a faithful servant of God that is redeemed by Christ along with humankind.

Conclusion

The liturgical renewal movement restored the centrality of liturgy in the lives of Christian people by emphasizing the capacity of liturgy to stimulate Christian growth. At the macro-level, contemporary liturgical theology proposes a sophisticated theological anthropology. The ordinary lay person can

become a theologian, a member of the lay apostolate whose values are of the kingdom of God and who is called to reconcile with neighbors and the world. The liturgy, then, becomes the primary space for the formation of the Christian person, whose performance of the appointed ritual functions as a regular rehearsal of adopting the attitudes of the Christian community and learning how to put them into practice in everyday life. Churches have intentionally integrated attention to global moral crises by naming them in the liturgy and exhorting the people to perform a collective response on the basis of their shared Christian values. Liturgical theologians emphasize that God's transformation of the world through the faithful observance of the people is one of potentiality and possibility because of human freedom and deficiencies. When divine grace is manifest through human performance of liturgical ethics, liturgy is no longer contained by the walls of a Church or worship space, since the people are performing the liturgy in the spaced shared by all of creation in the world.

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CHAPTER 37

Reading/Recitation/Memorization

Lauren E. Osborne

This entry outlines the ethics of reading, reciting, and memorizing within the frameworks of different religious traditions. While religious texts are often studied as texts – that is, in so far as they are interpreted on the level of discursive meaning, providing key tenets or narratives that form the backbone of a broader religious tradition – scholars have considered less thoroughly the ways in which believers may engage with religious texts in embodied practices, including memorization, reading, or recitation. And yet, considering the ethics of reading, reciting, or memorizing can help shape the understanding of a religious tradition more broadly and the engagement with religious texts therein. These practices and the ideals to which they aspire are shaped not only by the contexts of the religious traditions to which they belong, but also by even further contextual factors. There are the social, historical, cultural, or even occasional contexts in which those practices may appear or be pursued, as well as by the material that is to be read, recited, or memorized and as well how it is understood within the religious tradition to which it belongs.

A particularly significant example of memorization and recitation practices in relation to a broader tradition is the recitation of the Qur'an within Islamic tradition. Considering the meaning and ethics of Qur'an recitation within Islam reveals the connections between ethical practices and broader concerns, ideals, or theological tenets held in Islam more broadly. And even further, considering a parallel tradition of recitation – in this case, the comparative counterpoint of recitation of Torah within Judaism – offers a potentially fruitful avenue for further study. While the points of contact and commonality between reading, reciting, and memorizing sacred texts in Judaism and Islam are many, perhaps the most striking distinction that arises in comparing the ethics of these practices is that much hinges on how the words or material being recited, read, or memorized is understood and embedded within its religious tradition.

In "Text and Canon," in *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, Michael Fishbane theorizes the canonization and interpretation of a religious text or set of sayings within a particular tradition as a process of "canon consciousness," with the formation of the canon of the Hebrew Bible and its interpretation and reinterpretation in Jewish tradition providing a paradigmatic example of this phenomenon (Fishbane 2007, 69–70). He goes on to point out, and then to examine, how scriptural exegesis can provide a window on to moral reasoning in a tradition (through the case of ancient Jewish interpretation of the Hebrew Bible – called Midrash) (Fishbane 2007, 70–71). So too we may expand on Fishbane's example in considering the lives of religious texts in so far as they are engaged with through oral and embodied practices of reading, reciting, and memorization.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Why Recite the Qur'an

Traditionally, the Qur'an is transmitted orally, with the goal of individuals committing parts or even the whole of the text to memory. Although the written word and the physical copy of the Qur'an is important and treated with care (there is a word that is used specifically for a physical copy of the Qur'an, *muṣḥaf*, which etymologically refers to a collection of leaves, and is used to refer to written materials or physical books specifically), recitation and memorization of the Qur'an play a central role in religious life. In his 1987 *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion*, William Graham has argued that the oral and aural aspects of and practices associated with religious texts have been overlooked. For Graham, the Qur'an and the practices of memorization and recitation associated therewith serve as a key example in support of this claim (Graham 1987).

As Graham and others have pointed out, since its inception, the primary mode of engagement with the Qur'an has been through oral and aural means. The verse thought to be the first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad begins with a command to read or recite: "Recite! In the name of your lord who created" (Qur'an 76:1). And many verses begin with the command, "Say!" directing readers or reciters to repeat statements or narratives that may follow. By extension, the Qur'an is often thought as commanding its readers and listeners to recite it orally in ritual practice. Recitation as a religious obligation is typically derived from a command given in the Qur'an itself. One oft-cited verse commands the qur'anic readers and listeners, "recite the Qur'an distinctly" (Qur'an 73:4). This verse is often seen as directing the ethical imperative of its own recitation, not only that the Qur'an should be recited, but that it should be recited in a particular way.

Others have also pointed to historical evidence in attesting to the key role of reciting and memorizing the Qur'an in the development of the Islamic tradition, and the key role of oral transmission in the tradition's history is also cited as directing an ethical imperative to continue emphasis on orality and memorization as they are key components to the tradition's origins. Navid Kermani has argued that the accounts of the early reception of the Qur'an – via its recitation – attest to its aesthetic power, particularly in the context of the importance of the recited word and oral poetics in seventh century Arabia (Kermani 2015). Beyond aesthetic reception, reciters and recitation of the Qur'an played a key role in disseminating the Qur'an and its message in the early period of Islam. In this way, recitation served as the medium through which the developing early tradition was spread. As Frederick Denny has illustrated, in the early centuries of the Islamic tradition, the development of Islamic exegesis (the body of literature, discipline, and associated standards and norms eventually called *tafsīr*) and the rules governing correct pronunciation and etiquette of the recited Qur'an (*tajwīd*) in fact developed in tandem, as two iterations of a shared set of concerns of the preservation, interpretation, and maintenance of the qur'anic text (Denny 1980).

While in the early period of Islam, memorization and recitation of the Qur'an may have initially served the purposes of dissemination and preservation of the sacred text, the reasons for reciting it are not limited to these. By the medieval era, there had developed genres of literature on the understandings and uses of the Qur'an – *adab tilāwa al-Qur'ān* (the etiquette of reciting the Qur'an) – as well as *faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* (the excellences or favors of the Qur'an). In these bodies of literature, there is, as Anna Gade points out, a strong sense that memorization and recitation of the Qur'an benefit both the individuals involved as well as the Islamic community more broadly (Gade 2017). In addition, by this time the rules of recitation – the rules of *tajwīd* – had come to be canonized, with the earliest extant treatises dating to the tenth century CE (Denny 1981, 145).

The proliferation of ethical guidelines surrounding memorization and recitation of the Qur'an attests to its theological status in the tradition more broadly. The Qur'an is understood as the literal words of God; memorizing and reciting the text is a significant point of contact for Muslims to the divine word and the original moment of revelation. The Qur'an itself attests to its divine origins, and ties this claim about origins to a further claim of aesthetic perfection, of which orality is a key component. This particular relationship between text and revelation has led some to liken the memorization and recitation of the Qur'an to the Christian practice of the Eucharist, for example (Smith 1993, 70). While one may draw a parallel comparing religious texts of different traditions (e.g. comparing the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, the Qur'an, and so forth), the parallels of divine revelation between these traditions are somewhat different. In the case of Islam, the Qur'an is understood to be divine revelation (rather than a worldly text attesting to revelation in some other form), and when considering memorization and recitation in light of this theological tenet, the ethics that follow are significant (and described in further detail below). And it is for these reasons that the Qur'an is always recited in its original Arabic, rather than in translation, even if the individual reciting or those listening do not know Arabic.

Why Cantillate the Torah

Jewish recitation of the Torah is referred to most commonly in English as cantillation rather than recitation. That semantic distinction aside, a quick look into the basics of the ethics of cantillation of the Torah in the Jewish tradition reveals several points of commonality with qur'anic recitation, and the distinctions help further highlight the particularities of theology and ethics in both traditions more generally.

The recited Torah is most frequently encountered in Sabbath synagogue services, although its particular place in the liturgy and when else it may be heard or recited varies somewhat depending on the type of synagogue and community (Summit 2016, 41–42). While the most regularly occurring encounter with the recited Torah is in synagogue services, any individual who goes through the rite of passage of the bar or bat mitzvah also learns to recite some Torah for performance at that occasion. And as Jeffrey Summit has recently explored in *Singing God's Words*, many contemporary American Jewish adults now take on study of cantillation for the purposes of individual spiritual development and connection to tradition and community (Summit 2016). In this way, cantillation of the Torah is analogous to recitation of the Qur'an in that most active members of the religious community have some exposure to recited scripture in a liturgical context, at rites of passage, or may take it on themselves, and that recitation can be both part of the personal development of piety of a layperson, as well as a more specialized area of study.

Although the practice of reading the Torah aloud derives from the ancient period, there is not agreement about the details of its origins. Some have argued that the Torah service originated after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. Upon its destruction, the Temple could no longer serve as the central site of Jewish identity, and this moment marks a shift in conceptualization of the Torah text as the center of Jewish worship and access to the divine, in the absence of the Temple (Langer 1998, 49). In the collective memory of tradition, the Torah reading is understood as commemorative or a reenactment of Moses receiving the law on Sinai. While the details of historical origins may be obscure, the Torah reading is understood as being tied to Jewish history.

Considering ethics and religious practice within the broader framework of everyday life, however, complicates the seemingly straightforward relationship between the origins of traditions and the choices

of individuals. Ethnomusicologist Jeffrey Summit points out that while academic texts may offer historical reasons for why the Torah is chanted, when asked, the origins of tradition may not be the first point of reference for individuals. In contrast to historical reasons pointing to the origins of tradition, Summit's interviewees typically frame their decision to study cantillation of the Torah in terms of a personal connection to their community and its history, framing as personal agency something that has also been conceived in terms of communal obligation (Summit 2016, 7, 18). So too, in my own interviews with reciters of the Qur'an, while individuals may offer "traditional" explanations for why one might recite connecting to the status of the Qur'an within Islamic tradition, seemingly mundane details of everyday life or technical considerations of vocal techniques also emerge as important factors shaping decisions, such as passage to recite, or what recording one might prefer to listen to (Osborne 2016). This is not to say that "traditional" reasons are not relevant, but rather that considering ethics with respect to both textual traditions and as practices embedded in the everyday may reveal a more complex portrait of the ways in which religious traditions are enacted and reinterpreted in conversation with other facets of life.

How to Recite the Qur'an

The recitation of the Qur'an is conducted according to the rules of *tajwīd*, the body of rules governing correct pronunciations, including features such as correct points of articulation for Arabic letters, elisions, or specific pronunciations between certain combinations of letters, extension of certain syllables, where a reciter may or may not pause, conventions such as formulas that one should say when beginning to recite, and more general conventions of etiquette. This body of rules was codified by the tenth century CE, with the earliest complete works on the subject articulating in a single form rules that had likely been practiced earlier. The ostensible purpose behind these rules is for the reciter to produce the clearest and most beautiful oral rendition of the Qur'an, clearly representing the meaning of the text, and neither obscuring it or making it secondary in importance to other aspects of the sound (such as the melodic or emotional arcs of a recitation), or misrepresenting the meaning by pausing in an inappropriate location.

Notably, the melodic practices of Qur'an recitation are not specified by the rules of *tajwīd*. Instead, melodic conventions are most frequently taught orally. Most commonly, melodies follow the modal system of Arabic music, the *maqāmāt*. The use of pitch and melody in reciting the Qur'an is always improvised. Improvisation in a mode is in keeping with the performance styles and aesthetics of Arabic music. But there is also a larger point about Islamic theological ethics and the complex relationship between the Qur'an as divine word and musical practices. Music has a contested history within Islamic thought and practice, with it being seen as neutral in status at best, but often problematic in that it may be associated with practices or contexts that are forbidden or inappropriate, either in general or when mixed with religious practice specifically. In short, music is seen as a human-made system or practice, and the divine status of the Qur'an and its recitation makes it inappropriate to fix it to a human-generated practice (Nelson 1985).

The ethics of Qur'an recitation may be found in different sources, depending on how one understands ethics in this case. For the technical details in terms of the mechanics of recitation and memorization, *tajwīd* manuals abound, and thanks to the proliferation of global media, anyone with access to the Internet may find instructional websites, videos, or recordings freely available online. It is important to

note, however, that *tajwīd* manuals and even online resources are not typically used on their own, such that individuals may memorize and learn to recite the Qur'an in isolation. Rather, the tradition continues that the text is taught and transmitted in person from teacher to student, with manuals and other resources serving as guides or memory aids in part of this process.

Two of the most extensive considerations of theological ethics of recitation and memorization are from medieval authors. Sufi thinker Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111 CE) dedicated one volume of his *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*) to Qur'an recitation: *Kitāb Ādāb al-Tilāwa* ("The Book of Etiquette of Recitation") (Ghazzālī 1982). Shāfi'ī jurist al-Nawawi (d. 1277 CE) wrote a work on the etiquette of the Qur'an, including memorization and recitation, as well as other types of engagements and practices, *Al-Tibyān fī Ādāb Ḥamalat al-Qur'ān* ("Exposition of the Etiquette of Bearing the Qur'an") (al-Nawawī 2012). The word in al-Nawawi's title as "bearing" – *ḥamala* – generally refers to carrying something, and similarly to the English idiom "carrying a baby" can refer to pregnancy, and as it is used in this title, the term may refer to an individual "carrying" the Qur'an, in the sense that they have committed it to memory and it is contained within them in a figurative sense.

Neither medieval work outlines the details of recitation techniques such as the rules of *tajwīd*. Instead, each focuses on placing memorization and recitation within a broader ethical framework that connects to the traditional Islamic understanding of the Qur'an and its role in tradition. Al-Nawawi introduces his work with a section outlining the merit (*faḍīla*) of reciting and bearing the Qur'an, citing numerous accounts attesting to the eschatological rewards awaiting those who recite. Some accounts emphasize a connection between recitation and understanding, in that those who recite understand the content of the text and behave accordingly. While al-Nawawi's work on etiquette with the Qur'an is detailed, its framing indicates that the knowledge found therein should be applicable and meritorious for any believer, with a strong emphasis on the imperative to recite.

Al-Ghazali takes a contrasting approach in his work on the etiquette of recitation, however, even though both authors cite several of the same accounts or sayings attesting to the merits of recitation. The practical mechanics of recitation (the rules of *tajwīd*) are again omitted, but in this case they may be assumed as a premise or background for a more specialized readership. Al-Ghazali divides his ethics of recitation into "external rules" and "mental tasks." The external rules cover in quick succession basic ethics for any reciter, such as being in a state of ritual purity when reciting, but quickly move to a higher level, discussing the details of reciting the entire Qur'an at once, for example, or specifying how much of the Qur'an someone pursuing a Sufi path may recite at once. The mental tasks of Qur'an recitation then outline contemplative tasks to be pursued along with recitation, akin to stations of a Sufi mystical path, allowing greater access to inner meanings.

How to Cantillate the Torah

Although the origins of the Torah service are ancient, the system of notating the technical details of cantillation was not codified until the ninth century CE, with the earliest treatise on the accents of cantillation being attributed to Aaron ben Moses ben Asher (Summit 2016, 59–60, 189). The systems of ethics of reciting the Torah and Qur'an were codified much closer to one another in history than the disparate dates of their respective compositions would lead one to expect. The details of Torah cantillation rules resemble the rules of qur'anic *tajwīd* in terms of general themes and ideals, although there are significant

divergences, particularly with respect to the use of melody. The rules of cantillation help shape a coherent and clear rendition of the text, in order to clearly convey the correct meaning. In addition to the requirement of correct pronunciation of the Hebrew, the main features of the rules of cantillation include the use of accents or emphasis on certain syllables or words, and the use of *te'amim* – symbols written on the liturgical text that indicate which melodies should be used.

The discourse surrounding the use of melody and melodic rendition of the texts marks a significant divergence in the ethics of reciting between the Jewish and Islamic traditions. While the notation of *te'amim* still leaves some particularities of melody up to the cantor, suggestions of melody are notably absent from the rules of *tajwīd*. Melodic practices in reciting the Qur'an are exclusively taught orally, and always improvisatory in their rendition. Reciters are discouraged from "fixing" the text to particular melodies, as doing so would constitute an unacceptable mixing of human-made melodies with the divine word. Relatedly, the improvisatory nature of the melody may be said to also reflect the ideal relationship between melodic rendition of recitation to the words of the Qur'an. Ostensibly, the words must always be rendered clearly and drive the performance of the recitation; and correspondingly, melody should not become the driving force of the recitation at the expense of the divine word. Although clarity of text and meaning is the ideal in both traditions, the discourse surrounding and transmission of melodic practices is a significant difference between the ethics of reciting in Judaism and Islam, respectively, that relates to much broader historical and theological concerns in both traditions.

Memorization

Given the strong emphasis on orality in relation to divine revelation, the memorization of the Qur'an is considered to be especially meritorious. An individual who has memorized the entire text is referred to as a *ḥāfiẓ(a)*, literally meaning one who is preserving something. Not everyone who learns to recite necessarily memorizes the entire text, however. But in order to perform the five required daily prayers (*ṣalāt*), an individual must be able to recite in Arabic and from memory the first sura of the Qur'an and at least some other short suras. The most extensive treatment of the particular challenges and some of the pedagogical processes used in memorization may be found in Anna Gade's *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Qur'ān in Indonesia* (Gade 2004).

By contrast, in the Jewish tradition the Bible is recited from a scroll, with the physical object of the Torah scroll also taking on special significance in the Torah service. Liturgical scrolls, however, only indicate the consonants and notations indicating stress and melodies to be used, but do not include vowels, punctuation, or extended details on the rules of cantillation, so the reader must already be familiar with the material and the shorthand of cantillation markings (Jacobson 2017, 10). In this way, the scroll may serve as a memory aid but does not contain all of the information one would need in order to cantillate correctly without already knowing the text and its reading conventions. Written Qur'ans now always contain all vowels and notations indicating where *tajwīd* rules apply. Although a reciter must be knowledgeable about *tajwīd* rules, much more information is provided in a printed Qur'an as compared to a liturgical Torah scroll. That has not always been the case, however, as many have noted the earliest Qur'an manuscripts contain comparatively much less information, and some have cited this historical evidence in support of claiming an original orality to the Qur'an, that the earliest physical copies were likely memory aids. In part, the differences in the use of memory may stem from the broader understandings of these

texts within their traditions, with the Qur'an's strong claim to orality in relation to its aesthetics and to its preservation and dissemination. In this way, the imperative to memorize the Qur'an is not merely limited to contexts in which writing and written books were less widely available.

Current Trends and Possibilities for Future Research

The importance of memorization and recitation of the Qur'an in Islamic tradition is often cited as an example relating to orality as understood and practiced in the Islamic tradition more broadly. Although the imperative to memorize and recite the Qur'an looms large, it is by no means the only text that is transmitted orally through memorization and recitation. There is a small but growing body of literature focused on the oral transmission of hadith – the traditions or sayings most commonly attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that make up the main body of literature that forms the basis of ethical and legal traditions in Islam (with the Qur'an always being the primary source in name, but with ethical issues being treated more extensively and explicitly in the hadith). Orality and hadith transmission could be further studied in its role in the early development of Islam, for example, or in its continued practice in other historical contexts as well. Religious knowledge is often oral in nature in Islam, and further study of oral transmission and performance of Islamic texts and sayings could help fill in this understanding of Islamic epistemologies more broadly.

Currently, very little comparative work has been completed on ethics of reading, reciting, and memorizing across different religious traditions. A handful of recent works consider recitation practices within the frameworks of their respective traditions and contexts, comparative work – particularly in recitation practices in which there are historical and linguistic connections between traditions – is a desideratum in the fields of Religious Ethics and Religious Studies.

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CHAPTER 38

Pilgrimage

Albertus Bagus Laksana

Pilgrimage: Then and Now

Pilgrimage, understood broadly as a multifaceted tradition centered around the act of visiting a holy place (shrine) with religious or spiritual motivation, is an ancient practice found in all major religious traditions. And it is on the rise in our day (Coleman 2006). Old routes and shrines have continued to be popular, such as Camino de Santiago, Lourdes, the Holy Land, Mecca and Medina, Benares, and so forth, while new routes have been recently created, such as Camino Ignaciano in northern Spain, following in the footsteps of St Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556) who made an arduous journey of penitence and spiritual conversion along this route. In many parts of the Catholic world, Marian shrines are mushrooming, while the ancient ones continue to be packed with pilgrims. In the Islamic world, the canonical pilgrimage of the *hajj* and the non-canonical *umra* becoming even more attractive, with explosive numbers of pilgrims annually (never below 1 million) with the concomitant massive physical development of the cities of Mecca and Medina (Bianchi 2004), while local pilgrimage traditions are also mushrooming, from Morocco in the West to Indonesia in the East (Laksana 2014). The annual *arba'een* pilgrimage now draws more than 20 million pilgrims, not only Shīʿite Muslims but also Sunni Muslims and even Christians. In the decentralized Hindu tradition of pilgrimage, we find thousands of *tirthas* or sacred places, ranging from local shrines to major pilgrimage sites with international clientele, from a humble shrine in the Himalayas to a splendid mother temple in Besakih, on the slope of Mount Agung, on the Indonesian island of Bali (Lochtefeld 2010). In the Buddhist world, pilgrims continue to flock to various holy places, from the Vajrasana in Bodhgaya, considered to be a central holy place in Buddhism, to the Borobudur temple compound in Java and other smaller sites.

The rise of global pilgrimage is surely spurred by cheap travels and easier transportation and better facilities on the site, making faraway and remote sacred places easier to reach and the journey and visit more enjoyable, such as Hindu and Buddhist shrines in the remote Himalayas (Lochtefeld 2010). However, the phenomenon of pilgrimage continues to be very complex. In our time, the pilgrimage traditions have become so diversified, customized, and hybridized. We can find every style and form of doing the pilgrimage, from the traditional one that is physically arduous, to the tourist-style pilgrimage that combines religious or spiritual journey with modern leisure and travel. Scholars have begun talking about the new phenomenon of "secular pilgrimage" (Margry 2008). Furthermore, places associated with an ascetic journey of purification and meaning seeking, such as Santiago de Compostela,

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

continue to draw pilgrims of all kinds, from a couple on their honeymoon to a comedian in search of life's meaning (Frey 1998).

The complexity of modern pilgrimage is well-illustrated by the practice on Camino de Santiago. Although the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage has a strong religious foundation in Catholicism, it has been transformed in many ways. Here the original Catholic doctrine regarding sin and its remission and conversion endure, but we also find elements of transcendent spirituality, tourism, physical adventure, nostalgia, a place to grieve, and even esoteric initiation. For many, the Camino has served as a moment of deep union with nature, a vacation, an escape from the drudgery of the everyday, a spiritual path to the self and humankind, a social reunion, or a personal testing ground (Frey 1998).

Indeed pilgrimage has been a complex and unique phenomenon. Victor and Edith Turner, the pioneering figures in the anthropological study of pilgrimage, have pointed out that part of the enduring appeal of pilgrimage is the experience of liminality, that is, a moment where the structures of the normal society are left behind and a spontaneous new feeling of being united in a community (*communitas*) is born (Turner and Turner 1978). While acknowledging the innovativeness of Turner's seminal findings, contemporary scholars have moved beyond this Turnerian archetype of pilgrimage as a liminal moment that occurs across religious traditions and historical periods. These recent studies have been more attuned to the particularities of the theological or religious, historical, and cultural contexts of the pilgrimage in question. They notice different motives and dynamics, including contestations, involved in pilgrimage practice (Eade and Sallnow 2000). In our time, the practice of pilgrimage has become much more complex, customized, and hybrid in ways that reflect the particularities of our era, as shown by the Camino de Santiago. That is why, we find in the contemporary study of modern pilgrimage the term "intersecting journeys" to describe the meeting between different motives in the current phenomenon of pilgrimage (Badone and Roseman 2004).

As mentioned, local pilgrimage tradition is also mushrooming. In many places in Asia, this local practice is growing due to the fact that devotional and ascetic journey to a sacred place is emphasized by major Asian religious traditions as well as local indigenous traditions (Laksana 2014). This whole phenomenon is connected with the role of paradigmatic figures as well the power and spiritual attraction of natural or cosmic spaces. In many parts of the world, this phenomenon is part of everyday religion of the ordinary people and their communities. In Latin America, this popular pilgrimage would include veneration of Catholic saints, including Mary, that has become localized or acquired a national character as well, such as the veneration of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico and Our Lady of Charity in Cuba. In Muslim North Africa, veneration of local saints continues to be popular, while local pilgrimage in the African church has begun to gain scholarly attention as well after a long neglect (Mueller 2011).

In most major religions, pilgrimage is an important part of the tradition. In certain religions, such as Buddhism and Sikhism, the practice was initially met with hostility, but eventually it was to become an integral part of these religions. However, theological debate about the propriety of doing pilgrimage to tombs or shrines of saints can still be found, especially in Sunni Islam, where the contention can at times be so dramatic, resulting in violent vandalism such as the destruction of Muslim pilgrimage sites in Timbuktu, Mali, in 2012 (Laksana 2014). But in general, the debate between traditionalist and modernist Muslims on the propriety of doing pilgrimage has subdued significantly.

Narrative Framework and Moral Agency

The significance of pilgrimage in the framework of religious ethics is related to the question of moral agency: what kind of role does pilgrimage practice across religious traditions play in the formation of a moral subject? What kind of moral agency does pilgrimage help to form? Pilgrimage tradition in its broadest sense can be understood as a space of moral formation that helps people better understand various challenges of their moral world and to empower them in becoming a better moral self. The significance of pilgrimage can be related to all the major dimensions of religious ethics, such as the descriptive, normative, practical, fundamental, and meta-ethical dimensions (Schweiker 2005, 5–10). More particularly, it is within the framework of narrative theory in religious ethics and moral theology that the distinctive significance of pilgrimage in the moral formation of the self can be fleshed out. Understood generally, narrative theory is set against the disembodied universalist enlightenment style of moral reasoning. It does not start with abstract first principles, but with a particular story that is typically found or embodied in a community's tradition. This story contains the fundamental experience, beliefs, and values of the community regarding itself, the world and the cosmos, and God (Lucie-Smith 2007).

Within the framework of narrative theology, the human story is understood as a rich meeting place between concrete persons and divine revelation. Here morality is best understood not as abstract principles, but as part of a story (Lucie-Smith 2007, 5). Along this line, pilgrimage tradition has often served as a milieu in which people make deeper connections of their life stories with the narrative of the larger religious tradition as well as with the local communities. In the context of pilgrimage, those narratives become distinctive as they integrate particular Divine figures, paradigmatic persons or saints, sacred objects and place, as well as foundational and miraculous events, through a complex dynamic which in practice includes communal, ritual, embodied, and cosmic dimensions that enrich the formation of a moral self. In this regard, pilgrimage is a complex mode of piety that occurs in the intersection between the most private and personal aspect of one's life and the larger framework of his religious tradition and community.

In terms of moral agency, it can be argued that doing pilgrimage enhances one's personal well-being and moral agency (Ogletree 2005, 36–44). Pilgrimage often serves as a privileged time when pilgrims clarify their minds and enjoy a moment of inner peace, especially in cases of spiritual darkness and moral confusion. The deep spiritual experience of pilgrimage energizes the will in cases of moral and spiritual paralysis. Doing pilgrimage helps pilgrims achieve a sense of personal wholeness and cure. Pilgrimage to Santiago, for example, has been practiced as the therapy of route (Frey 1998). In many settings, pilgrimage experience also puts the pilgrims in closer contact with the larger community, and thus helping create a kind of communal moral agency. That is why shrines typically play a role in the identity formation of the local and translocal communities.

On the personal level and in response to different kinds of crisis (personal, marital, professional), a short pilgrimage visit to a local shrine, which is accessible on an almost daily basis, and where pilgrimage can be done in the midst of everyday activity, tends to become a habit of the heart, rather than a memorable one-time journey to a faraway dream shrine. The dynamics of this type of pilgrimage might be related to virtue ethics, namely, the effort to live more meaningfully every day through the cultivation of virtues. Here, pilgrimage is perhaps not to be understood primarily as an extraordinary act of piety, but rather a small yet crucial part of a habitual mode of cultivating spiritual virtues for a good life. Those

virtues include perseverance, simplicity, solitude, constant spiritual awareness, companionship, connection with nature, inner peace and tranquility, authenticity, and so forth. As a place of the formation of the self, pilgrimage has an ascetic dimension that often attracts pilgrims of our time. It involves intense spiritual moments helped by physical hardships, where pilgrims undergo a period of self-questioning and spiritual discernment.

The other important feature of pilgrimage tradition, which is relevant to the formation of moral self and agency, is the distinctive role of paradigmatic figures both of the larger religious tradition and local communities. Pilgrimage tradition is a privileged place where the life stories and role of these figures are narrated, reinvented, and reenacted in the rituals of the shrines, as well as in the lives of the community and the pilgrims. Spiritual connection with these figures is considered important, maintained among others through the cultivation and continuation of the narrative of the virtuous life of these figures in rituals and festivals around the shrine. In many local pilgrimage traditions, the role of the life's narrative of the paradigmatic figures tends to be understood not only in the sense of being moral exemplars, but rather in connection with the communal ritual and spatial framework where the power of the saints goes beyond the rightness of the actions but has more to do with their continued spiritual presence and intercessory power. This presence and power are also related to the idea of saints as founders and protectors of the community, even the larger community of the nation, as shown by the role of Maulay Idris as the patron saint of the Moroccan city of Fez, Our Lady of Guadalupe in the formation of Mexican identity, Our Lady of Charity in the case of Cuban Catholic identity, Rachel in the Jewish Israeli national identity, and so forth. In this case, pilgrimage to the sites of these figures is ritual enactment of the narrative of the community's origin and identity.

This dynamic occurs often when a society or nation is in a "societal liminality," that is, a cultural upheaval when old symbols and metaphors became insufficient and the new ones have not yet crystallized, which led to new rituals. Pilgrimage tradition with its rich rituals can be seen as a way to interpret this moment by putting it in connection with the sacred history of the community, thus enabling the community to make sense of it and regain moral agency at a time of crisis and confusion. This is so, especially when aspects of the biography of the paradigmatic figure or saint corresponds to the current situation (Sered 1998).

However, this dynamic can be more complex, for it often involves different communities, both in conflicting situations where different groups are competing for support and legitimacy through a particular shrine or pilgrimage site, as well as in the more peaceful situation where different groups share a common pilgrimage site in a harmonious way. In the first case, a group of pilgrims who belong to the same social class and grouping is collectively empowered in a special way in relation to the practice of doing the pilgrimage, including the rituals and symbolisms or other aspects of the pilgrimage tradition. In this regard, it has to be noted that the nature of pilgrimage tradition is rich and open-ended; that a particular group's strong sense of being empowered can happen within a hierarchical or rivalrous social system. In other words, the opposite social group can have the same experience as well. Contestations and competing claims can be found in one pilgrimage site.

In the case of shared shrines, different religious loyalties are performed by pilgrims to the site where the saints or paradigmatic figures are venerated by diverse religious communities. Here the claims and values of these diverse communities may not always be in conflict with each other but rather intersecting in some ways (cf. Cuffel 2003; Sikand 2003; Gottschalk 2001). Based on the case of a shared shrine of Haider Shaikh, a Muslim saint in the town of Marlekotla, Punjab, Bigelow calls this "ethics of harmony"

(Bigelow 2004, 5). The significance of this particular shrine should be understood in the context of the history of the place where they resisted the bloodshed during the Partition of India in 1947 and maintained peace and harmony. It should be noted that Merlekotla is a predominantly Muslim town in a Sikh majority state and a Hindu majority nation. This ethics of harmony between different groups is maintained through rituals, narrative, and regulatory practices around the shared holy figure and his shrine that also guide and structure social, political, religious, and economic exchanges between Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus in Marlekotla. This case shows how shrines serve as symbolic centers where the community's idealized identity and ethics may be enacted and grounded in the particularity of a place with their paradigmatic figures and narratives. Shrines and their stories become a discursive space for the plural communities to produce this ethics of harmony. The narrative of the saint, Haider Shaikh, has the power to boost the moral agency of different religious communities together, helping to forge a deeper sense of unity, peace, and solidarity, not through abstract moral values, but rather values that are embodied and becoming part of the community's self-understanding (Bigelow 2004).

In the more complicated world like ours, though, this ethics of harmony around a shared shrine might be in a fierce and at times bloody competition with contrasting visions of different groups in the larger society. For example, various shared shrines in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, have served as a space of harmony for generations, where the religious practice was inclusive and hybrid by incorporating local realities and cultures, drawing pilgrims from different religious persuasions (Laksana 2014, 2015). But this area now has become more complex with the presence of more radical religious groups with their iconoclastic ideologies. In recent years, there have been cases of vandalism of some sacred tombs of paradigmatic figures. Other shrines in Libya, Tunisia, and Mali have suffered the same fate. In 2002, during the Gujarat riots, many Muslim shrines in Punjab were destroyed, precisely due to their shared nature. In the context of this contestation, these shared shrines and their communities are challenged to maintain this ethics in a real way. Thus, its unique power might be more visible.

Cosmic Dimension

For some time now, we have heard lamentation against the disenchantment of the world brought about by modernity, as well as the longing for the re-enchantment (Brown 2005; Bennet 2001). In the area of ethics, there has been a plea to return to "a cosmos of personalized interactions within and between various levels of being that are ordered in ways that are rich with moral significance" as well as a longing for a primary religio-ethical cosmology that can be discerned through a direct experiential interaction with the natural world (Reynolds and Schofer 2005, 126–127). It is believed that aesthetic experience of the natural world boosts ethical agency as it helps create the right mood or landscape of affect for ethical decision and action. And this cosmological interaction is one of the most salient hallmarks of pilgrimage tradition in many world religions, as well as local religious traditions. Thus, the significance of pilgrimage tradition for ethics can be more clearly seen through the category of cosmology.

In ethical cosmology, the order of the universe has a religio-ethical implication on how humans behave in relation to the Divine, his own self, his fellow human beings and other creatures and the whole natural world, and how human beings organize themselves in communities. In this regard, pilgrimage in many religious traditions is closely connected to religious cosmology that has deep implications for ethics. The creation of pilgrimage sites typically involves a movement from a mere neutral space to a place laden

with meaning, where the shrine's spatial location is put in the larger sacred cosmic landscape of the area (Feldhaus 2003). At the origin of a pilgrimage site, there is always a role played by the narrative of the community, where cosmological beliefs regarding the meaning of the place and foundational event form an integral part. Due to this cosmological framework of sacredness, pilgrims conduct themselves differently in this area. In general, pilgrimage tradition and shrine culture, including its narratives, myths, rituals, material, and spatial symbolisms, serve as a place where cosmological insights have been conveyed, developed, appropriated, and reenacted by communities and individuals. At the shrine, the self of the pilgrim is a connected self, a communing self with "clouds of witnesses" (saints, pious ancestors) who are still part of the larger cosmic reality and interact with the natural and human world.

In the Christian theological parlance, the more specific role of cosmology can also be thought of in terms of "sacramentality." Sacramentality is a theological framework in which it is possible and desirable to enjoy the real presence of God as it is mediated by created realities in their materiality and particularities, as opposed to limiting God's presence in purely spiritual realm. In this framework, every created thing in the cosmos has the capability to be a real sign and container of God's presence. Things are sacramental, and pilgrimage tradition and saint veneration are imbued with this deeply sacramental worldview (Goizueta 2004). The framework of sacramentality leads to the appreciation of bodily experience, embodiment, materiality, and so forth.

In an age where it is increasingly more difficult for humans to appreciate bodily or sensory experience, pilgrimage practice across religious traditions stands out in its power to help humans to regain their full humanity. The undervalued and untrained bodies will hamper us in the world of action, and under this condition ethical life is impoverished and imperiled. With its integral cosmology, pilgrimage tradition helps us redefine our vision of humanity and its relationship with the universe and the natural world. Pilgrimage tradition springs from a religious encounter with the Divine mediated by embodied sainthood, materiality of the sacred, and sacramentality of the natural world. Scholars have identified the integral cosmological framework as the cultural home of many practices of popular religion, including the veneration of saints and the pilgrimage tradition (Goizueta 2004). The flourishing of pilgrimage tradition depends on the cultivation of this cosmology where God, humans (individuals and community), and the natural world interact with one another, where the experience of God cannot be reduced to the realm of inner self. Rather, this is a cosmology where the self has to cultivate its relationship with God and nature in order to be a full self, where God's presence is found in the natural world, the self, and the community, and the many connections between all these three. Again, this cosmological framework of the pilgrimage tradition helps form a more capable and balanced moral self. Contemporary ethicists have started talking about the cosmic good (Scheid 2016). For this to happen, there is the need to reconnect the humans with the natural world on the deeper level. And the pilgrimage tradition has something to offer due to its cosmological dimension.

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CHAPTER 39

Meditation as an Ethical Practice

Georges B. Dreyfus

> We have to cure our faults by attention and not by will.
> Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace,* 105.

Object of the Study

Meditation is often viewed as an activity irrelevant to ethics. This supposedly non-ethical character of meditation is celebrated by some as going beyond the limited categories of good and evil. Though referring here mostly to a popular misunderstanding of meditation, this view is not absent from the scholarly literature, where the goal of Buddhist traditions is sometime described as "beyond good and evil" (Horner 1950). Within the framework of these particular traditions, such a description makes sense, but it does not represent an adequate theoretical statement on the non-ethical nature of meditation and its goal. These statements, which are mostly pragmatic and performative, should not be mistaken as meta-ethical descriptions of the ethical nature or, rather, lack thereof, of the practices of these traditions.

Others view this perceived amorality with great suspicion, tying meditation to the modern culture of self-discovery, which, for them, displays an exaggerated sense of self-involvement and a narcissism deleterious to moral life. Whether they are right or not, one thing needs to be emphasized: it is a serious mistake to assume that the practice of meditation in modern culture reflects the "nature" of meditation in general. Meditation cannot be understood as being just a technique whose meaning remains independent of the cultural context in which it is practiced. Meditation is a technique of the self, in the sense that Foucault (1988, 16–49) has delineated, and we will come back to this point. This is quite different from the crude instrumental understanding often displayed by the modern practice of meditation. For a critique of the modern mindfulness movement, see Wilson (2014).

In this entry, some of the ethical aspects of Tibetan Buddhist meditations are explored. It should be clear that in examining the ethical nature of meditation, we are not interested in extolling the value of meditation. The point is not that meditation is good, but that ethical concepts are relevant to the development of a theoretical understanding of meditation. We believe there is a difficulty in modern academical study of Buddhism to address meditation adequately. Whereas we seem to find little problem to describe the myths, rituals, and narratives of Buddhist tradition, we seem to find it much more difficult to explain meditation in terms that are accessible to the educated public. When speaking about meditation, our usual conceptual

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

overflow dries up and we are reduced to using either emic terms or general concepts such as mysticism or religious experience. These terms are not necessarily false, but are certainly limited. These remarks address the common understanding of mysticism and leave out the more sophisticated views (De Certeau 1982). They tend to reinforce the stereotypes of meditation as alien, oriental, and as a part of "eastern religious practices." Viewing meditation as a mystical activity or a "religious experience" removes meditation from the activities of daily life, isolating it into a possibly glorious but unbreakable isolation. Anyone who knows how meditation is actually practiced in Buddhist traditions, which is the focus of this entry, will realize how unfortunate and inadequate this understanding is.

To set the discussion on firm ground, we will limit ourselves to looking at the way in which meditation is practiced by Tibetan Buddhists and how this reveals its ethical character. Although it might be possible to make a few general statements about meditation, we hold that meditation is a practice that takes place in particular contexts from which it can hardly be divorced. Meditation is not a disembodied phenomenon that is identical regardless of how, when, where, and by whom it is practiced. To avoid the fallacy of decontextualization, we will limit our impressionistic comments to the practice of meditation as taught in the *lam rim* (Gradual Stages of the Path) literature of Tibetan Buddhism.

This type of text was introduced in an early form to Tibet in the eleventh century by the Indian teacher Atisha. His work, *The Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment and its Explanation* (Atisha/author name 1969), *byang chub lam gyi sgron me dan de'i bka' 'grel* (Dharamsala: The Tibetan Publishing House, 1969) became the model for a genre of Tibetan Buddhist literature, which later became known as *lam rim,* describing a large range of meditations preliminary to the practice of Tantra. This literature is particularly significant for our purpose. It represents a basic view of Buddhist practice which is widely accepted in Tibet, both among lay population and *virtuosi*. It is practiced by all the contemporary schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Moreover, its views resonate with the understanding of other Buddhist traditions, particularly Theravāda, which share a similar gradualist approach. Although the *lam rim* literature is Mahayanist, its framework includes the practices found in Nikaya Buddhist traditions as well. The term "Nikaya Buddhism" is meant to designate the traditions such as Theravåda which are depicted by Mahāyāna traditions as Hinayāna, while avoiding the loaded connotation of this term. Hence, several of our conclusions will be applicable to other Buddhist traditions.

Even when meditation is seen as relevant to the ethical domain, the relation between meditation and ethics remains external. In the Buddhist tradition, ethics, *śīla,* is mostly understood in terms of injunctions, such as the five precepts emphasized by the Theravāda tradition, or the ten virtues emphasized by the Tibetan tradition. The five precepts are an undertaking to abstain from: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, taking intoxicants. The ten virtues are: the former first four, plus abstention from slanderous, harsh or frivolous speech, abstention from covetousness, malevolence and false views (Keown 1992, 29–32). Many Buddhist writers have described how respecting moral rules is basic to the practice of meditation. The importance of this type of morality for the overall tradition is well illustrated by the anecdotal fact that Radio Sri Lanka starts every day with the taking of the five lay precepts. More preoccupied by practical considerations, these authors have emphasized the preliminary or auxiliary value of *śīla* with respect to meditation. H. Saddhatissa's statement that "the precepts were never ends in themselves, confined to the mundane level, but were the essential preliminaries, as also the permanent accompaniments, to the attaining to the Highest State" is fairly typical of the limited view of ethics in Buddhism (Saddhatissa 1970, 113). Many modern scholars have recognized the fundamental role of *śīla*

within the tradition. Following the statements of Buddhist thinkers, these scholars have tended, however, to see the role of *śīla* as preliminary. They have concluded that ethics play only a limited role within the Buddhist tradition.

In another essay some of the reasons for this distorted view of the place of ethics in Buddhist practice have been explored (Dreyfus 1995). Here we just need to realize that to understand the ethical nature of meditation we need a broader ethical model, in which ethics is not reduced to a kind of informed consumer's choice, but includes both internal and external domains of our lives. Internal emotions must be seen as fully relevant to the moral character of a person. It is true that we cannot be obliged to have certain attitudes toward our fellow human beings. It does not follow from this that these attitudes are irrelevant to ethical life, rather but that ethical life cannot be reduced to the domain of obligations and injunctions. In order to appreciate the ethical character of meditation, we need ethical models that transcend the dualism of most contemporary ethics, that overcome the divide between reason and emotion, activity and passivity, and that include the whole range of human endeavor, both internal and external, within the purview of ethics (Blum 1980).

How to Understand the Ethical Nature of Meditation

As several contemporary thinkers have emphasized, a richer picture of ethics can be found in the ancient Greeks' views, particularly those of Aristotle and the eudaimonic tradition. Following this tradition, our attention shifts away from the notions of obligation and choice to that of goodness. Ethics is to be understood as being about the good life, that is, the life oriented toward a good end. This *telos* is *eudaimonia,* that is, human flourishing and well-being, in which the good is a whole made up of interlocking parts, forms of activity, internal and external, in accordance with the practice of certain virtues. Philosophically informed Buddhist scholars have begun to realize the importance of virtue ethics (the view of ethics as being about the good life in accordance with the practice of virtues) and teleological models for the understanding of ethics in Buddhist traditions. Some of them have tended to assimilate Buddhist ethics to an Aristotelean perspective (Keowan 1992). The point here is not to cast aspersion on this approach but simply to emphasize that the use of a virtue ethics model does not necessarily imply an adherence to Neo-Aristotleanism. There have been many teleological systems that were not Aristotlean. The Hellenistic ethical systems, for example, offer examples of virtue ethics that are teleological without being Aristotlean.

The goal of the Buddhist tradition, freedom from negative emotions, resembles that of many Hellenistic philosophers, freedom from disturbance. Moreover, like Hellenistic philosophies, Buddhist views emphasize the importance of certain virtues, detachment and compassion, which are both therapeutic and constitutive of the good. Buddhism is practical in the highest degree, holding that the value of philosophy is not theoretical but lies in its ability to transform humans. Virtues are not meant to just remedy some deficiency or resist some temptation, but to achieve a transformation of the person. Hence, both these traditions offer examples of teleological views that clearly differ from Aristotleanism, despite being virtue ethics.

The ethical views of the *lam rim* tradition fall in this category of virtue ethics. It does not provide a complete view of the "good," but presents a broad model of Buddhist goals and practices. The *lam rim* leaves out goals in the domains that are not explicitly connected with Buddhist soteriological goals,

such as economico-political life (*artha*) and the life of sensuous and artistic enjoyment (*kamā*), which are described in traditional Indian culture as possible goals of a healthy human life. Hindu tradition describes four goals, the other two being the domains of norms and behavior (*dharma* in the Hindu sense), and liberation (*mokṣa*). See Bary (1958). Its literature describes Buddhist practice as aiming at three types of "good." On a lower level is the attainment of a good rebirth through the practice of moral precepts. This goal is traditionally taken by laity in Buddhist societies, and is considered by the *lam rim* to be limited. On the middling level is Arhathood, the state of a person liberated from the causes of suffering, the negative emotions (*nyon mongs, klesha*). On the highest level is Buddhahood, the state of a person having reached the perfection of knowledge and compassionate activities. This is the goal emphasized by the *lam rim* tradition, and which corresponds to its Mahayanist perspective.

It is clear from this description that the *lam rim* tradition offers a teleological model. It posits certain goals to Buddhist practice which are reached by the development of certain excellencies that are constitutive of them. Although the goals posited are different, they all share in certain fundamental virtues that constitute the good life, summarized as being a life of compassionate detachment. In this broader picture of ethics, the whole of Buddhist practice becomes ethically relevant. Meditation in particular becomes central to ethical life, understood as the development of the virtues or excellences constitutive of human flourishing that is the goal of the Buddhist tradition. It is in the practice of meditation that the central virtues of the tradition, detachment, and compassion, are developed. Hence, far from being irrelevant to Buddhist ethics, meditation turns out to be central.

This is obviously not to say that the practice of Buddhist ethics requires that of meditation. Meditation is usually reserved in traditional Buddhism to religious *virtuosi* such as monks and nuns. Although the separation between these highly trained specialists and laity is more blurred in modernity (Bond 1988), the average person in Buddhist societies still never practices meditation. However, values central to the life of many Buddhists, such as compassion and certain forms of detachment manifested in giving, are related to the practice of meditation. According to the understanding of many Buddhists, these virtues can be fully developed only through the practice of meditation. Hence, meditation is central to a full understanding of Buddhist ethics, even for the majority, who will never engage personally in any meditation.

Meditation and Virtue

To develop a rich picture of the ethical role of meditation, we will have to analyze more closely the nature of meditation, and its relation to the development of virtues. In the Theravāda tradition, meditation is described as *bhāvanā*, that is, cultivation or development. In Tibetan Buddhism, meditation is called *sgom,* a word derived from the verb *goms,* to become accustomed. Meditation is a practice that aims at a process of self-transformation, in a cultivation of the desirable traits of one's character. Certain nefarious habits due to the domination of negative emotions, such as attachment, are transformed and gradually eliminated. Hence, meditation can be described as a process of becoming accustomed to and developing virtues such as concentration, mindfulness, detachment, compassion, etc., as well as an attempt to uproot internal negative obstacles to the good life.

At this juncture, two questions arise: what is the nature of virtue developed by meditation, and what are the particular virtues that meditation develops? There is no exact equivalent to the word "virtue" in the *lam rim* literature. The closest term is probably *dge ba'i chos (kusala dharma*), that is, virtuous quality. The practice of meditation is virtuous in as much as they lead the self and others to happiness and well-being. In the Theravāda tradition, the Abhidharma provides lists of virtuous qualities, such as the five faculties (*indriya, dbang po*), which are: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. They are mental faculties to be developed by the practitioner, which lead to the development of liberating insight. The *lam rim* literature also refers to this type of list. Its central classification of virtue is different, however, for it emphasizes the central importance of the six perfections (*pāramitā*). The list is divided into two types of virtues. The first group constitutes virtues such as giving, ethics, and patience, which are described by the tradition as belonging to the method (*thabs, upāya*) aspect of the path, directed by compassion toward the welfare of others and leading to the development of the embodied aspect of Buddhahood. These virtues, which are part of the collection of merits (*punya, bsod nams*), are other-regarding in that they concern our relations with other beings. The second group is constituted by the self-oriented virtues, such as wisdom. These virtues, which take part in the collection of gnosis (*jñāna, ye shes*), concern our way of apprehending reality and lead to the development of the cognitive aspect of Buddhahood.

These two types of virtue resemble the usual distinction between emotional and cognitive virtues. The first three virtues are driven by compassion and imply a positive altruistic attitude toward other beings. Wisdom, on the other hand, is more cognitive. It brings about insight into the selfless nature of things, thus removing obstacles such as selfishness and attachment. Wisdom is not only insight into the selfless nature of reality, it is also the practical intelligence that is required by the practice of other virtues.

The Role of Attention

But what is the role of meditation in the development of these virtues? The *lam rim* tradition distinguishes two types of meditation: meditation of stabilization (*'jog sgom*) and meditation of investigation (*dpyad sgom*). This distinction is broader than the distinction made by most Buddhist traditions (Tibetan included), that between tranquility (*samatha, gzhi gnas*) and insight (*lhag mthong*). It is puzzling that many Theravåda scholars insist that insight is a specialty of this tradition. Insight is widely discussed and practiced in Tibetan Buddhist traditions as well as in several schools of East-Asian Buddhism. Meditation of stabilization involves a fixation of the attention on a single object, often one's breath or a visualized object. When the mind has reached a minimal level of calm and focus, the meditator has the choice between continuing to keep her attention on a single object, or opening the focus of her attention onto more than one object. The first type is a practice of concentration that leads to the development of tranquility. The second category, investigative meditation, is extremely broad, for it includes all the meditative exercises that are not single-pointed, such as the practice of insight, loving kindness, the recollection of the Buddha's virtues, or the meditation on death.

Among the two types of meditation, the *lam rim* tradition emphasizes the latter type. Investigative meditation, such as meditation on compassion or selflessness, is more important, because it is directly relevant to the practice of the path. In ethical terms, such a practice contributes directly to the development

of virtues. But concentration is also relevant in that it develops the attention without which the development of virtues would remain limited. Concentration is particularly important in the development of wisdom, which grows out of the practice of special insight. To reach insight, the practitioner must first develop a high level of concentration. Only when the mind is powerfully focused, can she develop the sharp vision of reality that is required to develop wisdom.

What all these meditations have in common is the development of attention, which is understood in Buddhist traditions to have an essential role in ethics. Its importance can be understood at several levels. At the simplest level, a person needs to be attentive in order to be ethical. A distracted person fails to see that a situation requires a particular course of action. The contribution of attention to the practice of ethics, however, goes much further than this simple requirement that one not be absent-minded. This is so because in most cases, our difficulty in behaving ethically does not come from cognitive difficulties, at least understood in the ordinary sense of the word. The cases in which we are genuinely puzzled do exist, but they are relatively rare. In most cases, our problem does not come from a lack of information, but from an emotional inability to see the ethically relevant features of a situation (DeSouza 1980, 127–151). For example, we see a homeless person. We know that this person is in trouble. We also know that we could help this person, but that would involve some trouble. We decide to remain uninvolved. This decision is not due to a cognitive deficit, but to an emotional inability to overcome our fear leading to an inability to feel strongly enough for the person. This fear and indifference lock us into a certain vision in which we focus on the aspects of the situation that threaten us. This prevents us from considering other perspectives, particularly the ethically salient aspects of the situation, the fact that a fellow human being requires help that we can provide. In particular, this precludes us from engaging in what Strawson (1974) describes as "the range of reactive feelings and attitudes that belong to involvement or participation with others in inter-personal human relationships."

It is here that the type of attention developed by meditation becomes particularly relevant. Most forms of Buddhist meditation rest on the development of a form of attention usually described as mindfulness (*dran pa, smṛti*). It is the type of attention that we use when we focus on whatever appears to our mental or physical senses. When we are mindful, we are alive to the situation that unfolds in us and outside of us without identifying ourselves with the situation. This ability to detach ourselves from the immediate emotional reactions to the situation allows the mindful person to notice the homeless person as well as his reluctance to help him. The *lam rim* tradition insists on the centrality of this quality, which allows us to be aware of our attitudes and emotions.

Mindfulness is central to the development of a good life within the Buddhist tradition. It is the basic attitude that allows the practitioner to develop other forms of meditation, which as we have seen lead to the development of emotional and cognitive virtues. Mindfulness bridges the gap between domains that are often kept apart in modern ethics, such as activity and passivity. As both a state of heightened receptivity as well as a starting point for further action, mindfulness is both active and passive. Mindfulness also brings together emotion and cognition, acting as the basis of both, and thereby enabling and keeping together these aspects of the human psyche.

Mindfulness is directly relevant to the development of basic moral sensitivity. If we go back to our example, we can see that the development of mindfulness would have helped us to deal with the situation more appropriately. It would have given us the awareness of the emotional obstacles, here fear and indifference, that prevented us from helping a fellow human being. It would have allowed us to notice the limitations of our perception, and shift to another more compassionate perspective. Langer (1989, 137–173)

contrasts mindlessness, a capacity-fixing ability that tends to be rigid and inflexible, and mindfulness, a creative and capacity-increasing faculty that enables us to see the limitations of categories and contexts. Being mindless, however, we were carried away by our emotions. We were led to act unethically, not because we did not know what needed to be done, but because we were unable to resist our impulses. We walked away from the homeless person displeased with our inability to help and yet unable to do anything else.

Buddhist meditation is meant to address this type of problem. At a higher level, it is meant to modify these powerful emotions by eradicating self-grasping, their root. More immediately, though, the practice of meditation is meant to develop mindfulness. This basic virtue, which enables us to develop wisdom, is ethically relevant, for it helps us to gain some awareness and freedom from our emotions. This increases our ability to deal more effectively with negative emotions and develop positive ones. When it is well developed, mindfulness brings our emotions into focus very quickly, and we become almost immediately aware of our responses. This is quite important, for emotions such as fear develop gradually in our minds. Because we usually lack attention, we do not notice this process until these emotions dominate our minds. At this stage, it is often too late to do very much, for we are trapped by these emotions. The more we try to overcome them, the more we become entangled in them. Attention helps us, because it brings these emotions into focus right from the start. At this point, they are still weak patterns that are starting to set the tone without yet being dominant. Being attentive, we notice them and this may enable us to bring about other emotional responses. For example, instead of feeling fear and indifference, we become sympathetic to the plight of the homeless person. This in turn, allows us to open ourselves to this person.

A Few Misunderstandings

Although attention is essential to the development of a good life in the Buddhist tradition, it would be a great mistake to consider it as some kind of panacea. The development of attention and mindfulness do not ensure that our attitudes and actions will be ethical. Attention brings about a certain connectedness to the situation, but this connection is not inherently good. We can become engaged in an object that we are about to destroy. The ethical character of attention cannot be appraised in isolation from the overall framework of the practice in which we are involved. A related point is well made Gimello (1983, 61–88). In this example, attention becomes good only because it allows us to develop a more ethically informed attitude. Such an attitude is not just the result of attention, but depends on the moral education provided by traditions. It is because we have been made aware that helping is good that we can develop the appropriate virtues.

Another misperception is to see attention as providing an immediate and certain access to our mental states. This is again a mistake. The point in developing attention is not that by being mindful we unfailingly understand our emotions. The understanding of mental life gained through attention is not a direct knowledge by acquaintance. For example, we do not become aware of anger just by mere acquaintance with our mental states. The awareness that we are angry at somebody depends on a number of concepts and information that we have about that person. Thus, when we become aware of our anger, we are not directly noticing some kind of autonomous mental factor going on in our mind, like a fish swimming in a pond. Rather, we become aware of an emotional aspect of the global situation. This in turn allows us to pay some attention to this aspect, rather than being driven blindly by it. Only the forms of attention that

enable us to develop emotional virtues, such as compassion, and cognitive virtues, such as wisdom are virtuous. Attention is sufficient in the Buddhist tradition only when it becomes detached and compassionate. Then, it does embody the central virtues that make for the good life. It is only within the larger framework of a tradition that meditation is an ethical practice.

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CHAPTER 40

Asceticism and Self-Cultivation

Niki Kasumi Clements

In *Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche notoriously describes the historical development of "that other 'somber thing,' the consciousness of guilt, the 'bad conscience'" (Nietzsche 1989, II.4). He extols the Arcadian freedom of "the noble" – "he who is by nature 'master,' he who is violent in act and bearing" – as honestly expressing the human instinct to conquer and dominate (Nietzsche 1989, II.17). The fall into the "bad conscience" comes with "the ascetic priest" who is physically weak and so must redirect his dominating instinct against others through cunning manipulation and "spiritual revenge" (Nietzsche 1989, II.2). Nietzsche declares: "an ascetic life is a self-contradiction: here rules a *ressentiment* without equal, that of an insatiable instinct and power-will that wants to become master not over something in life but over life itself" (Nietzsche 1989, III.11). Nobles conquer others, as ascetics conquer the vitality of life.

Despite this perversion, Nietzsche also recognizes the ascetic as productive precisely through their self-vitiation, coming to shape subjectivity at the intersection of physical weakness and psychological cunning:

> All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* – this is what I call the *internalization* [*Verinnerlichung*] of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his "soul."
>
> (Nietzsche 1989, II.16)

Ascetics redirect dominating instincts inwards, negating the domination Nietzsche considers definitional for being human. This ascetic disciplining then renders the human being an "interesting animal" (Nietzsche 1989, I.6) who manipulates others into sharing constructions of "good" and "evil."

In a fascinating tension, ascetics negate their own vitality through self-denying practices, while also forging internal mechanisms that enable the productive regulation of subjects and society. As Tyler Roberts argues, "Nietzsche's writing does not reject but refigures asceticism" (Roberts 1996, 404). Ascetic mechanisms include not only world-denying forces of vitiation but also world-making forces of production. While Nietzsche's ascetics deny their own virility, they cunningly affirm an interiority (the "soul") regulated by moral injunctions and shape society in their life-subjugating image. Nietzsche critically transvalues modern morality, while also recognizing the productive side of asceticism. Even his invective suggests the intersection between vitiation and formation, subjection and production, asceticism and

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

cultivation. We can consider here not only constructions of power in asceticism (Valantasis 1995), but also constructions of ethics in asceticism (Clements 2020).

Analyzing asceticism in relation to cultivation involves Elizabeth Clark's attention to "what ascetics give up and what they get, in various particular historical situations" (Clark 1999, 15). Cultural and historical contexts shape constructions of asceticism that refuse transhistorical definition, as Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis's *Asceticism* volume shows, even as common themes cross traditions (Wimbush and Valantasis 2002). Dialectics of divestment and cultivation attend constructions of asceticism, so to flatten asceticism to renunciation is to misunderstand its force. For this entry on asceticism and self-cultivation, three currents in the construction of asceticism are analyzed, while countering flattening oppositions. Next, three sociocultural contexts are presented in (a) early China, (b) the late ancient Mediterranean, and (c) the contemporary United States, as diverse case studies that challenge such oppositions. Finally, features common to accounts of asceticism and self-cultivation are delimited, while recognizing their embeddedness in political, social, and economic contexts.

Ascetic Currents

Academic discourses of asceticism have increasingly analyzed cultural practices of restriction and production – and of divestment and cultivation – as potential sites for embodied critical engagement with social practices and norms. In the United States, scholarly attention to asceticism relies on the discourses of practice (Bourdieu 1990), power (Foucault 1997, 1990a), and performativity (Butler 1997) that include bodily *habitus*, productive forms of discipline, and iterative social signifying practices. Scholars in the study of religion continue to advance constructions of asceticism in three main currents: as a practice or technology of the self, as a historically-embedded phenomenon, and as an ideological apparatus. This section establishes how these currents intersect with three unproductive oppositions, including "Eastern" vs. "Western"; pagan vs. Christian antiquity; and individualism vs. ideology.

"Eastern" versus "Western"

Discourses on asceticism include formal features such as "practices of self-discipline – both bodily and spiritual – by which relations between nature, culture, and self are articulated and enacted, transformed and performed" (Roberts 1998, 89), "any act of self-denial undertaken as a strategy of empowerment or gratification" (Harpham 1988, xiii), and "a form of conduct" or "action that is an end in itself (not instrumental) but is not in itself (spontaneously) good" (Khawaja 2016, 61). Sarah Coakley describes how "ascetic formation ... involves a demanding integration of intellectual, spiritual and bodily practice over a lifetime" (Coakley 2015, 18). Asceticism involves deliberate practices of bodily, affective, and intellectual discipline and the divestment of particular worldly values in pursuit of a desired end. Scholarly focus on renunciation and denial sometimes relies on oppositions between "Eastern self-cultivation and Western asceticism" (Yuasa 1993, 97), where renunciatory practices in Christianity and its "Western" inheritors contrast with practice-based forms of ethical cultivation in traditions like Confucianism and Daoism. Yet just as asceticism and cultivation might not be opposed, neither too should orientalizing constructions of "Eastern" and "Western."

Pagan versus Christian Antiquity

Such characterizations relate to the scholarly construction of asceticism as stressing a "particular set of beliefs and practices that erupted into high visibility during the early Christian era" (Harpham 1987, xi). Two polarized narratives attend this construction: in one, Christian asceticism is a decline from pagan forms of life; in the other, Christian asceticism offers liberation from "a sensuous and licentious antiquity" (Behr 2000, 2). Oppositions between pagan and Christian paint the latter's focus on abstinence or restriction in alimentary and sexual practices as a renunciatory departure from the former's "inner activities of the thought and the will" (Hadot 1995, 128). Paul Veyne cautions against this polarization of liberation and repression assuming "antiquity was a Garden of Eden from which repression was banished" (Veyne 1987, 202). Nuancing the declension narrative, Michel Foucault comes to assess continuities as well as differences in the *askēsis* of ancient Greek, Roman, and early Christian "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1990b, 1990c, 2018), extolling ascetics who cultivate "arts of living" that contest dominant norms. Challenging norms of social, political, and economic life, in pagan and Christian ascetic literature "profound transformations of the human person were possible" (Brown 1998, 603; 1988).

Individualism versus Ideology

Understanding asceticism as "sub-ideological," Geoffrey Harpham describes the "ascetic impulse" as exceeding the particular religious ideologies that produced them. William James characterizes the spirit of asceticism as permeating wholly secular practices and institutions through culturally pervasive forms (James 1982). Max Weber identifies capitalism as a form of worldly asceticism (juxtaposed with otherworldly mysticism typified by Hinduism), where religious practices of deprivation and restriction intersect with economic practices of consumption and production in the Puritan idea of calling (Weber 2003, 111). The "ascetic impulse" has a two-fold force. On the one hand, it creates the perfect consuming subject, who pays money to submit to a rule; elite fasts, colonics, retreats, and ritual household declutterings offer their customers the opportunity of practicing peak purity through neoliberal efficiency maximization (Logan 2017). On the other hand, even this consumerist aesthetic can be seen as expressive of "intertwined methods of self-realization and social formation" and a desire for transformation (Logan 2017, 603). Valantasis argues the ascetic impulse can challenge the hegemonic operations of society, producing new social and cultural formations (Valantasis 2008, 103). Gavin Flood insists on asceticism as the internalization of religious traditions with robust cosmologies (Flood 2005, 2), limiting the sub-ideological ways ascetic impulses operate. Yet ascetic formation can exceed ideological subjection through the dialectical constitution of individuals and traditions.

Ascetic Constructions

To see these currents at work, three case studies illustrate the connection between asceticism and self-cultivation in the Warring States period of ancient China (fifth to third centuries BCE), the late ancient Mediterranean (fourth to fifth centuries CE), and the contemporary United States (twentieth to twenty-first centuries CE). These contexts help frame ascetic "motivations, meanings, and results" in relation to political, social, and economic factors (Harvey 1999, 317).

Case Study: Ancient China (Fifth to Third Centuries BCE)

Alongside political and military reforms, the Warring States period in ancient China saw philosophical schools develop to address tensions. From Confucianism (through Mencius and Xunzi) to Daoism (through Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu), texts influential in this period include approaches to self-cultivation and ethics understood as ascetic; that is, as "a practice acquired through strong moral, mental, and bodily discipline" (Choi 2012, 456). Despite differences in politics and metaphysics, "embodied virtue" in early Chinese ethical and medical views of the human see mind and body as not dualized but continuous where practices shape and transform humans (Csikszentmihalyi 2004, 59). The everyday asceticism of Confucianism and Daoism includes "active participation in social and political life with disciplinary rigor" (Choi 2012, 458), and self-cultivation includes "dietary practices, exercise regimens, breath meditation, sexual cultivation techniques, and other technical traditions" (Raphals 2011, 147).

To understand the connection between asceticism and cultivation, consider the metaphor of archery. *The Analects*, attributed to Confucius, sees one's character as laboriously cultivated through practice like an archer (Confucius 1979, 3, 7) and the texts of Mencius connect struggling with mistakes to the archer's self-corrections (Mencius 2003, 3A3). Mencius describes "radiant qi" (Mencius 2003, 2A2) as involving both physical and moral cultivation, leading to a jade countenance (Wang 2010, 344) and "physiological transformation" (Raphals 2011, 150). The *Nei-yeh* (Inward Training) describes the intersection between energy and cultivation – "Therefore this vital energy, Cannot be halted by force, Yet can be secured by inner power" (Roth 1999, 13) – and the spiritual ideal of "wu-wei" sees action accord "with the normative order of the cosmos" (Slingerland 2003, 5). Self-cultivation contributes to the balance of society and the heavens, be it through Confucian order or Daoist power.

Case Study: Late Ancient Mediterranean (Fourth to Fifth Centuries CE)

Juxtaposing "Eastern self-cultivation" and "Western asceticism" becomes even more inaccurate when considering the similar stress on psychological and physiological continuity in the late ancient Mediterranean (Shaw 1998). From Stoic to Jewish to Christian texts, Greek *askēsis* refers to forms of exercise originally associated with the physical rigors of gymnastics, with asceticism "present to greater or lesser degrees in every religious tradition of the Roman empire, pagan, Jewish, Christian, and Manichaean" (Harvey 1999, 317). Susanna Elm argues for continuities between Greek moral thought – notably "distinct stoic-platonic notions" – and early Christian ascetic stress on discipline (Elm 1994, 13). Philo of Alexandria describes the Therapeutae as a Jewish community organized through practices of fasting, prayer, and abstinence (Philo 1941), while late ancient rabbis reckon with bodily vulnerability in ethical cultivation (Schofer 2010).

While Pierre Hadot extols "spiritual exercises" of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, late ancient Christian ascetics stress theoretical as well as practical forms of self-cultivation. Athanasius's *Life of Anthony* enacts asceticism as separation from society through normative and physical distance, while regulating doctrinal orthodoxy on the basis of experiential wisdom (Athanasius 1980). Basil of Caesarea's *Rule* describes Cappadocian asceticism as including daily regulation of dress, food, and prayer alongside spiritual practices of contemplation within liturgical and communal settings (Basil 2013). In the Egyptian desert, Evagrius Ponticus refigures the Stoic ἀπάθεια (*apatheia*) as an achievement reliant on the daily cultivation of πρακτική (practical wisdom) and θεωρητική (contemplative knowledge) (Evagrius 1972). John Cassian

carries Evagrius's emphases to bourgeoning monasticism in southern Gaul, employing the metaphor of an archer who uses proximate and distal goals to stay motivated in the face of daily struggles (Cassian 1997, 1.5). For figures like Cassian and Abba Joseph in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Roberts stresses how "asceticism is aimed not at the repression but at the reorientation of desire" (Roberts 1998, 84).

Case Study: Contemporary United States (Twentieth to Twenty-First Centuries CE)

Discourses of "self-care" in the contemporary United States involve not just "what ascetics give up and what they get" but also what they give economically. Elite fasts, cleanses, and classes (from aerobics to spin to postural yoga) reject renunciatory language by reframing ascetic mechanisms of discipline and restriction through postindustrial capitalist consumption. Dana Logan illuminates dialectics of bodily evacuation and material consumption in the ascetic discipline metonymized by Gwyneth Paltrow's conglomerate *goop* that promises an adherent "accumulates through elimination"(Logan 2017, 622). Marie Griffith analyzes the Protestant background for this logic in movements like Women's Aglow, where narratives of bodily control and the construction of "fat" as indexing gluttony render bodily "imbalance" morally detestable (Griffith 2000, 143). From Weight Watchers to colonics to SoulCycle, programs of purifying consumption require participants' exertion, sweat, and financial investment. Despite its solipsism, the yearning for transformation also radiates, as Kathryn Lofton frames Oprah's power of "affiliating individual products with holistic lifestyle fantasies" forging "those moments in which ideology feeds action, in which her rhetoric of change might manifest in individual lives" (Lofton 2011, 26).

The potential for transformation also attends "lifestyle" disciplines derived from religious practices, including postural yoga and meditative practice. With the Sanskrit *yoga* applying to Hindu Brahminic traditions "of asceticism and praxis" (Fitzgerald 2012, 46), Andrea Jain illuminates the "everyday regimens" of *preksha dhyana* within the global economic movements of the yoga market, while also affirming a potentially transformative ethos (Jain 2015, xviii). Similarly, even as the "mindfulness revolution" can self-centeredly distract from addressing structural injustices (Purser 2019, 8), modern iterations of Buddhist practice can be seen both as "a personal spirituality and as a socially and politically active force for social and environmental justice" (McMahan 2008, 253). The sub-ideological reading of asceticism shows the tension between compulsory consumerism and the desire for transformation in practices appropriated from religious roots.

Ascetic Cultivations

These three historical and geographical contexts trouble oppositions and stereotypes in their inter- and intra-religious and cultural diversity. From Chinese feudal states, to late ancient Mediterranean landscapes, to contemporary American marketplaces, models of ascetic cultivation involve different political, social, and economic concerns. The intersection between embodied disciplines and religious ideologies nevertheless informs all three examples. Refusing to oppose asceticism as a tool of power and asceticism as a technology of self enables a framing of asceticism as productive of both modern disciplinary subjects and critical forms of self-cultivation.

Even as asceticism's meanings, motivations, and results shift, there are common mechanisms of formation across geographical, temporal, cultural, economic, political, social, environmental, and material differences. Asceticism, when read in relation to self-cultivation, involves the regularity and rigor of discipline exercised in an ongoing struggle to habituate in arduous practices and to transform through them over time. Such commitment involves an orientation towards a goal, as an archer towards its mark, which hones attention and stabilizes affective motivation within the struggles of privation. While ascetic cultivation can enable transformation over time, such transformation is never complete and even ascetic experts must dynamically adapt to the conditions of which they are a constitutive part.

Asceticism is not modern shorthand for deprivation or renunciation of self – nor does it signal purity and absolute separation from political, social, and economic concerns. While asceticism involves regulation, repetition, and symbolic orientation, it encodes complex relations between the intentional and ideological, between the cultivated and inculcated. The work it takes to engage and sustain ritual practices is related but not reducible to social subjection in those practices. Weber was right that hard work both signals the renunciation of particular worldly desires and contributes to the formation of a particular political, social, and economic life. Foucault's stress on "technologies of the self" alongside "technologies of domination" intensifies his attention to "arts of living" as the precondition for critical resistance to oppressive norms (Foucault 1988, 2011). Carolyn Walker Bynum and Amy Hollywood theorize this promise in medieval female ascetics' exercise of agency, reshaping societal scripts through bodily fasting and ritual piety (Bynum 1987; Hollywood 2016).

Social forces and relations shape subjects through regulative, disciplinary practices, but this captures only the compulsory side of asceticism or religious formation. Ideology is, indeed, a problem for asceticism, but only insofar as it delimits the range of possible values and aspirations that the ascetic might adopt. This is why Flood's tying of asceticism to religious traditions does not adequately account for the power of the ascetic impulse which does not just reinscribe traditions but also works to forge and contest them beyond the bounds of "religion" as well. Valantasis asserts a radically optimistic formulation of asceticism, where "body-builders, monks, gang members, environmentalists, community organizers – in short, anyone who resists in order to create new selves, different ways of socializing, and a cohesive way to relate to the physical world bespeaks the presence of an ascetical impulse" (Valantasis 2008, x). The radical potential of asceticism and self-cultivation that Valantasis, Foucault, and other scholars theorize lies not in the transformation of a particular subject but in the potential of this transformation to challenge political formations and economic practices. By forging disciplined experiments with forms of life and by opening up "tradition" to reinterpretation through embodied challenges, the intersection between asceticism and self-cultivation troubles dominant norms and requires analysis beyond limiting oppositions of "Eastern"/"Western," pagan/Christian, and individual/ideological.

This analysis of asceticism and self-cultivation reframes practices of regulation and even deprivation beyond a flat logic of self-renunciation as characteristic of "Western" forms of life. To transvalue Nietzsche's own derision of ascetics is to recognize asceticism as part and parcel of the cultivation of self and society. To counter negative assumptions and unproductive binaries concerning asceticism involves recognizing (sometimes extreme) practices of deprivation and regulation oriented towards the cultivation of self, rooted in the world even if in critical tension with its norms. To recognize the possibilities for self-cultivation in asceticism is also to refuse the dogmatism of humans as dominating or dominated, considering instead constructive possibilities for habituation, orientation, and transformation.

Challenging what forms of life might look like vis-à-vis disciplined, arduous formation is part of an ethical project to not just *think* differently, but to *live* differently. This genealogy of the desiring subject, as Foucault reflects in his late work, is a history of the transformations of desire from a straightforward Nietzschean imposition of force to a dialectical constitution between subject formation and self-cultivation in "the forming of oneself as an ethical subject" (Foucault 1990b, 28). Appreciating the possibilities for cultivation in asceticism involves understanding the dialectic between critique and construction, the giving up of comfort and ease for a transformed self and the production of new forms of sociality. Self-cultivation is never necessarily progressive and the radical potential of asceticism requires the ongoing critique of norms, opening up different ways of inhabiting and reshaping worlds.

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Part III

Comparison

1 Theories

CHAPTER 41

Comparison in Religious Ethics

Sumner B. Twiss

Overview

Religious ethics in the comparative mode represents cross-traditional and cross-cultural ethical inquiry with simultaneous hermeneutical, critical, constructive, and theoretical dimensions. The hermeneutical dimension entails interpreting moral and religious cultural systems, thinkers, practices, and patterns of reasoning in social and historical context. The critical dimension involves analyzing the social, political, economic, and institutional influences on these systems, thinkers, practices, and patterns. The constructive dimension requires identifying and developing intercultural moral resources for articulating new self and social understandings as well as practical strategies for advancing human well-being. And the theoretical dimension involves reflecting on systemic issues raised by the preceding dimensions; for example, ethnocentrism, methodological distortion, universalism versus relativism, justification and truth, the role of imagination, and relations among understanding, interpretation, and explanation. As presently understood and practiced, comparative religious ethics embraces methodological pluralism (and complementarity) and accepts the role of the comparative ethicist as a transformative public intellectual. Although some would argue that this field of inquiry is a discipline, others prefer to regard it as an ongoing conversation among scholars of different disciplines united by the aforementioned dimensions (see Stout 1994).

Whether discipline or conversation, comparative religious ethics has a complex history that crosses disciplines and is marked by intellectual controversy over goals, methods, and results. Its emergence as a focused academic subject is often dated to 1978, when three works simultaneously appeared: Green (1978), Hindery (1978), and Little and Twiss (1978). This coincidence was made all the more remarkable by the fact that the authors were working independently of one another and had somewhat different lineages, ranging across and combining social theory, anthropology, history of religions, and philosophical ethics. The coincidence may be explained in part by the desire of religious ethicists to break from the ethnocentric hegemonies of Christian ethics and purely Western philosophical ethics. Despite the apparent watershed year of 1978, it is important to be aware of earlier developments. These are never far from the view of current scholarship and identify certain themes and issues that are still part of the conversation. In lieu of an exhaustive survey of this development, only a few prominent and illustrative figures and landmarks will be cited, along with features of continuing significance.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

History

From the period of classical social theory and philosophy, the illustrative landmark figures are Émile Durkheim, Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, and Edward Westermarck and L. T. Hobhouse. Durkheim pioneered the idea of developing a positive science of social life. A science of morality should treat moral and religious beliefs and practices as natural phenomena for which were sought the causes, functions, and laws on a *sui generis* social plane (Durkheim 1915). From Durkheim's perspective, the science of morality provided an intellectual basis for guiding enlightened social and political policy. In fact, he played a significant role as a transformative public intellectual during the period of the Third French Republic.

Unlike Durkheim, Weber distinguished between politics and scholarship. He developed a program of value-neutral scientific inquiry into social phenomena. Weber's distinctive methodology of *Verstehen* uncovered the subjective motives of agents – complemented by causal and historical explanation and involving the use of ideal types of rational behavior (Weber 1963). Using this methodology, Weber pioneered sociological inquiry into distinctive types of religious ethical systems within correlated political economies. This was informed by an overarching evolutionary view of rational social development.

Although in significant agreement with Weber's method, Troeltsch crystallized the meaning and challenge of historicism for dealing with the moral and religious diversity and the internal development of supposedly absolute ethical and religious values (Troeltsch 1971). Unlike Weber, Troeltsch was not shy about playing a public intellectual role in German political society, particularly after World War I.

While not trained social scientists, philosophers Westermarck and Hobhouse undertook comparative surveys of moral phenomena all over the world. Their contrasting normative and theoretical conclusions – ethical relativism and moral universalism, respectively – illustrated the challenge of Troeltsch's "crisis of historicism" for the field of ethics (Westermarck 1906; Hobhouse 1916). Both Westermarck and Hobhouse played significant public intellectual roles in, respectively, Finnish and English politics.

The major themes of this first phase of development are: interest in a science of morality with evolutionary overtones; attempts to articulate a method of systematic comparison; awareness of how historicism poses the acute challenge of universality versus relativism in the sphere of ethics; and a tendency to accept the role of public transformative intellectual.

The second phase is marked by anthropological interventions, whether pursued by professional anthropologists or by philosophers guided by such professionals. Two philosophers, Richard Brandt and John Ladd, did limited fieldwork among the Hopi and Navajo, respectively, utilizing Western moral theory (theory types) to expose the logical structure of the reasoning and worldviews of their subjects (Brandt 1954; Ladd 1957). Both were widely read in the ethnographic literature and used informants and professional translators for limited periods of field research. Both used "ideal types" to guide their inquiry and to analyze their results. They regarded their studies as forays into what was called "descriptive ethics," that is, analyzing the moral reasoning of subjective agents from their internal perspective. Yet their work also compared Western patterns of reasoning and justification with those of indigenous peoples. Neither Brandt nor Ladd envisioned himself as a transformative intellectual.

By contrast, the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski undertook intensive field studies of the people of Melanesia. Curtailing the use of theoretical ideas and professional informants, he relied on long-term participant observation in order to ascertain how they reasoned and made sense of their world (Malinowski 1948). Malinowski's ethnographic method was influenced by American pragmatism (specifically, William James).

He attempted to determine how his subjects' behavior made sense or was reasonable inasmuch as it pragmatically satisfied their basic needs. The total field of data was scrutinized from the perspective of how the data fit holistically and pragmatically in order to form an intelligible world. Malinowski was not interested in comparison per se, or in using ideal types as bridges of comprehension, which might distort the data and do an injustice to the way his subjects actually reasoned.

By way of summary, the main themes of this phase of development are: a contrast between methods of inquiry about moral reasoning (inquiry into its logical structure guided by a descriptive typology versus intensive fieldwork guided only by a non-theoretical pragmatic holism); movement toward explicit systematic comparison versus a suspicion of such comparison; and the apparent demise of the role of the public or transformative intellectual.

The third phase of development begins with the aforementioned watershed books of 1978, followed by intensive scrutiny of their presuppositions, methods, and results. Ronald Green's book was predicated on a theory of moral and religious rationality derived from Kant's moral philosophy (and to a lesser extent John Rawls' theory of justice). This theory was used to probe the structure of reasoning in Judaism, Christianity, and the religions of India (Green 1978).

Roderick Hindery was guided in part by Weber's work on religious ethics, as well as other methodological studies. He used primary sources and history of religions literature to challenge simplistic views of the ethics of Hindu and Buddhist traditions (Hindery 1978).

David Little and Sumner Twiss explicitly adapted Ladd's descriptive ethics – by adding definitions of certain key concepts (morality, law, religion) – to probe the reasoning and justificatory patterns of selected data from three moral traditions: the Navajo, early Christianity, and Theravāda Buddhism. This study was also informed by contemporary ethnological and historical scholarship (Little and Twiss 1978).

The response to some of these works was immediate and sustained. Green was criticized for imposing an *a priori* and ethnocentric account of rationality on religious–moral traditions that distorted their views. Little and Twiss' study was criticized for being overly positivistic and deploying categories and ideal-typical structures of reasoning that were too static and unnuanced to capture the dynamics of reasoning within the complex worldviews in which they are embedded.

In reaction to these criticisms, Robin Lovin and Frank Reynolds published an anthology of essays in 1985 on cosmogonies and ethics that explicitly propounded a Malinowski-like pragmatic holism as the proper way to study texts and phenomena within diverse moral traditions. This continued the suspicion of systematic comparative work in ethics, while opening the possibility that pragmatic holism could be used for non-systematic comparison in the future (Lovin and Reynolds 1985). The majority of essays in their anthology were particularistic studies of limited texts and traditions (considered within themselves), not explicit comparisons across traditions or cultures. The majority of the authors were historians of religions and anthropologists. For this phase as a whole, none of the scholars advocated the role of the comparative ethicist as a transformative intellectual.

A number of trends are remarkable in light of the preceding phases: a continuing interest in a grand theoretical (although not explicitly evolutionary) account of morality across traditions; the continuing use of ideal types (even if challenged) in comparative ethics; and a continuing interest in deploying less systematic and more pragmatic approaches to the subject. In addition, the theme of universality versus relativism carried through many of these works. Green's theory presupposed moral universalism. Little and Twiss' patterns of moral reasoning were portrayed as descriptive universals. Lovin and Reynolds worried about the possible relativistic implications of their pragmatic holism.

Contemporary Situation

In order to fill out the picture of comparative religious ethics and lay the groundwork for looking toward the future, it is important to ferret out certain themes and trends within current work. It is useful to distinguish these themes and trends into two broad categories: (1) internal features of comparative scholarship and (2) substantive focal concerns of that scholarship. *Internal features* include aims, depth of comparison, categories of analysis, methods, social and intellectual location, and variegated subtraditions. *Focal concerns* refer to the emergence of substantive areas of scholarship which use comparative methods to enrich such fields as moral psychology, history of religions, biomedical ethics, environmental ethics, and political ethics, to mention but a few.

As presently practiced, comparative religious ethics encompasses a number of aims, ranging across enriched cultural moral self-understanding, appreciation of other traditions, enhancement of cross-cultural communication, addressing shared social problems, and systematic theorizing about religion and ethics. While individual scholars may emphasize certain of these aims more than others, all appear to accept the fact that their work is relevant to advancing these aims. There appear to be two types of depth of comparison: implicit and thin, and explicit and robust. The thin type of comparison brings categories of analysis – whether Western-derived or adapted from previous historical and comparative study – to bear on describing, interpreting, and analyzing one tradition, thinker, text, or genre. This analysis is followed by critically revisiting (and possibly revising) the original categories of analysis. More robust comparative studies explicitly compare two different traditions, thinkers, texts, or genres in order to elicit significant similarities and differences between the objects of comparison. Categories of analysis employed in either of these types range across intentionally theory-thin bridge concepts (way of life, notion of agency), more normatively loaded concepts (particular moral norms, a particular notion of rationality, a theory-type such as natural law or virtue theory), and the inductive elicitation of comparable themes from the materials under scrutiny (discursive strategies, elements of worldview, praxis). The methods used by scholars are myriad and range across a number of options; for example, formal–conceptual (using moral theories as sortals), historical–philological (focusing on key normative terms), phenomenological–ethnographic (investigation of lived reality), hermeneutical–dialogical (mutual interrogation of moral worldviews, reasoning, praxis) (Twiss and Grelle 2000). Although these methods are hardly exhaustive, they are legitimate options for inquiry that can be selectively used and combined in the comparative task, depending on the choice of aim and material. The spirit of methodological pluralism and complementarity is now a leitmotif for this field of study.

As scholarship has progressed, and as appropriate in a world characterized by global intercultural communication, transport, and education, non-Western scholars have entered the conversation of comparative religious ethics. They are guided by similar or analogous aims, methods, and categories, although now enriched by indigenous social and intellectual locations. This trend is likely to continue and strengthen, eroding perceptions (or misperceptions) of the hegemony of Western scholarship. This trend, in turn, has surfaced – or at least emphasized – the fact that non-Western traditions embody diverse sub-traditions (an internal moral pluralism) that accounts for the fact that previous scholars have offered seemingly competing readings of non-Western traditions, thinkers, and texts. Monolithic interpretation of these traditions is forever eroded.

Some of the most important work in comparative ethics is now being done by indigenous scholars interested in philosophical and practical issues and the way that their societies and traditions deviate

from Western moral reasoning and praxis. This scholarship is complemented by Western scholars equally interested in the reasons for such deviation, as well as being alert to ways that Western reasoning and praxis might have something to learn from non-Western traditions or at least be enriched by them. Illustrative examples of this development range from comparative studies of the self (relevant to moral psychology), to cross-cultural studies of human rights and just war theory (relevant to political ethics), to comparative studies of health, medicine, and healthcare delivery (relevant to biomedical ethics), to cross-cultural studies of ecological thought and practice (relevant to environmental ethics). The list could continue because so many substantive focal concerns are now involved in the comparative enterprise.

The fact that comparative inquiry is being integrated into substantive areas reflects a maturation and acceptance of the field by other scholars. It also points to the re-emergence of the role of the comparative ethicist as a public intellectual committed to working with others – locally, nationally, internationally – in the attempt to resolve social problems shared by diverse peoples and traditions (Twiss and Grelle 2000). This development, while welcome, does not gainsay scholars' continuing interests in other more theoretical issues and aims. The fact is perhaps aptly illustrated by continuing dialogue about issues of universality versus relativism, now within the form of arguments and counter-arguments about prospects for a common morality or global ethic. The parameters, then, for the conversation or discipline that is comparative religious ethics are both expanding in certain respects and reflective of concerns that originated with its emergence.

Future

In order to concretize further the maturity attained by comparative religious ethics and to illustrate directions for future scholarship, it is necessary to note in more detail work now being pursued. As mentioned previously, comparative ethics is now being undertaken in substantive focal areas of concern.

(1) Comparative inquiry into selfhood and moral agency subsumes study of particular topics, such as self-cultivation, the sources of human moral evil, particular virtues, notions of conscience and their analogues, among others. Much of this work constitutes rather thin comparisons between non-Western conceptions of self and related phenomena, on the one hand, and somewhat broadly cast notions of Western metaphysics and virtue theory, on the other (Allen 1997). By contrast, other studies are much thicker and more robust comparisons between particular thinkers or key normative concepts from two different traditions – for example, Mencius and Aquinas, Augustine and Xunzi, *jen* (Confucian humaneness), and *agape* (Christian neighbor-love) (see Yearley 1990). These studies push comparisons in the direction of trying to solve a genuine human problem, such as how to relate reason and emotion, how to overcome moral evil, or how to sustain the project of becoming a good person. This type of robust comparison is especially difficult, since it requires mastery of two different traditions, their languages, and their internal historical development, in addition to using a combination of methods (philological, conceptual, historical) and carefully controlled bridge concepts (person, will, rationality, virtue). Nonetheless, scholars are increasingly trained to undertake such studies, and one can anticipate more such work in the future.

(2) The emergence of social, applied, or practical ethics from the perspective of non-Western moral traditions, while not explicitly comparative, is a phenomenon worthy of note. It portends the general

potential for scholars of non-Western and Western traditions to collaborate on seeking answers to shared moral dilemmas cutting across traditional and cultural boundaries. It is simply a fact, for example, that scholars of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism – whatever their social and intellectual location – are probing moral issues concerning medicine and healthcare, ecology, statecraft, business, and human rights (see Keown 2000). Given the processes of globalization, one can easily anticipate an explosion of such work that can only benefit the scope and quality of comparative inquiry in applied ethics.

As one example of how far this general phenomenon has developed, the area of comparative medical ethics and healthcare delivery is represented by not only ground-breaking tradition-focused work (Hinduism, Buddhism, Native-American traditions, Confucianism), but also explicit cross-cultural comparison of, for example, concepts of health and disease, issues of suicide, euthanasia, and human experimentation, and patterns and modes of healthcare delivery (see Coward and Ratanakul 1999). This work has thus far focused on challenging Western paradigms for handling these concepts and issues, which are often controlled by the influence of the scientific biomedical model. Similarly, there have been challenges to the Western biomedical focus on individual patient autonomy versus other traditions' openness to family and community consultation and decision making. Western healthcare delivery that values high-technology medicine over community-oriented preventive and palliative strategies is also challenged. Again, evidence indicates that this area of comparative ethical inquiry will intensify and become more robust in the future.

(3) One encounters similar developments in the area of ecological and environmental ethics, although with a twist. Disenchanted environmentally minded Western scholars are taking the lead in looking toward non-Western traditions for conceptual and practical resources to mitigate environmental pollution, ecological destruction, species extinction, and depletion of non-renewable energy sources that are exacerbated by modern industrialized economies. The hope is that comparative study of non-Western moral traditions will yield new ways of conceptualizing a positive regard for nature, as well as correlated practical strategies for reining in energy and resource-hungry Western societies. There is a spate of studies on non-Western traditions focusing on conceptions of nature, ecological balance, appropriate land use, and harmony between humans and other species, among other related topics (see Callicott and Ames 1989). As the environmental crisis constitutes a worldwide problem, one can, again, anticipate increasingly robust comparative work in this area.

(4) Comparative ethics and political theory has been high on the agenda of comparativists for the last two decades. It has been intensified by recent political, military, and terrorist events. Amid claims of an inevitable clash of civilizations, scholars of comparative ethics have been patiently addressing issues of war and statecraft – just war theory and its analogues – and human rights that are increasingly translated into discourse for public consumption and education. With respect to just war thinking, the comparative work thus far is focused on Islam, Christianity (or Western tradition more broadly), and Buddhism (see Kelsay 1993; Bartholomeusz 2002). In regard to human rights, comparative work has focused on the enlightened retrospective interpretation of myriad non-Western and Western moral and religious traditions in light of their congruence with or deviation from traditions of international law and human rights (see Bloom et al. 1996). Increasingly, this work is also taking on a public intellectual dimension in the form of cross-cultural dialogues, both non-governmental and governmentally sponsored (see Twiss 1996). As human rights atrocities and war continue to plague the peoples of the world, one can confidently predict that this area of comparative ethics will grow in importance.

(5) The final substantive area – search for a common morality – brings us full circle to a perdurable concern of comparative religious ethics since its earliest inception: universality versus relativism. While theoretical in tone, this issue has a very practical moral dimension, since if there is (or can be) a universal, common, or global ethic or morality, a strong groundwork is provided for intercultural moral dialogue and praxis. Comparativists have been working on the prospects for a common morality from a number of angles: deploying diverse philosophical theories (Kantian, Aristotelian) informed by comparative data; forging a practical overlapping normative consensus among diverse moral and political traditions; showing pragmatically that a common set of moral norms is the best way to solve shared problems and advance human well-being (see Outka and Reeder 1993). In addition, this search – which is likely to continue into the foreseeable future – continues to press the theoretical issue about whether comparative ethics can produce generalizable moral knowledge indicating some deep truths about our human moral nature.

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CHAPTER 42

Comparison as a Discipline

David A. Clairmont

Moral theorists do not typically consider comparison a topic deserving much attention. After all, moral theory is the work of theorizing about morality – about the meaning of good and evil, right and wrong, and their presence or absence in community standards and ways of life. In everyday life, comparison functions as a basic way of making sense of the world, of differentiating similarity and difference in physical space, in the use of language, and in negotiating individual identity and social relations. In this sense, comparison is natural, inevitable, without conscious deliberation, and not of theoretical concern.

Comparison becomes deliberate when it is cultivated as a skill, often first in early childhood education. Young people are asked to compare and contrast, to find similarities and differences, when they learn to read or when they learn scientific methods of investigating the world in classroom settings. The rationale for comparative thinking in these situations is not linked to any particular goal but rather is the acquisition of a translatable skill to assist in all areas of life. In some cases, comparison is linked to a desire to understand new situations, social settings, and people from different backgrounds. Although the rationale in these cases is not explicitly ethical, such instances do provide early life examples of how comparison might function for ethical purposes.

If comparison is therefore an inevitable feature of human life on the one hand and something which also can be deliberately cultivated as part of general education and early childhood socialization, how is comparison a theoretical concern for an academic field such as religious ethics? As Sumner Twiss argues in this volume, comparison as a distinctive approach to religious ethics emerged from the confluence of the historical and philosophical study of religion. "Religious ethics in the comparative mode represents cross-traditional and cross-cultural ethical inquiry with simultaneous hermeneutical, critical, constructive, and theoretical dimensions" and Twiss goes on to explain that "As presently understood and practiced, comparative religious ethics embraces methodological pluralism (and complementarity) and accepts the role of the comparative ethicist as a transformative public intellectual. Although some would argue that this field of inquiry is a discipline, others prefer to regard it as an ongoing conversation among scholars of different disciplines united by the aforementioned dimensions" (Twiss 2005, 147).

Following Twiss, we might set the organizing question of this entry in the following terms: *What is the advantage of thinking about comparison as a discipline?* In the study of religious ethics, any answer to this question must clarify both what is meant by comparison and what is meant by a discipline. In the

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

remainder of this entry, I begin with the latter question, reviewing the various uses of the term discipline: as a way of life cultivated by teachers in conversation with their students, as a domain or field of study, and as a community with distinctive aims and recognizable forms of excellence. Next, I will explore how these different senses of a discipline help us to understand the reasons why comparison is important for religious ethics, specifying the various rationales that support the comparativist's work. I conclude with a brief account of the different kinds of communities that receive the work of comparativists and probe the responsibilities of these religious ethicists in our increasingly interconnected, reflexive, global religious space.

The History and Senses of Disciplines

It is customary to think of academic disciplines as kinds of work that parallel specialized jobs in other professions (Berry 1996, 19). However, the idea of a discipline has a history which is useful to review if we are to understand the various ways we can speak of comparison as a discipline. In our ordinary usage, the word "discipline" denotes a form of training (sometimes even a form of a punishment intended to reform a behavior deemed undesirable), but the original meaning of the term is actually the one who is trained – that is, the student – from the Latin word *discipulus* which refers either to the student or to the follower of a teaching (from which we derive the word "disciple") (Oxford English Dictionary 2013). This sense of discipline focuses both on the one who is trained but also on the way of life (or in a more limited sense, the way of knowing) through which one receives training from a competent authority in intellectual, moral, or spiritual matters. So the first sense of discipline denotes a *way of life and teaching* and suggests that in some way what one knows (indeed, what one can know) depends in some way upon the quality or dispositions of the knower. If this is true, then we can begin to see how the meaning of a discipline could be a relevant concern for moral theory.

In a second sense, we can speak of a discipline as a *field of study* and here we find a more familiar connection to academic fields such as religious ethics. To say that one has been trained in a discipline is to say that one has sufficient knowledge and the requisite skills in a particular area of investigation and that those involved share questions and topics in close enough relation one to another that conversations and debates can be meaningful and productive. Yet, as William Schweiker explains, "With the rise of the modern Western world there were extensive debates about what constituted a discipline of thought. There emerged the conviction that any genuine discipline must have a distinct subject matter, even as there was the need to define a 'system of the sciences' around a fundamental principle or scientific method in order to ensure the coherence of knowledge. The core of the modern project was to understand the world and free human beings from ignorance and illusion. One did so by specifying the method, purpose, and criteria of various disciplines in such a way that each was autonomous and yet consistent with all others because they shared a rational structure. . . .What is rejected by a range of thinkers in various fields [today] is a depiction of knowledge gained and justified through autonomous disciplines tenuously held together by one formal rational structure or method of inquiry" (Schweiker 2005, 3–4). In other words, with the development of academic fields according to a unified understanding of the purpose and scope of human reason and the standardization of scientific methods of investigation, all observable reality could be subdivided into fields and each field guided by that expression of universally acknowledged rational principles most appropriate to the kind of thing being investigated. Human

beings as one part of observable reality occupied an interesting place in such investigations since they could be studied for their continuity with nature as bio-chemical systems, or as animals exhibiting recurring and predictable individual and group behavioral patterns. Although the behavioral and other social sciences adapted rationally generated scientific methods for the study of human beings as a distinctive type of natural phenomenon, they still assumed a basic continuity between the methods of the social and natural sciences.

Religion too was studied on the model of disinterested scientific inquiry, either in its earliest form in the philological and historical study of sacred texts or later in the anthropological study of human behaviors and cultures. The truth sought was the truth gained through observation, description, experimentation, analysis, prediction, and control yet this approach to the study of religion no less than other forms of human activity seemed to require something more to approach its subject matter appropriately (Pals 2015; Joy 2014). Although we cannot provide here an adequate review of the rise of the modern field of religious studies, at least two points are relevant to understanding comparison as a discipline. First, although human beings are animals, they are distinctive as reflective, self-interpreting animals. They think about what they do and question it in light of what other people observe and report to them about their behaviors. They process feedback and change their behaviors to varying degrees according to that feedback. This feature of human behavior, essential to socialization in groups, means that the human person exists in the world as a questioning being that constantly interprets and calls out for interpretation (Ricoeur 1981; Schweiker 2005). So whatever methods are used to study human beings, those methods will inevitably be incomplete unless they join scientific and humanistic study. Second, although human beings are trained to think comparatively at an early age to navigate personal relationships and social situations, adopting an explicitly comparative approach to human behaviors, including their religious dimensions, presents its own challenges. The history of comparative religion as a field of study shows the difficulty of such analysis because religious groups are not static. Like the individuals that constitute them, religions are historically and linguistically situated phenomena that change over time in response to internal discussions within those communities and new challenges from the outside. So when we think of comparison as a discipline in the sense of a field of study, not only do we inherit the complex relationship between the human sciences and the humanities, we are also joining two difficult histories: the history of the scientific study of humanity and the history of interreligious encounter, interpretation, and conflict.

In a third sense, we can speak of a discipline as a *community with distinctive aims and forms of excellence*. As Twiss noted in the lines quoted earlier, those who work in the field of religious ethics are aware of the difference between a field of scholarship and a community of scholars, and some (Twiss cites Jeffery Stout as one example) understand religious ethics as a community of scholars who share some overlapping interests rather than viewing it as a separate field unified by adherence to a single method. Arguing that "Comparative ethics is less a discipline than a sort of floating seminar in which scholars from various fields trade information and discuss methodology," Stout goes on to suggest that "A comparative ethics worth having will be about ethical rhetoric in its many varieties, good and bad, as they manifest themselves in various contexts, happy and grim. But it will also be an ethical rhetoric, in the sense of being a complex rhetorical performance that expresses and advances genuinely ethical concerns" (Stout 1994, 356–357). Yet to say that one shares scholarly interests with others while differing on the methods by which one approaches a shared body of research data naturally raises the question of what kind of academic community this might be (Clairmont 2010). Some scholars, such as Alasdair

MacIntyre, have offered sharp critiques of the modern academy's disciplinary structure, arguing that without a single coherent understanding of what a human being is and what the final purpose of human life is the modern academy will remain fractured and unable to make progress on any genuinely important human question (MacIntyre 1990). On MacIntyre's view, such progress would only be possible if the academy could come to some agreement on the nature and purpose of human life, and such agreement would inevitably require access to religious discourse across traditions that address these questions. The difficulty for MacIntyre, as for many others who debate the scope and biases of human reason, is that there is no place separate from existing frameworks of knowledge from which to make arguments to convince others who have radically different views of human life, the nature of human reason, and even the very notion of an overarching human purpose. MacIntyre's solution is twofold. First, cultivate strong communities that share a view of the nature and purpose of human life (these are usually, but need not be, explicitly religious groups) and then allow those communities to form their members in the intellectual and moral virtues necessary to recognize and cultivate the truly human good. Second, engage in current academic debates rooted in one's own moral or religious tradition and rely on the argumentative strategy of narrating the histories of rival moral, religious, or academic traditions, pointing out especially those instances where those communities cannot on their own terms account for historical changes or deploy their own resources to meet new challenges – a strategy meant to keep argument rooted in the history of traditions and the arguments that can be heard and understood by the communities they are meant to persuade. A tradition, as MacIntyre explains it, is "an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements, and those internal, interpretive debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress the tradition is constituted" (MacIntyre 1988, 12).

MacIntyre argues that each tradition must cultivate in its members a distinctive set of virtues rooted in that tradition's own particular understanding of what is truly good for human beings and these virtues are cultivated through practices. A practice, for MacIntyre, is "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended" (MacIntyre 1984, 187). Virtues, which are distinct from but closely related to practices, are "those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations, and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good" (MacIntyre 1984, 219).

Academic fields have their own distinctive kinds of practices that cultivate in their participants certain kinds of virtues. What exactly these virtues are depends on the goods at which we take academic work to be aiming and it is here that we begin to see the importance of thinking about disciplines as communities with distinctive aims and forms of excellence. Are there certain practices and virtues peculiar to deliberate work of comparison in religious ethics as well as other fields? Lee Yearley has suggested that there are, although he does not follow MacIntyre's more restricted understanding of virtues being bound to the histories and narratives of particular moral or religious traditions. Although Yearley would affirm that

"A virtue is a disposition to act, desire and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and leads to a recognizable human excellence, an instance of human flourishing," he proposes that the virtues deriving from the comparative study of religious ethics are not bound to traditions and that new virtues can in fact develop as the result of personal and communal educational experiences (Yearley 1990, 2). Reflecting on his own experience studying medieval Christian and classical Confucian texts comparatively with his students over many years, Yearley says that

> Religious ethics for me is that special kind of journey we call an adventure. . . .in which I examine and develop ideas of the self and virtue in traditional classics in order to illuminate where we as moderns encounter the sacred. ...To do justice to such texts, we must bring them into a kind of reasoned conversation with our own ideas and do so in a way that gives absolute pride of place to neither. Only by this process can we show adequate respect not only for our own ideas and procedures but also for these of the alien texts we want to engage. This kind of conversation is usually evident neither in the texts themselves nor in most contemporary approaches to subjects these texts treat. Only by generating it, however, can we avoid the harmful effects that misreading can have: effects such as the sentimental appropriation of the alien ideas or the untutored rejection of them.
>
> (Yearley 1997, 128–129)

For Yearley, the comparativist is part of a community of accountability which extends to other contemporary readers and interpreters (one's colleagues and students) but also to the traditions that produced these texts. One is accountable in a twofold sense: one is in the process of giving an account of oneself before the text by explaining one's interest in the challenge it poses, but one is also accounting for the text before its community of origin, not because religious texts or practices are the exclusive property of the community that produced them but because the comparativist enters that world as a respectful outsider in need of training to understand the religious world on its own terms and whose own experience sets questions for the text, even as she or he stands ready to be challenged, perhaps even transformed, by what one finds there.

Engaging in these practices has the capacity to produce new virtues. Yearley states that "Spiritual regret is one of those virtues that concerns the appropriate response to the recognition that extremely varied, legitimate religious ideals exist and that no person can possibly manifest all of them. Like all virtues, it is a corrective of a corresponding weakness, in this case the tendency to overlook the challenge produced by the presence of other integral and even tempting religious goods. It is also new in that it both responds to challenges that were not fully understood before and develops capacities that were previously undeveloped" (Yearley 1994, 12–13). Cultivating this virtue requires a particular set of practices which begin with one's own encounter with religious traditions, either as a student, a teacher, or as an interested non-specialist. Such practices might begin deliberately under the instruction of another person, or they might arise from life experiences or be triggered by certain significant events. Yearley explains that "Spiritual regret arises when we recognize three things. First, that various, legitimate ideals of religious flourishing exist. Second, that the conflict among them means no single person can come close to exhibiting all of them. Third, that those ideals or states which one can pursue or possess will usually be largely determined by forces either beyond one's immediate control or beyond anyone's control. This regret can arise in different forms at different times in one's life. It seems, however, normally to be linked to maturity, to a well understood fund of experience" (Yearley 1994, 12–13).

The key is that these practices, following MacIntyre's insight, are cooperative activities that are undertaken in conversation with others. Moreover, there are particular goods that result from the practices of comparison that can only be realized through that activity. For example, certain goods are realized by the comparativist: the skill of studying texts carefully, interreligious understanding, patience with religious or moral differences, humility about one's own tradition's history and indeed about one's own moral life. Other goods are realized by the community: investment in the academic questions of others, perhaps even investment in their scholarly biographies and the histories of their fields; appreciation for what different kinds of expertise bring to an academic community which can affect decisions about department hiring and culture; new ways to cultivate students' interests in the humanistic disciplines and so on. Comparative practices cultivate goods which may, in time, become virtues of individual scholars or of academic groups.

Rationales for Comparison and Communities of Accountability

Considering how scholarly practices form a particular set of virtues naturally leads us to ask what are the reasons for engaging in comparison in the first place. Elsewhere, I have identified five rationales for a comparative approach to religious ethics: facilitative, persuasive, dialectical, reconstructive, and transformative. A *facilitative rationale* for comparison "fosters the sort of tolerance for and appreciation of difference necessary for frictionless exchange in a global marketplace"; a *persuasive rationale* seeks to convince others of the moral or religious truth one has discovered "where the friction produced by comparison is frequently seen as a necessary condition for the appropriation of new religious truth"; a *dialectical rationale* "aims at the sort of understanding between religious traditions that highlights shared values and practical moral programs"; a *reconstructive rationale* "acknowledges that traditions must use age-old resources to speak to contemporary human problems, while also calling upon the experiences of contemporary communities to form the new moral questions that demand our attention today"; a *transformative rationale* for comparison aims to "bring religious communities to more acute sensitivity to their own past moral failures and future possibilities" (Clairmont 2011, 193). Such rationales may be present explicitly at the beginning of comparative projects or may begin more implicitly and then move toward explicit articulation over time. It is also possible that more than one rationale may be present at any point of a comparative project. For example, in MacIntyre's account of traditions, or Stout's account of ethical rhetoric, or Yearley's account of new religious virtues, we can ask both which of these rationales guide the initiation and maintenance of their comparative projects, but we also can ask whether and to what extent their rationales have changed as they have advanced in their research and in their conversations with other scholars and with people from the traditions they engage.

It is persons not fields of study that articulate and refine scholarly rationales and these purposes of comparison affect scholarly communities. In constituting communities of comparison, each rationale comes with a certain kind of accountability to one's fellow scholars, to the communities one studies, and to the discipline in each of the senses noted above (as a way of life, as a field of study, and as community with discernable goals and forms of excellence) (Holt, Kinnard, and Walters, 2003). As William Schweiker has noted, the act of giving an account is a complex endeavor which involves not only acknowledging what one has done but also the interpretive horizon of one's own action – how others might conceivably understand what we have done and the possible reasons why they might make such an interpretation

given their own questions and life experiences. "Not only do we give an account of our ends-in-view, and why we think they are good and worth pursuing, but we can also hold agents accountable for the ability to respond to anticipated responses" (Schweiker 1993, 243). In our discussion of comparison as a discipline, we can see that any comparison will yield responses, both from other scholars making the same or similar comparisons but also from the traditions being compared, including those who are practicing members of those traditions. This should in no way impede the scholar's investigations into those traditions but we would be well advised to "develop a level of transparency about our own investment in the traditions we study and the extent to which our own work contributes to the ongoing creation and recreation of those traditions" (Clairmont 2010, 102).

So for example, when Jeffrey Stout suggests that comparative ethics is not only about ethical rhetoric but is itself a kind of ethical rhetoric, he is suggesting that the comparative discipline has a purpose, at least part of which is to show how religious discourse manifests itself in public conversations about ethics (Stout 1994, 356–357). When members of those religions hear his interpretations, they now have an enlarged sense of their traditions – it includes the public interpretation of their religious discourse and they now need to respond to it. This means that Stout is accountable for what he has said that these traditions do in public since they are now interpreting his interpretations of them. His rationale for comparing (some combination of the facilitative, dialectical and transformative) helps us to understand the form of accountability appropriate to his work. Or to give another example, when Lee Yearley counsels his students that comparative study may cultivate the virtue of spiritual regret (a virtue best described as a subset of prudence, which is the cardinal virtue that deals with fitting response to a just goal), he is adding to the kinds of questions his students and colleagues ask about the traditions they study. Do these traditions make claims meant to draw me in and test my belief? Are they challenging me to accept their claims or clarify the kind of claims I make in my moral or religious arguments? Should I cultivate the conviction that they ought to exist as real options for a good life even if I do not want them for myself or those I hold most dear? Yearley's rationale for comparison (some combination of the persuasive, dialectical and reconstructive) conditions the form of accountability he has to his community.

The preceding discussion was meant to help those thinking about comparison in religious ethics to be more reflective about the kind of work they are doing, why they are doing it, and the effects of their work on their scholarly communities and the communities they study – the reasons why it is helpful to think of comparison as a discipline. It is also offered as an invitation to those considering adding an explicitly comparative dimension to their work and to those thinking about the nature of academic life and the current status of disciplines, for which comparison in religious ethics may offer helpful examples. It is meant, above all, to emphasize the humanity, fragility, and nobility of the scholar's vocation and of investment in scholarly communities despite their many challenges in our age of global religious and political ambiguity and conflict.

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CHAPTER 43

Religious Ethics and Religious Studies

Richard B. Miller

Religious ethics is an academic specialization that examines how religion and ethics are interrelated. Religious ethicists investigate how religious sources – e.g. sacred laws, images, norms, adages, rituals, metaphors, narratives, and symbols – can be drawn upon to shape moral conduct and character, and to address classical or contemporary ethical problems. But religion and morality can also conflict. Accordingly, religious ethicists also identify resources in non-religious ethics to assess how well religions carry out their responsibilities to human welfare and public life. In so doing, religious ethicists presume that secular ethics can offer an independent set of criteria for evaluating religious traditions.

Religious ethicists thereby integrate materials from two areas of academic specialization: religious studies, on the one hand, and ethics (or moral philosophy), on the other. Conceived in this way, religious ethics is a hybridized, interdisciplinary specialization that borrows from two broader humanistic discourses. It is a species of two different genera. As a subfield of *religious studies*, religious ethics informs and is informed by questions, problems, data, and concepts in the scholarly study of religion. As a subfield of *ethics*, religious ethics draws from moral theory and the history of ideas to address theoretical and practical problems that arise out of religious traditions.

Religious ethics thus straddles the discourses of religious studies and moral philosophy. But this fact is more a matter of theory than practice. Owing to the origins of the field and the secular nature of moral philosophy, religious ethics finds its institutional home in the academic study of religion. It often recruits resources from moral philosophy to clarify one or another matter, e.g. about whether the language of virtue or duty best captures the ideas of an influential thinker or school of thought. In this respect, religious ethicists are like biblical scholars who enlist concepts from literary theory, or historians of religion who draw on methodological tools from the field of history, to make sense of their materials. In all of these areas, the aim is to find insights from traditions of inquiry in the humanities and social sciences to sharpen our understanding of religion's connections to the moral life, textual traditions, and history, respectively. That said, in theory at least, religious ethics can contribute to knowledge in moral philosophy and may increasingly do so as philosophy diversifies itself to include religious sources and traditions.

With these thoughts about the interdisciplinary nature and institutional parameters of religious ethics in mind, this entry will focus on the place of religious ethics in the academic study of religion. After describing two principal models in religious ethics, paying special attention to the relation between religion and ethics, it will conclude by addressing how religious ethics and the scholarly study of religion can inform each other in mutually enriching ways.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Intellectual Models

Religious ethics is shaped by two main models. Each model functions as an ideal type for organizing an understanding of work in the field, and each presumes that religion and morality are distinguishable domains of value and action. According to one, ethics is dependent on religion as its necessary or sufficient condition. According to the other, ethics is independent of religion. Call these two ideal types the Dependent Model (*Sacred Canopy*) and the Independent Model (*Ethics of Belief*). Religion thus has a dual relationship with the concept of authority. It can authorize ethical claims about the right and the good by guaranteeing and grounding them. Or it can be subject to ethical assessments that possess their own rational authority, independent of religious beliefs or practices.

The Dependent Model/The Sacred Canopy

One model in religious ethics views religion as a fundamental resource for shaping the character and guiding the conduct of individuals, groups, and institutions. It does so by focusing on humans' relations with, and obligations toward, deities, semi-deities, and holy figures as well as humans' relations with, and obligations toward, other humans. Religion thereby offers a *sacred canopy* for thinking about their adherents' relationships and obligations (Reeder 1988). Religion can be understood either in ostensive terms, e.g. Buddhism or Judaism, or in non-ostensive terms, e.g. as referencing "sacred matters" along with a variety of attitudes, practices, and tenets related to such matters. Conceived in either of these ways – ostensively or non-ostensively – religion offers resources that have a direct bearing on human existence and the moral life. On this view, ethics is dependent upon religion.

That dependency takes various forms. Ethics might be *logically dependent* on religious concepts, or it might be *psychologically motivated* by religious attitudes, or it might be *epistemologically conditioned* by religious ways of knowing. For that matter, ethics might be conceived *as historically dependent* on religious traditions, or *linguistically dependent* on religious forms of language, or *fundamentally guaranteed* by religion. In all of these instances, the general movement is *from* religion *to* ethics, wherein religion provides an organizing backdrop that helps to make sense of ethics. Religion is understood to provide theoretical and practical guidance for identifying and resolving problems in human existence and for conceiving right and good relations in social life. When ethical concepts are connected to religious sources, they guide human conduct and social life in ways that enable religious practitioners to connect to sacred phenomena. Such conduct might either provide a path to religious blessings or may reflect the fact that the practitioner is already blessed as evidenced by his or her moral rectitude.

Religious ethicists who follow this movement from religion to ethics examine how religions generate, interpret, sanction, and apply ethical norms, attitudes, or ideals as a basis for evaluating human character and conduct as right or good. By providing a sacred canopy for ethics, religion functions meta-ethically. The operating idea is that religion enjoys an authority that justifies ethical claims and values. That idea can be either an empirical or conceptual one. It may be a working premise that shapes a scholar's research, perhaps heeding the meta-ethical attitudes that religious adherents in fact assume about the authority of their own tradition. Or it may derive from the conviction that religion is autonomous and thus immune from questions about its moral probity from other sources of human wisdom. The practical result of either assumption is the same: religious ethicists ask what difference religion makes for ethics. They want to know, among other things, if religion can offer something to the moral life that is missing from secular morality.

Morality's meta-ethical dependence on religion can be that of *necessity* or *sufficiency*. Adherents of some ostensive religions hold that their beliefs alone are necessary for true morality. They thus reject the idea of acceptable religious pluralism or the idea that secular morality offers moral wisdom. They understand morality as depending on religion "all the way down" and view true morality as relying on the truth of their religion (Reeder 1997). The picture is holistic: morality stands within, and is thus relative to, a wider web of beliefs and practices.

Religious ethicists who study ostensive religious ethics on this holistic description examine the inner logic and patterns of moral reasoning in a specific religion (or in specific religious teachings) to see whether the relevant claims all hang together. They think about religious ethics as having a logical nature according to which religious and moral instructions rely on coherent relationships among premises, warrants, and backings that structure an argument or matrix of ideas. In that respect, religious ethicists approach religious traditions much like philosophers examine the arguments of one or another school of thought, e.g. utilitarianism or deontology.

When conceived holistically, religions are denied the ability to address concerns from persons who stand outside of them. One possible exception occurs when basic, thin moral or legal categories emerge for expressing political solidarity or moral indignation across religious or cultural boundaries during social crises. But those thin concepts nonetheless repose against a thicker set of beliefs, customs, and practices (Walzer 1994). If religious ethicists (or others) critique a religious tradition holistically understood, they must do so as connected critics, drawing from resources from within that tradition to identify internal weaknesses, contradictions, or ways to reinterpret a traditional idea in order to offer an alternative (and presumably better) basis for its adherents to address a moral or religious problem (Walzer 1987). A critic thus assesses aspects of a religious tradition on that tradition's own terms. Here the critic faces ethical questions about her own intellectual practice, namely, whether she is overly deferential to the tradition under review, limiting her critical toolkit to a religion's resources for critique and reform. But on a holistic picture of a religious tradition, criticism posed in terms that exist outside a tradition would be morally and perhaps conceptually alien to those to whom it is directly addressed.

Religious ethicists who work with a non-ostensive account of religion may also view religion as necessary for morality. Here the idea is that morality is entirely dependent on sacred matters or some broad, comprehensive rubric that may include but extend beyond ostensive religions. If a religious ethicist conceives of "religion" in this inclusive way, she likely considers the fact of religious pluralism as good. Yet religious ethicists who develop non-ostensive categories for understanding "religion" and who view it as necessary for morality draw the line of acceptable pluralism between religious and secular morality. They see religion as offering sources of wisdom for justifying morality that have no real equivalent in secular sources.

Religions that claim that religion is *sufficient* for morality, in contrast, can accept religious and moral pluralism. This fact holds whether we are thinking about religion in ostensive or non-ostensive terms. Religions that adopt this outlook see various traditions as offering different ways of justifying moral ideas, concepts, and forms of wisdom that have currency within a variety of contexts and cultures. Morality can then be conceived as free-standing, on the one hand, but enjoying an overlapping consensus from a variety of religious and secular traditions, on the other. For example, we might view the Golden Rule as a moral tenet that makes sense on its own but as also compatible with a range of different religious and cultural traditions. Religious ethicists who study religion and ethics on this description view ethics as a "common morality" or "natural law" morality (Outka and Reeder 1993). They can draw

on that picture of ethics to identify trans-religious patterns of reasoning or non-relative sources of normativity according to which religions and their ethics can be described, compared, and evaluated.

The two groups of scholars who operate according to the Dependent Model thus agree that ethics depends on religion. What distinguishes the first group from the second is that the former views *all* ethics as depending on religion, whereas the latter views *some* ethics as depending on religion.

The Independent Model/The Ethics of Belief

The second main model in religious ethics examines logical and ethical questions about religion's ethical teachings. It reverses the direction between religion and ethics that we observed in the Dependent Model in that it proceeds *from* ethics *to* religion. This model assumes the independence of ethics from religion and finds non-religious sources to describe and/or justify ethical claims (Little and Twiss 1978). Here the organizing question is how ethical values place rational and normative constraints on what religions avow as their sacred obligations. In order to answer this question, religious ethicists who operate according to this model presume the existence of non-relative standards for carrying out the *ethics of belief* (Miller 2016). In this respect they function like philosophers of religion: religious ethicists and philosophers of religion focus on religion as the object of their inquiry. Philosophers of religion ask whether religious claims are *true*, whereas religious ethicists ask whether religious claims are *right* or *good*.

Religious ethicists who carry out an ethics of belief, like those who situate ethics within a sacred canopy, examine the inner logic and patterns of moral reasoning in a specific religion (or in specific religious teachings) to determine how well the relevant claims cohere. But religious ethicists who carry out an ethics of belief reject the idea that religion is autonomous and instead subject it to assessment according to free-standing criteria. They also reject the idea that religion is necessary for morality and thus view themselves as free to offer either internal or external critiques. When carrying out external critiques, they face the charge of parochialism or ethnocentrism. Once again the critic faces ethical questions about his or her own intellectual practice – in this case, about whether the critic, as an outsider, has the moral credentials to speak as an authority regarding the practices or beliefs she criticizes (Miller 2016).

Religious Ethics and Religious Studies

As noted above, religious ethics is a subfield that straddles two broad discourses, one of which is religious studies. Historically, religious ethics developed in North American departments of religious studies that took shape or expanded in the 1950s through the late 1960s in response to questions connected to religion and ethics, often in the context of political change and social turmoil. Religious ethicists studied the relation between religion in ethics in ways that were distinct from those used to study religion in seminary settings, area studies programs, and departments of philosophy, while nonetheless borrowing from traditions of inquiry important to work carried out in those other contexts. They thus carved out a new regime of academic discourse with its own procedures for producing, distributing, and assessing ideas about religion and ethics (Miller 2016).

Religion's dual relationship to authority helps to explain the rise of religious ethics in the 1950s and 1960s. As noted above, religion can either authorize ethical claims about the right and the good, or it can

be subject to ethical descriptions and assessments that enjoy their own rational authority. That dual relationship likewise helps to explain the Dependent and Independent Models for conceiving the relationship between religion and ethics. Owing to crises in authority across a range of institutions and professions in North American during the 1950s and 1960s, and owing to the rise of religious pluralism and cultural diversity during that same era, scholars and citizens were compelled to take a fresh look at resources for thinking about the good life and the good society (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988). Previously esteemed sources of moral wisdom and guidance were seen as unreliable or untrustworthy. Religions offer their own guidance and different visions of the right and the good, inviting scholars to probe religious traditions for their moral wisdom, to think about morality's relationship with religion, and to compare religious and secular traditions of moral thought. Not surprisingly, then, approaches to religious ethics that were organized according to the Dependent Model took shape. Yet religion was not, and is not, morally innocent. Religion's own crisis of authority, and its complicity in morally questionable political policies and practices in North America and abroad, cried out (and continues to cry out) for normative analysis. Thus the importance of the Independent Model for conceiving of religion's relationship with ethics.

Grasping the need to speak to social problems where matters of social and religious authority were contested, the first generation of North American religious ethicists largely saw themselves as contributing to the domain of ethics. That fact has generally gone unchanged over the last 50 years. Whether they see religion as a sacred canopy for ethics, or whether they carry out an ethics of belief, religious ethicists generally view themselves as contributing to knowledge about the moral life rather than to knowledge about religion, even though a good number of them exist in religious studies or theology departments. They view their subfield as widening our understanding of the moral life and offering resources for addressing questions that arise out of an expanded understanding of morality. Religious ethicists often presume a wider understanding of what counts as relevant to morality than do standard approaches to ethics in moral philosophy. But thinking about how religious ethics compares with moral philosophy might detract from considering religious ethics as a potential source of knowledge about religion. If we shift our gaze, we can see that religious ethicists can contribute to and benefit from the study of religion in a number of ways. Consider these eight possibilities.

First, religious ethicists can liberate the guild of religious studies from a positivist, naturalistic, and behavioristic view of religion. They can enable scholars and students to see that religions offer visions of the right and the good that provide reasons for action. Religions motivate their adherents, informing and shaping matters of personal identity in first-personal, "subject-referring" ways. Naturalist and behaviorist models for studying religion fatally distort the phenomena under their scrutiny because they picture human beings as a part of the natural order as it was understood according to canons that shaped the scientific revolution in Europe during the seventeenth century (Taylor 1984). Alert to matters of human agency and responsibility – fundamental to matters of ethics – religious ethicists can help scholars of religion re-shape how they view human action and subject/agent-formation in relation to religious experience, training, and enculturation. They can catalyze attention to how religions work to impart feelings, ways of seeing, and practices of self-examination among their adherents. These are matters of interest to religious ethics and scholars of religion alike, especially scholars interested in religion, psychology, and culture, and attention to them can expand the range of materials that scholars of religion can study and compare. Religious ethicists can provide a lexicon and set of resources for understanding religion's relation to moral formation and how religions seek to move and shape humans as self-interpreting animals (Taylor 1984).

Second, religious ethicists can identify how matters of ethics are often central to the religious traditions and practices they study – that no religion can be adequately represented without reference to its ethical resources for addressing (capably or not) questions of the right and the good in personal and political affairs. Religions are historically implicated in the contested considerations of gender, race, sexual orientation, class, power, the environment, and cultural difference. The study of religion can offer religious ethicists rich, concrete historical and sociological material for carrying out their work. Moreover, religious ethicists can make plain that religions have ways of reasoning about such matters that are themselves the proper topic for scholarly analysis and assessment. Religions are not only drivers of human action; they are sources of reflection, criticism, and argumentation. Ensuring that the study of religion critically engages religious reason-giving is a crucially important task for the religious ethicist as a contributor to the guild.

This fact means that religious ethicists can read canonical materials in the study of religion in a fresh light – and can encourage historians and philosophers of religion to do the same. Herein lies the third way in which religious ethics and religious studies can enrich each other. Typically, theoretical materials in the study of religion are read as if they were posing questions about the truth of religious claims or as if they are seeking to provide theories for studying religion in an academically legitimate way. Religious ethicists can remind their colleagues that many canonical materials, e.g. Hume, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, raise questions about whether religion is *good* for its adherents. Scholars of religion and ethics can thereby broaden the humanistic parameters according to which theoretical materials are understood and brought to bear on the study of religion.

In a related vein, and fourth, religious ethicists can benefit from discussions in the study of religion about basic theoretical questions that have helped to shape the discipline, e.g. the meaning of religion, theories about its origins and persistence, debates about the definition of religion, accounts of religion's psychological and social functions, concepts of religious language, theories of religion's ideological and utopian tendencies, and the like. Many of these topics have been taken up in the literature of cultural anthropology and the social sciences. All too often, religious ethicists view religions as only a form of meta-ethical or practical reason-giving without fully considering the humanistic aspects of religion that are queried by their colleagues in religious studies. Engaging these broader questions in the guild can help religious ethicists avoid their own kind of reductionism and expand their repertoire for understanding religion and ethics in everyday life.

Fifth, the study of religion can contribute to religious ethics insofar as religions enable us to understand the need for morality. Many, perhaps all, religions adopt a picture of human beings as social and interdependent, thereby making sense of the need for morality to help humans co-exist in ways that are right and good. Moreover, some religions have a picture of human fault that provides a framework for setting moral expectations when thinking about improving conditions of social and political life. For these reasons, the study of religion can identify accounts within religious traditions that aim to make sense of their many rules, norms, ideals, and the like.

Sixth, religions often offer patterns of practical moral reasoning to guide the conscience and ethical deliberation (Kelsay 2007). Religions not only have substantial norms, ideals, and values; they often include *methods* according to which such substantive ideals are deployed to address moral doubts, conflicts of duties, and matters of personal liability. Religions with rich traditions of law, pastoral advising, or jurisprudential reasoning have established methods for tackling questions that range from those concerning the individual conscience to matters of policy assessment (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988).

Religious ethicists can draw from the history of these traditions for their own work and can enrich the study of religion by clarifying patterns of moral reasoning and personal self-analysis that are central to religions themselves.

Seventh, religions can identify matters of importance that exist beyond or apart from morality. Not all of life can be assimilated to morality, however broadly it might be conceived. Matters of meaning and commitment – about things that we care about – lie beyond the grasp of ethical categories (Frankfurt 1998). We care about more than ethics and our relationships with others; we also ask about what is important to ourselves. With that fact in mind, the study of religion can point to where religions draw the limits of morality when thinking about human existence, and what they construe as important for adherents to have as sources and objects of care.

Eighth, religions often address how the pursuit of the right or the good is frustrated or foiled. Here the idea is that human existence includes the challenge of responding to the immoral or the non-moral – to what goes by the terms "moral evil" and "natural evil." While religion might claim to guarantee or ground morality, it does not guarantee that humans will comply with the demands of morality or that life is without setbacks, disappointments, and tragedies. Religions address these non-ideal facts of everyday life. Scholars of religion and religious ethicists can enrich each other's work by identifying how the traditions they study address such facts.

In these ways, religious ethicists and their fellow scholars of religion can mutually enrich their respective understandings of religion and can expand the concepts, theories, and resources for studying it.

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CHAPTER 44

Secularisms: From Political to Ethical

Slavica Jakelić

From "Secularization" to "Secularism"

Over the last two decades, the notions of "secularism" and "postsecularism" have become something of a scholarly fad. While this development became an opportunity for interdisciplinary engagements, its result was also the absence of conceptual clarity. What is more, in the midst of global and interdisciplinary interest in secularisms and postsecularisms, it was easy to forget that, until recently, concerns with all things secular were principally the domain of social sciences. For classical social theorists, the transformation of the role religion plays in social life was central to their understanding of modernity: they saw the impending demise of religion (Karl Marx), wrote about the rationalization of religious norms in the modern capitalist societies (Max Weber), and asked about the diminishing force of religions as a source of solidarity (Émile Durkheim).

Drawing on the ideas of the founders of their discipline, most twentieth-century social scientists argued that the processes of modernization (industrialization, urbanization, scientific and technological advancements, democratization) inevitably led to religious decline on institutional and individual levels. As a result, most social scientists but also scholars in other disciplines, including theologians, treated secularization teleologically – as an unavoidable result of historical changes associated with modernity. Only a few lonely voices of dissent – such as sociologists David Martin, Andrew Greeley, and Jeffrey K. Hadden – pointed to secularism as constitutive of the philosophical and ideological platform of modernization, and as such, an impetus for secularization.

The secularization thesis came under scrutiny in the 1980s and 1990s, when events such as the Iranian revolution and the fall of communist atheist regimes raised questions about the resurgence of religion. It was increasingly evident that religion was not alive and well only exceptionally (as in the case of the United States); the whole world looked as if it were undergoing religious revivals. Even Peter L. Berger, once among the most prominent advocates of the secularization thesis, changed his mind. In 1968, he was confident about the unstoppable march of secularization: he declared that, by the year 2000, "[t]he traditional religions are likely to survive in small enclaves and pockets," as sects that would resist "a worldwide secular culture" ("A Bleak Outlook is Seen for Religion," *The New York Times* 1968). At the end of the millennium, however, Berger saw the world "as furiously religious as it ever was" and, in some places, even more religious than it ever was (Berger 1999).

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

One implication of the religious vitality Berger described was the distrust, even dismissal, of the secularization theory. It was in that context that José Casanova's book on "public religions" introduced much needed nuance and clarity (Casanova 1994). Arguing for the reappraisal rather than rejection of the theory of secularization, Casanova distinguished three components of secularization: *as differentiation* of the secular from religious spheres, *as decline* of both religious beliefs and practices, and *as privatization* of religion. As Casanova convincingly argued, one of the main problems with the old paradigm of secularization was that it conflated historical processes with predictions, causes with consequences, and analysis with normative assumptions. Thus, if the differentiation hypothesis and privatization hypothesis (correctly) indicated some processes that happened with modernization of societies, the secularization thesis also carried the prophecy of what will or ought to happen (decline of religion).

Casanova's careful examination of the secularization thesis highlighted that the proximity between the notions of secularization and secularism was not simply etymological but also normative. This insight was pivotal as it gestured toward the exploration of the secularist assumptions built into the social sciences. Others noted this problem as well. Thus, although Radical Orthodox theologian John Milbank acknowledged that the notion of the *saeculum* did exist prior to the advent of modernity, he also argued that it was social theory that enabled the imagining, establishment, and maintenance of the secular as separate from the religious domain (Milbank 1990, 9). For Milbank, secular social sciences are in effect "theologies or anti-theologies in disguise" (Milbank 1990, 3).

Some scholars saw Milbank's arguments as simplistic, but others argued for an analogous understanding of the relationship between secularization and secularism in social sciences. Scholar of religion and social theorist Adam Seligman maintained not only that secularism is a component of the epistemologies and methodologies of social sciences; secularism has been long assumed, he wrote, to be a very condition of social inquiry (Seligman 2009). Likewise, political scientist Elizabeth Shakman Hurd argued that the idea of separation between religion and politics is the foundational belief of international relations (Hurd 2008).

Such discussions reflected an important shift in academic interests – away from secularization as an unavoidable historical process, toward secularism as a normative and ideological phenomenon. Scholars now explored the varieties of meanings, institutional and cultural formations, of secularism. They also offered powerful normative critiques of secularism, its imaginaries, and the ways in which it shaped the taken-for-granted structures of modern life. I look at the crisis of political secularisms that gave empirical impetus for the probing inquiries into genealogies of secularism; I also consider the critiques of secularism as an ideology, form of power, and a sensibility that shape modern political and cultural formations of the secular approach to authority and agency.

Secularisms: Concepts, Crises, Critiques

Whether scholars examined secularism through empirical, or theoretical, or normative lenses, they have most often presented it in two ways: as plural in character and as in conflict with religion. We can trace such a twofold, and at times conflicting, understanding of secularism in the discussions about its relation to science and political life (Jakelić 2010).

The modern history of science-religion relations seems to suggest that secularism here emerges as a form of antireligiousness, with various junctures of that story attesting to the science's putative anti-religious drive: the trial of Galileo Galilei in 1633 and the Scopes Trials in 1925, the ascent of the so-called "New Atheists" (who position science as religions' foe) and the revived, contemporary debates about the place of science in public education and in religious schools. Without much doubt, historical and normative understanding of the religion-science contestations, and the "scientific secularism" that often accompanies them, remains an important task (Plantinga 2009). But as scholars continue to think through the ways in which Western rationalism helped constitute the philosophical and methodological foundations of secularism as an anti-religious disposition, it remains equally vital to explore the complex iterations of the religion-science encounters, and to do so within but also beyond the confines of the Western historical experiences.

The theme of unavoidable conflict between secularism and religious communities and institutions also shapes the explorations of secularism as a framework for ordering modern political life, explorations that have dominated secularism studies. The latter reflects the extent to which secularism has become central to our understanding of modern democracies (Taylor 2010), especially the ideals of the separation between politics and religion, between state and religious institutions (Hurd 2008; Kuru 2009; Ferrari and Durham 2003; Sullivan 2005). Most models of political secularism that organize these relations carry a powerful democratizing impulse – the aspiration to create a public sphere open to all, regardless of their particular identities (Bhargava 2010; Hasan 2010). But as scholars often emphasize, political secularisms also entail forms of hegemony, especially in those instances in which they legitimize the homogenizing nationalist projects (in France or Turkey, for instance), and political ideas and practices attempting to confine the space of religion.

The hegemonic drives of political secularism greatly shaped the background of its crises over the last few decades. Thus, while secularism linked to science experienced somewhat of a revival at the start of the second millennium, the crises of political secularism have been global and have been developing regardless of the particular model that political secularism assumes – whether it is more assertive as in Turkey and France, "passive" and "ecumenical" (Kuru 2009) as in the United States, or stands as a model of "principled distance" and normative ideal as in India (Bhargava 2010). These crises, which to a great extent correspond to cultural pluralization and the global rise of public religions and religious fundamentalisms, have been especially evident in the legal arenas. Thus, from the UK to Australia, from Greece to Russia, one can see the emboldened religious actors' challenges to the established definitions' religious-secular distinctions and institutions that embody them, affecting the public expressions of religious identities and beliefs.

The global character of the crisis of political secularisms underscores not only the revival of religions but also the need to uncover the deeper, often unspoken normative meanings of secularism as they have come to shape and ground cultural, political, and legal cultures in different contexts. Drawing on my earlier work on this topic (Jakelić 2010, 2014, 2015), I highlight here three normative critiques of secularism – critiques of its Western Christian roots, its parochial views of agency and authority, and its links to modern states.

The Critique of Western Christian Roots of Secularism

While the history of the "the secular" is characterized by multiple meanings and shifting boundaries, scholars generally agree that the provenance of ideas and institutions of secularity and secularism is the

world of Western Christianity – from the ways in which the notion of *saeculum* (age/world/century) originated in medieval Latin Christendom's canon law, to its contemporary meaning linked to "expropriation and appropriation" of church property that occurred with the rise of modern states and the Protestant Reformation (Casanova 1994, 12–13, 15).

For Milbank, this particular genealogical account of the secular carries a proposition that secular was somehow latent and "gestating in the womb of 'Judeo-Christianity'" (Milbank 1990, 9), which is a notion that he rejected. But for other scholars, especially those who explore the instantiations of secular sensibilities and politics beyond Christianity and beyond the West, the Christian roots of secularism are the starting point of their inquiries. Indian scholar T. N. Madan, for example, begins with the notion of secularism as "a gift of Christianity" and a whole worldview that "establishes a hierarchical relation between the secular and the religious," which counters the Indian experience where the secular is encompassed within the religious (Madan in Bhargava 1998, 22). Similarly, Adam Seligman proposes that secularism (just like the idea of "religion") arose in a particular period of Christian history and cannot be applied to the histories of non-Christian civilizations (Seligman 2009).

One of the most influential critics of secularism, anthropologist Talal Asad – who has contributed to each of the three normative critiques articulated here – strives to unmask the connections but also the "breaks between Christian and secular life" (Asad 2003, 25, 26). For Asad, it is in these spaces that we can expose "the secular" as it circumscribes the "secular redemptive politics," which seems similar to Christian redemptive sensibilities but is distinctively democratic and anticlerical" (Asad 2003, 61). Moral philosopher Charles Taylor, whose work shaped many conversations on religious-secular problematic since the late 1990s, also does not question the Western Christian origins of secularism. But unlike Madan or Seligman or Asad, Taylor does not seek to retrieve the roots of secularism in order to dismiss them but in order to highlight one current of its normative history. In so doing, Taylor counters the subtraction narratives about the emergence of the secular age with his more nuanced and more constructive genealogical account of the immanentization of virtue in the context of the late medieval Catholic Christianity (Taylor 2007). Moreover, he wants to recover one thread in the normative history of secularism to posit it as the principle for liberal modern democracies, Western and non-Western (Taylor 1998, 31–53).

Stated differently, even if their normative objectives are different, scholars who acknowledge the Western Christian origins of secularism concur that this particular location makes secularism's claim to universality and objectivity unsustainable. The same is the case with the critics of secularism's views of agency and authority.

The Critique of Secular Understanding of Agency and Authority

At the heart of much of Asad's critiques of secularism is his exploration of the type of agency that secularism assumes – the one asserting autonomy and freedom against the authority of tradition. For Asad, this secular notion of agency entails the "romance of resistance"(Asad 2003, 71), that is, the idea that one can act freely, make history, and overcome suffering solely through contestation of and resistance to external authority. While this understanding of agent as self-empowering, Asad maintains, came to define the notion of agency as such, there are different grammars and forms of action that can shape agency. As he explains, if secular agency is posited against suffering, religions often think of suffering as an essential element of the human condition and, moreover, not as an absence of agency but a particular form of it (Asad 2003, 67).

Building on Asad's ideas, Saba Mahmood critiques the manner in which the secular view of agency structures feminist approaches to freedom and empowerment. In her exploration of the women's piety movement in Cairo, Mahmood finds that the scholarly interpretations of these women's actions generally arise within a framework of suppression/subversion and, as a result, focus on what women's reform movements work against, not what they stand for (Mahmood 2005, 22, 24, 25). Following Asad's insights, Mahmood declares that one's capacity for agency entails "not only...acts that *resist* the norms" but those through which one "*inhabits* norms" (Mahmood, 25, italics mine). Put differently, Asad and Mahmood both strive to unmask the secular view of agency as parochial. They also want to expose the idea of secular agency as the use of reason against passions ascribed to the realm of religious subjectivity, positing that secular agency is not a universal notion but is based on normative, emotionally fraught assumptions about human nature (Asad 2006, 93–106; see also Mahmood 2005, 5).

Several decades ago, political philosopher Michael Sandel pointed to the type of agency established in a liberal-democratic state: he argues that a democratic polity legislates and institutionalizes a particular, liberal idea of personhood, which prioritizes of individual rights and self-mastery over common good. Sandel's arguments thus encompass the critiques of secularism's claim to neutrality and objectivity and a critique of secularism's connections to the modern state, to which we turn next.

The Critique of Secularism as a Legitimization of Nation-States

According to the ideals of the liberal-democratic doctrine, the modern state is based on the principles of liberty, equality, and neutrality, giving no preference to either religious or non-religious beliefs, and guaranteeing that conflicts can be resolved not with an enforcement of belief but, to paraphrase Jürgen Habermas, by the force of the better argument. For Marc Galanter, nothing could be further from the truth: as he declared several decades ago, the modern state not only defines the boundaries of neutrality and nature of social institutions differently from religion, it also defines what religion is.

Madan's critiques of secularism as established in the context of the modern Indian state echo Galanter's views. Madan maintains that the Indian model of secularism cannot claim to be the foundation of equality or peace because it privileges some religious traditions over others and, in so doing, becomes conducive for religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. For Asad, too, secularism is not the promotor of peace but a technology of control and governance that nation-states use but to "classify and regulate. . .religion, education, health, leisure, work, income, justice, and war" (Asad 2003, 188). Countering one of Charles Taylor's propositions, Asad declares that secularism is not a question of political legitimacy but an attempt to transcend and replace religious and other particularities by demanding full loyalty to some nation-state.

We find similar arguments in the work of theologians, religious studies scholars, and social scientists. For political theologian William T. Cavanaugh, the nation-state colonizes the Christian imagination and wants to submit all types of attachment to itself, affirming itself through violence and the legitimate use of violence (Cavanaugh 2011). Religious studies scholar Markus Dressler follows Asad's ideas in his own studies of Alevites in Turkey, to show that Kemalism's form of power attempts to govern religion and determine its meanings and scope, in order to establish and promote the Turkish's state's hegemonic idea of national identity (Dressler 2010). Echoing Asad but also drawing on Peter Van der Veer's work, scholar of international relations Elizabeth Shakman Hurd writes that nationalism – whether defined by French, American, or Turkish nationalists – feeds on the symbolic repertoire of religion and then transforms it by nationalizing and, hence, secularizing it (Hurd 2008, 105, 110).

The critics of secularism as a foundation of modern states, in other words, argue that secularism replaces one type of violence (religious) with another, that of the nation-state and imperial wars (Asad 2003, 11; Cavanaugh 2011, 15). They, moreover, propose that secularism does not help mitigate the challenges of religious pluralism, but provides a vision for and institutional enforcement of the projects of national homogenization, which are directed against plurality of collective identities and especially against religious particularisms.

Critique of the Critiques of Secularism

The critics of secularism discussed above introduced many valuable insights into the studies of secularization, secularism, and religion. They correctly pointed out the unsustainability of secularism's claims to universal justice and rationality – not simply because of the particular, Western and Christian, origins of secularism, but more importantly, because of the ways in which secularism enacted by nation-states always privileges some worldviews and communities over others. The critics are especially forceful when they question secularism's capacity to address the pluralism of worldviews if it posits itself both as an arbiter and a participant of that pluralism.

Yet, there are important reasons to problematize the critiques of secularism. This is particularly the case if one does not approach the religious-secular problematic in the way many of secularism's critics do – as the upshot of the powers of the modern project or as determined by the genealogies and politics inherent to the religious-secular binary – but rather considers this problematic as dialectical in nature, and defined through contestations *as well as* convergences. One productive trajectory of the critique of secularism's critics emerges from the act of historicization of nationalisms'-religions'-secularisms' links. What this type of approach demonstrates is that modern nation-states are hardly secular in nature and that the critics of secularism most often operate with a flattened, reductionist view of modernity, which a priori shapes their analyses and interpretations in ways that take away the agency from religious actors and institutions. Furthermore, to historicize nationalisms'-religions'-secularisms' connections is to create a site for a critical assessment of the discussions of "religious" and "secular" agency as well. Scholars like Asad assert the need to contextualize these concepts, yet his focus is on the differences between the religious and the secular forms of agency, which ultimately and inadvertently essentializes the two categories. Rather than opening the analytic approaches to the questions of freedom and authority, then, the studies of religious v secular agency foreclose such inquiries.

Put differently, against several articulations of the normative critiques of secularism, it is plausible to suggest that secularism is a phenomenon that ought to be considered historically, sociologically, anthropologically, and theologically, thus beyond the questions about the place, time, and context of its origin. This is vital not only, as sociologist Nilüfer Göle suggests, to acknowledge the "civilizational powers of Western modernity" (Göle 2010, 244); this is pivotal because only a global and comparative perspective that does not carry an a priori analytic framework could show how the religious and the secular, in their various iterations and constellations, have shaped and continue to shape the multiplicity of modern projects in the contemporary world. On this view, one aspect of the normative critiques of secularism that especially needs probing and problematizing is a thin, reductionist view of secularism inherent to these critiques – the idea that secularisms are foremost, or merely, a political phenomenon, whose relations with religions are exhausted within the framework of power. This is a problem that characterizes postsecularity scholarship as well.

It is important to see that secularism is also a moral orientation in and toward the world, guided by a drive to enable human flourishing. As Rajeev Bhargava points out, when viewed as inherently normative, secularisms cease to be just the property of the West – a concept or an ideal that could have been only imposed on, or appropriated by, the non-Western societies. Rather, as Bhargava shows, secularism as a normative project had precedents in other historical and cultural experiences. Furthermore, as the exploration of various social movements indicates, the enactments of secularism as a moral disposition reveal how they do not relate to religions solely through power contestations and conflicts but through shared moral sources as well. For example, the secular ideas and practices in the context of Solidarity, the Polish movement against the communist regime, calls attention to the fact that secularism had more than one meaning even in the context of communist, atheist societies – one political, to legitimize the powers of the anti-religious Marxist state, and the other more ethical, which framed a powerful critique of those atheist states.

The case of Solidarity and the type of secularism it affirmed is not an exception. If we compare the Polish case with other cases – for example, the civil rights movement in the United States, or the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa – the conclusions would be similar: we cannot reduce the grammar of secularism and practices of secular activists only to questions of power or self-empowerment. As social theorist James Jasper underscores, the importance of protests in the context of social movements lies not in their practical accomplishments but in the fact that they provide the contexts in which individuals and citizens can probe their moral intuitions. Social movements, in other words, present themselves as particularly productive sites for a greater understanding of not just the politics but also the ethics of secularism in the twenty-first century.

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CHAPTER 45

Postsecularisms: The Politics and Ethics of Postsecular

Slavica Jakelić

"Postsecularism:" From Heresy to Orthodoxy

According to James Beckford, some of the earliest thinking about postsecularity can be traced back to 1966, and Andrew Greeley's article "After Secularity: The Neo-Gemeinschaft Society: A Post-Christian Postscript." As a dissident of the sociological community, thus in accord with his broader misgivings about the secularization thesis, Greeley argued in this article that, as scholars observed secularization and rationalization of religion, they also needed to attend to the new emerging types of religious fellowship – those gesturing toward the spaces of the Gemeinschaft-like community (Greeley in Beckford, 2012). Sixteen years later, one of the most forceful American critics of secularism, Richard John Neuhaus, wrote of a new period in American history – the moment of "the collapse of the 200-year old hegemony of the secular Enlightenment" and the need for a new "overarching meaning system" in public life (Neuhaus in Beckford 2012). For Neuhaus, this new system was religion.

Greeley's and Neuhaus's propositions did not immediately spark the talk of postsecular, at least partly because they appeared at the time when secularization theory was still taken for granted. The turning point for scholarly conversations of postsecularity was Jürgen Habermas's use of this notion, most early in his speech in 2001 (Boy 2017). To be sure, between sociologist Greeley and theologian Neuhaus, on the one hand, and political philosopher Habermas on the other, theologians of postmetaphysical and postliberal disposition developed a particular view of postsecularity, reflecting, according to John Boy, the increasing interdisciplinary interest in "going 'beyond' something" (Boy 2017). But it was Habermas's interest in postsecular that legitimized this concept beyond theology, religious studies, and scholarship of postmodern orientation. Thus, it was only after 2005 that the term acquired prominence in a range of disciplines.

Scholars have since systematized the meanings and uses of the concept of postsecularism in various ways. I recognize their insights below but also diverge from them, to argue that the postsecular moment has been identified and the notion of postsecular probed in three major ways, all of which we can trace in Habermas's thinking about postsecularity: to *describe* and *explore* religious changes in the late modern world; to *diagnose* and *reflect on* a particular moment in the understanding of religions; and, to *alter* approaches to religious-secular problematic intellectually and politically.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Postsecular as a Way to Describe and Explore Religious Changes in the Late Modern World

Philosopher Hent de Vries wrote in 2006 that "[a] society is 'post-secular' if it reckons with the diminishing but enduring – and hence, perhaps, even more resistant and recalcitrant – existence of the religious" (de Vries 2006). Berger's and Casanova's 1990s work directly addressed the reckoning de Vries described, even if they did not explicitly use the notion "postsecular." That is to say, Berger's and Casanova's ideas about the desecularization and deprivatization of religion respectively represent some of the earliest attempts to understand the rise of "strong religions" and the need to move beyond the idea of modernity as a secular condition (Almond et al. 2003).

Berger's thesis about the desecularization of the world, contrary to some interpretations (Stoeckl 2012), did not suggest the incompatibility of religion with modernity but constituted his more complex arguments about the relationship between religion and modern pluralism. Interested especially in the role of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianities in the modernization processes beyond Western societies, Berger did not think of desecularization simply in terms of religious rejection of, or challenges to, modernity but also – and in line with his Weberian disposition – in terms of religious contributions to it. Descriptively, Berger asked: how are we to study and understand the place of religion in the context of desecularization of the world? Normatively, he looked at religious changes to explore (what had long been his primary) concern – ontological pluralism as a condition of modern religious experience.

Casanova's historical-sociological analysis of global religious changes provided, as discussed in this volume, empirical lenses for a nuanced theoretical re-envisioning of secularization theory. But what Casanova's project especially brought forth was the framing of religious revivals as the deprivatization of religion – the process he understood as the refusal of religious actors and institutions to be confined to the private arena, thus anticipating de Vries' point about the "recalcitrant" religions.

The extent to which Casanova's ideas influenced Habermas's own thinking about postsecularity has often gone unnoticed, despite the fact that Habermas is explicit about this connection. The latter is especially evident in Habermas's argument that postsecular does not signify the end of secularization or a historical moment in religious developments that warrants the dismissal of secularization theory. Contrary to suggestions and hopes expressed by Neuhaus or, as we shall see shortly, of Radical Orthodox theologians, Habermas does not use the notion of postsecular to describe some new triumph of an unchanged religion. Rather, like Casanova, and similarly to sociologist Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (2000), Habermas sees postsecular as a moment in which religions constitute and reconstitute modernity's multiple cultural and political programs.

It is in light of recognition of religious transformations *and* transformative roles of religions in social life that postsecularism acquired another layer of meaning – to signify a new moment in the scholarly appreciation of religions.

Postsecular as a Way to Diagnose and Reflect on a Particular Moment in the Understanding of Religions

Sociologist Kristina Stoeckl argues that, as far as sociology and political theory have been concerned, the notion of postsecularity often points to scholars "somewhat open to the topic of religion" (Stoeckl 2012). Stoeckl is not isolated in her diagnosis of the postsecular moment as a "religious turn" in the academy; William Barbieri's synthetic reflections on postsecularity indicate this as well. In this regard, Barbieri

particularly highlights theorists Michael Hard and Antonio Negri (literature and political science respectively), who offer a critique of globalization that contains various biblical themes; literary theorist Terry Eagleton, who responds to "New Atheism" while unhesitatingly drawing on his own religious background; and philosophers Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek, who directly engage with religious scriptures and traditions in their writings (Barbieri 2014, 146). To this list of scholars who attest to the religious turn in scholarly circles one should also add sociologists with no prior interest in religion – for example, one of the leading European sociologists Ulrich Beck, who discovered the vital importance of religion for modern pluralism only in the age "after secularization" (Beck 2010). For feminist scholars, too, postsecular is an opportunity to, as Elaine Graham writes, "correct (often hidden) gendered nature of our thinking about faith and reason, . . .sacred and secular" (Graham 2012, 243, 239), and, even more, to explore *and* expose religion for the ways in which it both inhibits and empowers women.

It is in the context of such proposals that the interdisciplinary engagements surface as especially desirable: one can find, for example, significant resources for postsecular theological approaches to religion and gender in social sciences, among others, in Göle's and Mahmood's work, which explores the complex ways in which Islam shapes women's agency in public life (Göle 1996; Mahmood 2005). At the same time, what the feminist considerations of postsecularity also uncover is that postsecularity does not signify only a new interest in, or openness to religion, but a deeper process – what Habermas calls a "change in the consciousness" (Habermas 2017 and 2010). This change, on the one hand, reflects an increased awareness that scholars need to move beyond European parochialism and triumphalism in the approach to religious matters. On the other hand, this postsecular also signals the need to leave behind perspectives that, arising within political theory, defined much of the thinking about the role of religion in democratic life – the ideas of John Rawls, when these implied the exclusion of religious particularities and reasons from the domain of public reason, but also Habermas's own classic approach to public life and the arena of civil society as spaces shaped by reason and rationality. For Habermas, then, postsecular as a change in the consciousness has significant theoretical and normative implications because it stands as a twofold possibility: first, to envision public life as constituted by religious and secular perspectives alike, and second, to appreciate religions as enriching for conversations about the common good.

This particular trajectory in thinking about religious-secular plurality and place of religions in the public arena had been charted out already in Casanova's work, which was both analytic and normative in character. Drawing on Habermas's (pre-postsecular) concept of communicative interaction, Casanova conceived of public religions as critical for social integration "through the discursive and agonic participation" in civil society, that is, as enabling both the contestation and construction of common good (Casanova 1994, 230–231). Thus, while Casanova thought of public religions as a challenge to the Enlightenment premises of modernity "comparable to those of feminist and republican critiques of liberal theory" (Seligman 1994, 488), a post-2001 Habermas argued that religions assert values and ideals of human dignity, solidarity, and social justice in a way that provides critical and emancipatory perspectives in the world dominated by capitalist economic logic. For both Casanova and Habermas, religions can energize democratic institutions.

Put succinctly, the postsecular moment shaping a variety of disciplines emerges as a moment of reflexivity, which demands scholarly rethinking of the very categories of religion. One result of that reflexivity is the notion of the postsecular as a way to redefine and transform the ways in which scholars approach religious-secular encounters, as scholars and as citizens.

Postsecular as a Call to Alter the Approaches to Religious-Secular Problematic Intellectually and Politically

Scholars who engage postsecularity as an analytic and normative category do not only reconsider their approaches to religion but also develop constructive projects concerned with rethinking of the religious-secular problematic and relations. They do the latter in a variety of ways: by affirming the religious and secular voices alike, by inviting the reestablishment of religion at the center of social life, and by proposing that we redefine the meanings and scope of secularism.

The first form to revising the religious-secular encounters in the time after secularization was articulated by one the forerunners of scholarly concern with postsecularisms, Richard Neuhaus. As we saw, he viewed the movement "beyond" secular as the one in which the religious order replaces the secular order. Theologians of postmodern, postliberal provenance, especially those in the Radical Orthodoxy camp, follow a similar trajectory. For most of theological thinking developed in this vein, as Stoeckl (with anxiety) recognizes, postsecular signifies the "regime change" that brings societies back to religion (Stoeckl 2012). Or, on Barbieri's reading, postsecular here has for its "organizing purpose the restoration of religious credibility" (Barbieri 2014, 145).

Habermas develops ideas for the second type of religious-secular realignment: his attempt to construe a different account of religion is intertwined with political questions about the religious-secular relations in the contexts of a postsecular, hence, pluralistic society. On the one hand, this type of society means the equal participation of religious and secular citizens in public life. On the other hand, postsecular pluralistic society requires tolerance. Similarly to philosopher Bernard Williams (1998), Habermas does not think of toleration as an appreciation of other's perspective but endurance of it. Unlike Williams, Habermas considers postsecular toleration in terms of recognition that others have rights to "convictions, practices and ways of living that" that we ourselves reject (Habermas 2017) all the while everyone taking part in public life remains accountable to each other for their own political contributions. According to Habermas's vision, then, the postsecular civil society reconciles the ideals of the Enlightenment and of pluralism through equal citizenship and respect for cultural differences respectively.

We see the contours of the third understanding of the postsecular as a moment requiring a different disposition toward religious-secular problematic in the works of political theorists Rajeev Bhargava and William Connolly. Bhargava's ideas are radically different from Milbank's or theologian William Cavanaugh's (Connolly 1999) since Bhargava does not think that the problem of secularism is its normative origins but that these origins have been forgotten. He therefore proposes the need for an alternative conception of it, and develops a constructivist account of secularism while drawing in particular on the history of secularism, modern and premodern, in the Indian context (Bhargava 1998, 2010). Similarly, Connolly argues that we ought to refashion secularism into one possible perspective among other religious and non-religious perspectives. For Connolly, who is, like Casanova and Habermas, interested in the agonistic aspects of democracy, the tension that emerges from critical engagement between religious and non-religious views is good for both: while informing each other, they also constrain each other.

Critiques of Postsecularisms: Thin Imaginings of "Religion" and of "Secularism"

As the category of postsecular rose in prominence, so much so that some see it as a new orthodoxy, it also gained powerful critics (Mufti 2013). On the one hand are the objections to its conceptual muddiness and

incoherence (Mufti 2013; Beckford, 2012); on the other hand are critiques of postsecularity scholarship because it "refuses to examine the legal and political forces at work in regulating what counts as 'religion' in public life" (Beckford 2012, 51). Sociologist Michelle Dillon sees both of these problems in Habermas's work: his postsecular, she maintains, does not only have multiple meanings, but it also does not recognize religions in terms of their "embodied experiences and emotions" and the internal plurality of religious contestations (Dillon 2012, 153). In other words, while the scholars of postsecularity might see it as a chance for a redefined understanding of, and attitude toward, religion, their act of defining religion often confines it.

Aamir Mufti critiques postsecularity as incoherent and analytically confusing but, even more importantly, as "evasive about the transition it supposedly marks" and purposefully obfuscates (Mufti 2013, 9). To sociologist Gennaro Ascione, the transition from secular and secularization toward postsecular is not a transition after all but an attempt to provide a different foundation for the classical modernization narrative about Western geocultural superiority, this time in postmodern terms (Ascione 2017). Scholars of religion Markus Dressler and Arvind-Pal S. Mandair similarly view the notion of postsecular as forgetful of its own history and preventing an inquiry into that history, arguing that instead of the postsecular, scholars should move toward the idea of "the post-secular-religious" (Mandair and Dressler 2011). The latter concept, Dressler and Mandair declare, would acknowledge "the irresolvable contradiction, or aporia, that lies at the heart of the religio-secular paradigm and remains open to the questions raised in light of the experience of our postcolonial democracy" (Mandair and Dressler 2011, 4). More recently, Dressler affirmed the political critique of (what Casanova calls) "the knowledge regimes" of secularism, arguing for the need to move beyond the walls of academia in order to dismantle the religio-secularist agendas in specific contexts (Dressler 2014).

The critics of postsecularity and the proliferating literature on postsecularism correctly stress the need for greater analytic clarity in the uses of this term and for a more reflexive approach to its genealogies, especially as the latter manifests in the postsecular attempts to delineate and restrain the proper domain of religion. Yet, the difficulty with the ideas of postsecularism and postsecular literature is not only that they reaffirm the unreflexive and often reductionist accounts of religion; the problem, as James Beckford argues, is also that the ideas of postsecularity trade on the simplistic notions of the secular (Beckford 2012, 16).

It is at this juncture that the scholars of postsecularity meet the normative critics of secularism discussed in this volume's entry on secularisms: both groups ultimately point to the secular and to secularism as a matter of politics and of power relations that constitute and reflect the Western project of modernity. Habermas, even as he uses the secular to describe the citizens' ontological positions, all too easily slips into defining the secular as it shapes the elements of the state's "neutrality." Charles Taylor rejects the subtraction story of the victory of the secular over the religious, affirming the "immanent frame" as a space that both believers and nonbelievers share and within which they make normative evaluations (Taylor 2007). Yet, in Taylor's rendering of the story of secularity, the moral "drive to Reform" he discerned at the root of the immanent frame, seems to lose its moral forcefulness due to the very processes of immanentization – due to its becoming secular (Taylor, 2007).

In contrast to the thin and often reductionist readings of secularism that shape many critiques of secularism as well as much of the literature on postsecularism, it is possible to understand secularism more broadly as a fundamental disposition toward the world driven by a desire to support and enable human flourishing. While enactments of secularism will always arise within a particular context, as a moral orientation in and toward the world, secularism cannot be claimed or deemed the property of any one tradition or culture, and it certainly cannot be claimed as primarily or solely the property of politics.

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2 Approaches

CHAPTER 46

History of Religions

Donald K. Swearer

Exploring Religious Ethics

Previous chapters have explored topics in religious traditions, ranging from the metaphysical backing of moral beliefs to the dynamics of text and canon. This chapter examines the place of the history of religions with respect to the work of comparative religious ethics. It is hardly surprising that the development of the study of the history of religions has also attended to matters in ethics. And it is thereby also not surprising that many of the themes that occupy scholarly attention in exploring religious ethics come to light from the perspective of the history of religions.

Among the several contributions that the history of religions makes to the study of comparative religious ethics, two, in particular, stand out. First, as part of a religious system, ethics is informed by the several components that constitute the polychromatic network of a religion; for example, cosmology, soteriology, and ritual. Second, the history of religions brings to the work of religious ethics an emphasis on the descriptive historical and contextual, but not at the expense of inductively derived general truths or general ethical patterns. My examination of these and other contributions of the history of religions to reflection about the nature of religious ethics follows the recent history of the development of the interaction between historians of religions and ethicists. I configure the ongoing process and results of this interaction around the following themes important for comparative reflection: particularism and holism; cosmology and ethical naturalism; narrative ethics and soteriology; history of religions and a global ethic.

The history of religions was one of the midwives assisting at the birth of comparative religious ethics in the 1970s. These beginnings were characterized by a debate between ethicists trained in the methodologies of Western philosophy and social sciences, and historians of religions schooled in the historical traditions (texts, languages, social and institutional histories) of the world's religions. Although neither side was monolithic and the dividing line between the two was fluid and overlapping, the historians of religions challenged the ethicists on the grounds of methodological reductionism and theoretical overkill, and for imposing Western analytical models and formal structures of moral reasoning onto richly diverse, historically and culturally embedded indigenous religio-ethical systems. The ethicists, in turn, saw the agenda of the historians of religions as promoting a religio-cultural particularism lacking analytical rigor, unable to provide a coherent framework or general structure essential for meaningful normative and comparative work. Analogues to this debate can be found elsewhere in disputes between a

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

communitarian, virtue approach to ethics versus a formal, universalizable structure of moral reasoning, and postcolonial critiques of the imposition of essentializing categories forged in the academic and political cultures of the West on quite disparate cultures.

Historians of religions challenge interpretations of religious ethics that require precise analytical concepts and a primary focus on moral reasoning. We argue for a more holistic approach that includes not only doctrinal texts and seminal philosophical concepts, but also the lived tradition in its greater complexity – its rituals and practices, its popular stories as well as grand narratives, and the cultural ethos in which religious traditions are embedded. Historians are not opposed to conceptual frameworks per se, but question "their degree of precision and specification, their source, and their illuminative powers. Hardened conceptual tools may break as much as they dig out, and inappropriate tools may damage the terrain" (Childress 1979, 4).

Historians of religions consider that their discipline avoids reductive, univocal conceptions of religion/religious ethics or preconceived frames of reference imposed on historically distinctive and dynamic living traditions. Instead, they bring a holistic, comparative-inductive approach to the study of religion that investigates a wide variety of continuities among different systems of belief and practice without reducing them to a single referent (Bianchi 1995, 400). This contextual, historical approach does not depend on or lead to a universal theory. Its interdisciplinary approach results in the construction of a historical, typological, multi-dimensional map of the actual religious terrain. In brief, the history of religions proposes that religious ethics should be mapped within the contextual frameworks of the worldview and ethos of a particular religious tradition. But what does this claim mean in practical terms? The remainder of this chapter proposes to forge a response to this question using recent history of religions' contributions to the field of religious ethics.

Particularism and Holism: The Example of Buddhism

In the 1980s and 1990s Buddhist ethics emerged as a major field of study, not only as part of Buddhist studies but also within the context of the history of religions/religious ethics discussions. Several factors contributed to this development: the provocative interpretation of Theravāda ethics in *Comparative Religious Ethics: A New Method* (Little and Twiss 1978) and the resultant debate between David Little and several historians of religions, in particular, Frank E. Reynolds; the appearance of the digital *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* (JBE) in 1994 and its online conferences; a dramatic increase in published monographs in the area of Buddhist ethics, most notably the work of Damien Keown, who co-founded JBE with Charles Prebish; and the impact of socially engaged Buddhism on both the development of American Buddhism and Buddhist social ethics.

Until quite recently, the study of Buddhism in the West tended to romanticize the tradition as an esoteric "other," defined it in terms of an other-worldly soteriology, or approached it as a philosophical system constructed on the seminal teachings of suffering (*dukkha*), not-self, emptiness, and nirvāna. Much that went on in Buddhist societies and cultures was ignored, or perceived as epiphenomenal, or critiqued as an accommodation to uneducated lay folk who lacked the intellect and spiritual dedication of monks. Buddhism, then, was constructed as a two-storey affair: "real" Buddhism was a monastic, soteriological religion; Buddhist ethics was either provisional or essentially assimilated into Buddhist soteriology. Scholars who contributed to this dualistic construction included Max

Weber, who represented Buddhism as an otherworldly mysticism type of religion, a shadow that fell on *Comparative Religious Ethics*, characterized by one reviewer as "Weber's progeny, once removed" (Stout 1980).

Metaethically, Little and Twiss (1978) propose that a religious ethic integrates a *religious action guide* and a *moral action guide*. The first is based on the supreme authority ascribed to a religion's cosmology or object of ultimate concern, such as *nirvāna* or God, an authority that resolves life's deepest enigmas (e.g. suffering). A moral action guide addresses problems of other-regard, cooperation, and caring for the material welfare of others. In the case of Buddhism, Little and Twiss argue that the ultimate vindicating authority of *nirvāna* as the supreme *dharma*, predicated on the deconstruction of the self (*anātman*), so dominates Theravādin practical reasoning that an ethic of regard for the material welfare of others is problematized and undermined. Consequently, moral action guiding texts that stipulate norms of mutual responsibility, cooperation, and other-regard are judged to be provisional because of Buddhism's "fundamental belief in the ultimate unreality of human persons" (Little and Twiss 1978, 241).

In contrast to models for the study of comparative religious ethics built on the structure of moral reasoning *à la* Little and Twiss or neo-Kantian rationalism (Green 1978), Frank E. Reynolds proposes that the historian of religions' approach to comparative religious ethics should begin with a broad, general understanding of the religions under investigation; then focus specifically on their ethical dimension; identify the central religio-ethical pattern that plays a predominant role in the traditions; investigate the substantive similarities and differences among the ways the common pattern has been articulated in these religious contexts; and compare the ways in which these patterns have functioned in the lives of religious communities (Reynolds 1980). The descriptive picture or map that results from this process challenges rigid distinctions between soteriology and ethics; specifically, in the Buddhist case between a teleological, *nirvānic* ethic and a consequentialist, *karmic* ethic. Reynolds does not obviate such distinctions; instead, he integrates diverse ethical "modalities" into a broader whole bound together by a common religio-ethical pattern. This pattern correlates modes of moral reasoning with multiple cosmologies and different social locations. It situates ethics in relationship to other components of the Buddhist worldview (viz. cosmology, epistemology), modes of activity and practice (viz. meditation, ritual), and sectors of the Buddhist community.

Methodologically, the history of religions approach to the study of ethics is holistic in the sense proposed above. It does not presume to account for the entirety of a religious tradition or construct an "essence" that defines the whole tradition vis-à-vis its "manifestations." Rather, the history of religions maps action guides and ethical discourse within a general picture and a central pattern, but not a general theory. This approach involves an "intensive study of the structure, dynamics and social implications of the normative modes of action which different traditions have, at various times and places, expressed in their teachings and manifested in their community life" (Reynolds 1979, 23). While some Buddhologists attempt to correlate Buddhist ethics with particular Western metaethical theories, such as Aristotelian eudaemonistic ethics (Keown 1991, ch. 8), others argue that Buddhist ethics should not be constructed in terms of a particular theory and that to do so robs a reading of narrative texts, in particular, of their rich particularity as discursive ethical sites (Hallisey 1996). As the preceding discussion indicates, the history of religions may be said to bring the twin perspectives of historical particularism and inductive holism to the enterprise of comparative religious ethics. An investigation of the historical and contextual particularity of religions enables one to derive a general picture or map and a common religioethical pattern.

Cosmology and Ethical Naturalism

Historians of religion contend that moral reasoning should not be treated as an isolated system but studied as part of a complex cultural whole that includes not only moral beliefs but also beliefs about reality. This view rests on the assumption that how one acts and reflects on the meaning and reasons for one's actions mirrors the larger picture of how one understands the nature of the world (i.e. the cosmology). In this context, the term "cosmology" is broadly construed as a "study of the ways in which cultures and individuals relate their basic notions of the origins of the reality in which they live their lives to the patterns of action that they consider to be ... worthy of choice" (Lovin and Reynolds 1985, 8). Historians of religions argue that within the scope of religious ethics an account of moral action and moral reason that does not engage the cosmology in which it is set will be restricted; that is, the picture justifying a particular course of action will be incomplete; and, of even greater significance, the symbolic web of meaning that informs moral agency will be lost. For example, it has been argued that the uniqueness of Confucian ethics reflects its embeddedness in a non-dualistic, organismic worldview (Geaney 2000, 467). Furthermore, historians of religion contend that the purview of investigation should not be confined to formal schema of moral reasoning but should include a wide variety of expressive modes, including narratives, doctrinal treatises, legal codes, ritual, and ceremonial patterns (Lovin and Reynolds 1985, 4).

The correlation between the way people identify their moral choices and how they identify and test their beliefs about reality has been characterized as ethical naturalism. The empirical cast of ethical naturalism challenges both *a priori* and descriptive formal patterns of moral reasoning: "[it] seeks to describe the relationships between worldviews and norms in ways that accurately reflect the tensions and controversies in a community's experience, in ways that reproduce the complexity of a tradition and allow the identification and meaningful comparison of the most crucial elements within it" (Lovin and Reynolds 1985, 30). Ethical naturalists, therefore, affirm ethical pluralism over-against both universalistic formalism and subjective relativism or idealist versus positivist analyses of moralities (Bird 1981, 162). While embracing cultural diversity, ethical naturalism also sees similarities among the limits and possibilities of human experience that make moral judgments and choices intelligible across cultures (Lovin and Reynolds 1992, 273). These similarities emerge inductively from the dialogical practice of comparative religious ethics itself, rather than being imposed as a deep structure or derived as a universal pattern of practical reason. This practical engagement calls for an imaginative act of translation more akin to metaphor than to syllogism, to mimetic performance than to logical argument (Schweiker 1992, 269ff.).

The historian of religions' dialogue with different religio-ethical systems can and has been extended to include systematic analyses of religious ethics, as well. In her descriptive study of Aztec cosmology, for example, Kay Read demonstrates that Aztec myths embody a paradigm of transformative sacrifice that guides all levels of conduct in Aztec society. Charles Reynolds and Ronald Green find Read's analysis of the ways in which Aztec myths validate and vindicate the moral norms of Aztec society a model of what comparative ethics can be if ethicists and historians of religions engage one another in serious dialogue (Reynolds and Green 1986, 147). They suggest a "thick theory" for understanding the ethical significance of cosmogony, a universal feature of religious traditions that would pursue the following questions: how do cosmogonies vindicate basic ethical norms of individual conduct, social institutions, and moral virtue; how do they validate normative ethical standards; how do they guide individuals and groups in the

selection of specific ethical principles and rules; how do they help individuals and groups answer the question of why be moral, and how to deal with moral failure; and how do social forces and cultural traditions inform cosmogonies (Reynolds and Green 1986, 146). With these questions, Reynolds and Green are proposing a "conceptual agenda" with the intention of bridging the gap between theory and description in order to enhance both (Reynolds and Green 1986: 147). The issue remains, however, whether such a conceptual agenda with its emphasis on moral reasoning, vindication, and validation does not overly constrain the ethical textures embedded in the broad mythologized and ritualized cosmological frameworks at the core of religious traditions.

Soteriology: Saints and Virtues

> I ... recommend that an hour spent in the company of a Pachomius ... or a Saint Martin can tell us ... how to begin to answer the challenge posed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "It is becoming clear every day that the most urgent problem besetting our church is this: how can we live the Christian life in the modern world." (Brown 1987, 14)

Saints are models from whom one learns "patterns of life for which no principle or code can serve as an adequate representation" (Hawley 1987, xiv). Saints' lives bridge the gap between soteriology and ethics, between social and personal, moral and religious virtues. Saints are exemplary models – both examples of something and examples to someone. They embody the core pattern of a tradition, not in an abstract or theoretical way, but particularized in narratives, modes of behavior, and specific communities. Saints' lives are concrete expressions of a religio-ethical tradition as a whole and the core pattern/value of the tradition. They are not merely examples typifying the whole; rather, they are convincingly the whole, showing the way to a coherent personhood that contrasts markedly with the "world of shards and fallen fragments by which they are surrounded" (Hawley 1987, xv).

For historians of religions, the narrated lives of saints instantiate and thereby mediate moral principles for a community of faith or members of a society. In this sense they provide an alternative to a model of comparative religious ethics that focuses primarily on modes of moral reason. Narrated lives of saints, furthermore, also uniquely integrate religious and moral action guides. They embody a religio-moral perfection that paradoxically reflects but goes beyond the moral systems that govern ordinary morality and cannot be precisely articulated within the confines of practical reason (Hawley 1987, xvi). For example, the Confucian "paradigmatic individual" or *chün-tzu* exemplifies the spirit of *jen* (human heartedness, compassion) without slavish adherence to conventional rules of propriety (Cua 1992, 58). A Mother Theresa embodies the Christian ideal of agapic love that judges the inadequacies and imperfections of the ethics of distributive justice; yet, at the same time, she creates a community dedicated to the equitable treatment of the impoverished poor and, in doing so, is venerated as a source of beneficent succor for devotees from all walks of life for all kinds of reasons. As Hawley observes, saints are perceived not only as exemplars of individual moral perfection or even of an imagined fellowship of faith and morality, but also as living agents of moral transformation and even physical well-being (Hawley 1987, xxi). They serve as models of moral aspiration and inspiration. For the historian of religions, furthermore, the lives of saints offer both a paradigm of exemplary

behavior and an approach to the study of comparative religious ethics that challenges the focus of philosophical ethics on moral reasoning.

Narratives of saints' lives serve a holistic function. They integrate the plural ethical modalities within and among religious traditions, and bridge the divide between the rational and affective dimensions of the moral life. As William Barbieri observes of narrative ethics more generally, it broadens the horizons of contemporary ethics beyond its characteristic concern with moral principles and criteria for decision making (Barbieri 1998, 361). Saints' lives have the capacity to convey more about the motivational and aspirational dimension of the moral life, one of the key features of religioethical traditions and also of any reasoned consideration of descriptive and normative ethical agendas.

Religions and Global Ethics

Human beings are held to have access to human rights and to be accountable and obligated to live up to them *not* because they are Muslim or Christian or Buddhist or Jewish or Hindu or a member of any particular religious or philosophical tradition (Little 1999, 166).

The ethicists' critique of the particularism and pluralism of the history of religions' approach to comparative religious ethics assumes special cogency in the debates over the prospects of a global ethic, especially with regard to the urgent and pervasive issue of human rights. Critics of efforts to promote a global ethic, such as the United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights adopted in 1948, include proponents of cultural diversity with views not unlike the historians of religions' claim that religious ethics are historically and culturally embedded, not abstract systems of moral reasoning (Nino 1991, 90). Questions about universal human rights standards have also been raised from the perspective of differing worldviews and cultural traditions; in particular that the UN Declaration frames human rights in terms of a distinctively Western conception of the autonomous self or individualism.

Historians of religions bring to the discussion of a global ethic a respect for historical and cultural pluralism both within and among traditions, while at the same time rejecting a skeptical moral relativism. We are not positivists; our maps of religion depict generalizable contours and patterns, not simply discrete particulars. Our descriptive, inductive method does not preclude the possibility of normative claims regarding moral competence and moral responsibility, but disagrees with the position that the idea of human rights requires a neutrally formulated normative regimen. Views resonant with the method of the history of religions include Tore Lindholm's (1992) notion of overlapping consensus; Sumner Twiss' (1998) contention that intercultural dialogue can lead to a shared sense of human moral capacity, common vulnerability to suffering and oppression, and analogous moral principles; and John P. Reeder Jr.'s neo-pragmatist proposal regarding concrete universals achieved through the discovery of convergences among moral, valuational, and factual beliefs (Reeder 1993, 194). Historians of religion agree with the neo-pragmatist's position that religio-cultural traditions are not locked into fixed conceptual schemes between which there is no possibility of translation and the compatible view that concrete universals may be extrapolated analogically over a range of moral experiences (Reeder 1993, 200–201). Although the historians of religions' inductive approach values pluralism, we affirm that comparative religious ethics is not merely a descriptive study of diverse moral traditions, but is also a dialogical

process to which our discipline brings a distinctive perspective, one fundamentally attuned with William Schweiker's observation regarding comparative ethics:

> The practice of comparative ethics contributes to the enactment of a shared moral universe in which the diverse ways of being human are preserved amid the claims of [shared] responsibilities ... It reaches its goal when through encountering others in the performative act of interpretation there is some apprehension of the shape, texture, and direction of their lives and our own within a shared space of meaning and responsibility. (Schweiker 1992: 285).

In a world increasingly fraught with ethnic and religious violence justified politically by religio-moral absolutes, the history of religions' valuation of diversity and plurality, while affirming that all human communities share not only a physical planet but also a moral universe of meaning and responsibility, has more than an academic import. I suggest the contribution of the historian of religions to the future of comparative religious ethics is nothing less than a moral imperative.

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CHAPTER 47

Culture and Moral Pluralism

Bruce Grelle

Many pressing issues upon which religious ethicists reflect involve disagreements or conflicts among competing social groups that hold and act upon disparate worldviews and values. Such conflicts occur not only *between* groups that hold opposing worldviews and values, but also *within* groups where there may be disagreement about the meaning of shared beliefs and values or about priorities among them. The concept of culture is an inevitable part of efforts to understand such conflicts, just as it must be an inevitable part of efforts to find possible resolutions to them. Likewise, the social-historical reality of "cultural pluralism" is the inevitable context for religious and moral reflection in this era of globalization, with its unprecedented degree of interaction between the diverse peoples and cultures of the world. In this entry I will briefly discuss the concept of culture and its significance for religious ethics.

The Concept of Culture

There are many excellent accounts of the origins and development of the concept of culture (see Eagleton 2000; Lincoln 2000; Masuzawa 1998; Tanner 1997; Williams 1981). Scholars typically remind us that "culture" was initially a noun of process, having to do with the cultivation and tending of crops, the rearing and breeding of animals, and the active culture or cultivation of the human mind. In the eighteenth century, "culture" became a more general designation for the "spirit" (whether ideal, religious, or national) that informed the "whole way of life" of a distinct people. This "spirit" was believed to be manifest in all human activities, but was most evident in specifically "cultural" activities such as language, morals, and styles of art. It was in this connection that J. G. Herder first used the plural "cultures" in deliberate distinction from a singular sense of "civilization." This broad pluralistic usage of "culture" became central in the development of comparative anthropology, where it continued to designate a whole and distinctive way of life (Williams 1981, 10–11).

Understood as ways of life, cultures include language and modes of verbal and nonverbal communication, technologies and material artifacts, learned and customary patterns of behavior and social organization, and so on. Cultures also consist of socially inherited and community-specific "ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient" (Shweder 2000, 163). The terms "worldview" and "ethos" best describe the aspects of culture that religious ethicists are typically most interested in. As Geertz has explained these concepts,

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

> A people's *ethos* is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its *moral and aesthetic style and mood*; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects. Their *worldview* is their *picture of the way things in sheer actuality are*, their *concept of nature, of self, of society*. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order (Geertz 1973, 127; emphasis added).

The idea that cultures are whole ways of life constituted by a unity of worldview and ethos is important because it helps us to see that moralities themselves must be understood as cultural systems (see Bird 1981). Recognition that "moral concepts are embodied in and are partially constitutive of forms of social life" (MacIntyre 1973, 1) underscores the historicity and cultural specificity of moralities and acknowledges the importance of contextual understanding. It is not only a mistake to isolate the analysis of moral reasoning from the analysis of moralities as a whole, it is also a mistake to isolate ethics from the study of history, society, and culture (Gustafson 1972, 52). On this view, the study of religious ethics should focus not only on forms of moral reasoning but also on forms of life, not only on moral argument and justification but also on the full range of "normative activity that creates and sustains an ethos" (Reynolds 1979, 23).

Culture, Ideology, and Hegemony

Thus far we have focused on cultures as whole ways of life characterized by distinctive blends of intellectual, moral, and aesthetic sensibilities, values, and behaviors that are shared in common by particular groups of people in specific times and places. Yet a problem with this way of thinking about cultures is that it tends to obscure the political uses and ideological functions of religions, cultures, and moralities. We can begin to move beyond an overly romantic conception of culture as a seamless whole way of life by viewing cultures in the context of struggles between competing groups over who is going to exercise intellectual and moral leadership (or hegemony) in society. According to Gramsci (1971), the supremacy of a social group is exercised and maintained not only through the exercise of coercion and force, but also and more commonly through the exercise of intellectual and moral persuasion. Through its occupation of positions of leadership in the religious, educational, and other "cultural" institutions of society, the dominant group's "view of reality" informs all tastes, morality, customs, religious, political and legal principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations (Femia 1975, 30–31). It comes to constitute the "common sense" of the majority of the population – "the conception of the world absorbed uncritically from the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man develops" (Gramsci, cited in Counihan 1986, 5).

Many traditional "anthropological" approaches to culture tend to emphasize the role played by religious and moral ideas in the collective self-expression of human communities and in the intellectual and moral integration of social systems. Recall here Durkheim's famous definition of religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices ... which unite into one single moral community ... all those who adhere to them" (1965, 62). By contrast, the concept of hegemony shifts our attention to a consideration of the extent to which cultural formations are characterized by conflicting interests and by lived patterns of domination. It focuses our attention on the heterogeneity that typically exists within a society (subcultures, counter-cultures, etc.) and upon the political interplay between dominant and oppositional cultural expressions (Williams 1978, 110).

Whether or not this recognition of an inevitable connection between moralities and cultures on the one hand, and the interests of social groups and the exercise of domination on the other hand, commits us to viewing moralities as nothing more than rationalizations or reflections of group self-interest is a question to which we will return below.

Cultural Pluralism

At this point I want to shift from the concept of culture to a discussion of *cultural pluralism* as a chief context for, and approach to, the study of religious ethics. More specifically, we return to the comments made at the outset of this chapter regarding conflicts of worldviews and values between and within cultures. Whether described as "culture wars," "clashes of civilizations," or "struggles for hegemony," such conflicts are a fact of religious and moral life.

Though "pluralism" and "diversity" are often used interchangeably, "pluralism" understood as a philosophical and ethical–political stance toward diversity must be distinguished from "pluralism" understood as the sheer fact of diversity. *As an approach to cultural and moral diversity*, "pluralism" is conscious that "many legitimate goods exist and that whatever goods you pursue, they are but one among many possible sets of goods" (Yearley 1994, 9). This approach contends that while it is possible and useful to compare alternative cultures and ideals of human flourishing, it is not possible to rank them according to a single universal standard or make them fit into a single comprehensive conception of the good and virtuous life (Berlin 1990, 1–19; Fiorenza 2001; Yearley 1994). "The Greek hero, the Christian ascetic, [the] Nietzschean critic, the twentieth-century analytical philosopher, the Buddhist monk, the capitalist entrepreneur, and the Confucian scholar ... stand alongside one another as alternative visions of the virtuous life" (Fiorenza 2001, 81).

Anthropologist R. A. Shweder (2000) has articulated a persuasive yet problematic example of a pluralistic approach to cultural and moral diversity by contrasting pluralism with "cultural developmentalism." Shweder contends cultural developmentalism is favored by many first world economists and policy makers; by various agencies promoting Western-style globalization and by the international human rights movement; by "monocultural feminists" for whom traditional and non-Western forms of family life, gender relations, and reproductive practices should not be tolerated; and by a growing number of anthropologists who take an interest in other cultures "mainly as objects of scorn" rather than as sources of illumination (Shweder 2000, 159, 161–162). Cultural developmentalism believes there is only one way (the West's) to lead a morally decent and rational life. The goal of the cultural developmentalists is to lift cultures, civilizations, and religions "up from error, ignorance, bad habits, immorality, and squalor, and refashion them to be more progressive, more democratic, more scientific, more civic-minded, more industrious, more entrepreneurial, more reliable, more rational, and more like (the ideal) us" (Shweder 2000, 160–162; see Harrison and Huntington, 2000, for examples of "cultural developmentalism").

By contrast, Shweder's own ethical–political project as a cultural pluralist seeks (1) to defend the idea that there are a variety of ways of living as rational and morally decent human beings; (2) to defend diverse cultures against ethnocentrism and chauvinism; and (3) to maintain that other cultures should be viewed, at least initially and potentially, as sources of illumination rather than as obstacles to the spread of Western beliefs, values, and styles of life. He wants to resist the idea that either "we" or "they" have implemented the only credible and morally legitimate manifestation of a good human life.

According to this position, it is simply not possible simultaneously to maximize all the good things in life, "which is why there are different traditions of values (i.e. cultures) and why no one cultural tradition has ever been able to honor everything that is good." This is why we frequently find ourselves in situations where "it is possible for morally decent and fully rational people to look at each other and at each other's practices and say, 'Yuck!'" (Shweder 2000, 61, 164, 315).

Even so, it remains possible to make evaluative judgments regarding the moral progress or decline of various cultures. "Progress means having more and more of something that is 'desirable' (i.e. something that should be desired because it is 'good'). Decline means having less and less of it" (Shweder 2000, 165). The problem is that before we can make evaluative judgments we must first select some specific good to measure, and which good to select is not always self-evident. For example, if we choose maximization of child survival during the first nine months after birth as the good by which to measure a culture's success, then the United States is objectively more advanced than Africa or India. But if "maximizing the likelihood of child survival during the first nine months after conception (in the womb) is the measure of success, then Africa and India (where abortion rates are relatively low) are objectively more advanced than the United States (where abortion rates are relatively high)." There is "much that is discretionary (i.e. not dictated by either logic or evidence) in any decision about how to name and identify specific 'goods' and thus morally map the world ... And when it comes to constructing narratives about progress ... there is lots of room for discretion (and ideology) in how one tells the story of who is better and who is worse" (Shweder 2000, 165–166).

Cultural Pluralism, Ideology, and the Common Good

Along with many scholars in religious studies, I continue to believe, like Shweder, that it is important to resist ethnocentrism as far as possible. The cultivation of a "dispassionate capacity to comprehend and explain other people's experience of their worlds without interjecting one's own preferences" (Paden 1992, 73–74) remains basic to the practice of comparative scholarship. Likewise, I accept pluralism's claims that human goods are multiple and irreducible to one another, that there are a variety of ways of being rational and morally decent human beings, and that these multiple ways are nurtured in and embodied by different cultures in different times and places. Moreover, I concur with the idea that it is best to view other cultures as potential sources of illumination rather than primarily as obstacles to one's own values or ideology. There are both existential and practical benefits to be gained through sympathetic engagement with diverse cultures and ideals of human flourishing (see Schilbrack 2002; Twiss and Grelle 2000; Yearley 1994).

But Shweder seems to believe that a genuinely pluralistic stance toward cultural and moral diversity necessitates the abandonment of efforts to articulate a common or "universal" moral language that is applicable within and across multiple cultures. For example, he implies that efforts to promulgate a moral language of universal human rights inevitably involve the imposition of a uniform and imperialistic approach to moral values that is inconsistent with genuine respect for cultural diversity. Thus, he applauds the decision of the executive board of the American Anthropological Association (1947) not to endorse the United Nations "Declaration on the Rights of Man" on the grounds that it was an ethnocentric document, adding: "in 1947, anthropologists were still proud of their anti-colonialist defense of alternative ways of life" (Shweder 2000, 164). Shweder is not alone in this view. One can find human rights skeptics among representatives of particular cultural traditions and among some scholars of those

traditions who believe that the language of human rights represents a Western moral ideology intended to supplant the moral perspectives of diverse cultural traditions (Twiss and Grelle 1995, 30).

But this is an incomplete and misleading picture of the nature, source, and function of contemporary human rights discourse and of the relationship between human rights norms and particular cultural moral traditions. It is a mistake to conclude from this that a pluralistic approach necessitates the abandonment of efforts to develop moral languages that both recognize the irreducibility of cultural and moral diversity while also seeking to identify values that can be shared in common across cultures.

Through cross-cultural dialogue and negotiation about problems that they face in common – tyranny, torture, starvation, lack of access to education and healthcare, discrimination and violence along religious, racial, and ethnic lines – increasing numbers of people around the world have begun to employ the language of human rights as one way of speaking about certain core moral values that appear to be shared by a number of different cultural traditions (see Bird et al., 2016, 33–58; Evans 1998; Kelsay and Twiss 1994). Indeed, the language of human rights has increasingly become a kind of "moral creole" that people from a variety of cultural backgrounds have found to be very useful for communicating with one another in an effort to stake out a practical moral consensus among diverse traditions regarding basic conditions necessary for the respect of human dignity (Stout 1988, 80–81, 243, 294).

The language of human rights has gradually developed alongside and sometimes been combined with the variety of more particular moral languages traditionally spoken by people from different cultures around the world. This does not mean that human rights can substitute for or replace these richer, more specific and complex moral languages. The discourse of rights is too minimal, too thin, to provide the motivation and sense of direction necessary for the pursuit of human fulfillment. While the human rights movement has sought to establish principles by which all people – regardless of their identity as members of particular communities and traditions – ought to live in order to render social life as peaceful and beneficial as possible, it has necessarily been associated with a relatively narrow conception of morality-as-constraint – a morality of rights, duties, and obligations.

By contrast, the world's cultural and religious traditions offer broader conceptions of morality that set forth concrete visions of human fulfillment and that focus on the cultivation of virtue and the formation of character. Far from being autonomous from the particularities of traditions and cultures, such visions and virtues are intimately linked to one's identity as a member of a specific community. Among themselves, members of particular cultures will continue to speak their native moral languages, translating the subject matter of "human rights" into the richer more variegated and nuanced moral idioms that are rooted in their own specific cultural conceptions of human nature, community, and moral rationality. Likewise, they will translate elements of these moral idioms into the more generic language of "rights" when they seek to communicate with "others" who do not share the same cultural conceptions (Twiss and Grelle 1995, 33–35). What one describes and justifies as "human rights" in international and cross-cultural settings when speaking moral creole will likely be described and justified differently when speaking a moral language indigenous to one's own local culture or religion.

This is not to suggest that the consensus regarding basic human rights (in the form of international treaties and covenants) that has emerged over the past fifty years is complete. There remain tensions and disagreements between the particular moralities of cultures and the "universal" morality of human rights – especially with regard to the rights of women, children, and homosexuals – just as there remain tensions within human rights discourse itself between civil-political rights, social-economic rights, and cultural-developmental rights (see Kelsay and Twiss 1994, 31–59; Okin 1999).

This ongoing contestation regarding human rights suggests several things about the relationship between morality, ideology, and culture. It reminds us that all moral ideas and discourses are employed by particular people in specific times and places and are inevitably linked to the interests of those who employ them. But this does not mean that religious ethics should abandon efforts to identify a common good shared by multiple social groups and by diverse traditions within and across cultures. Some moral discourses are more "universal" than others, in the sense that they do not simply reflect or rationalize the narrow self-interest of the groups that employ them but actually do succeed, at least *to some degree*, in encompassing and representing broader human interests. In other words, the mere existence of an ideological connection between moral discourses and sectional interests does not necessarily mean that all claims to moral universality are a mere pretense or form of deception (Grelle 2017, 121–133). Likewise, while there are undeniable tensions and conflicts between the ideal of universality and the reality of cultural diversity, this does not mean that it is impossible to find common ground between traditions and cultures (An-Na'im 1992). The international human rights movement illustrates that it is sometimes possible, through dialogue and negotiation (rather than through some form of *a priori* philosophical analysis), to identify common interests shared by disparate groups with alternative cultural and moral orientations.

In this world of competing and conflicting worldviews and values, one of the main tasks of religious ethics must be to assess and compare the *degrees of universality* that are embodied in the moral discourses of diverse cultures and traditions. To what extent do they reflect or rationalize the narrow sectional interests of particular social groups? To what extent do they succeed in identifying or creating and expressing what might be regarded as "universal human interests" that are shared by disparate groups in a given society or historical epoch? Which discussions are more and which are less inclusive of the interests of the widest number of human beings – whatever their religion, race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on?

Rather than oppose efforts to develop common, "universal," cross-cultural moral languages in general – whether human rights or similar efforts, such as the interfaith movement's attempts to articulate a "global ethic" (Küng and Kuschel 1995) – cultural pluralists should look at how these languages are being used in specific times and places, by whom, and for what purposes. When such avowedly "universal" moral languages are employed in self-serving, ethnocentric, imperialistic fashions, they should be opposed. But when they are employed to help find common moral ground in the midst of conflict and competition between social groups and amid cultural and religious diversity, they should be promoted as a basis for uniting people in the task of building a world where the human dignity of both individuals and cultures is more fully respected.

An approach to religious ethics that takes culture seriously must seek to analyze moral discourses in the context of cultures as a whole, in the context of struggles for hegemony among competing social groups within and between cultures, and in the context of a recognition of the practical need to develop ways of speaking about a common good even while recognizing the irreducible cultural and moral diversity of the world in which we live.

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CHAPTER 48

Conceptual Approaches in Comparative Religious Ethics

Aaron Stalnaker

Aims and Methods in Comparative Religious Ethics

Conceptually oriented approaches to comparative religious ethics have become sufficiently refined that they now constitute a distinct form of ethical inquiry. This kind of study focuses on analyzing ethical and religious ideas, and exploring their implications and systematic relationships in larger theories. Such work is close in style and some aims to moral theology, moral philosophy, and intellectual history. But it can range far wider culturally than the frequently European core subject matter of these disciplines as typically practiced in the West. Comparisons of this type can go on at many levels. Comparative ethical inquiry can examine debates between contemporaries, either within or across religious traditions; or track differing interpretations over time as traditions change; or it can compare the views of various thinkers from different traditions. While "comparative religious ethics" is typically thought to concern only the last of these, that is, explicit cross-traditional analysis, the forms of study and reflection involved are continuous across the full range of these possibilities, albeit with gradually increasing linguistic and historical challenges as cultural distance increases.

While cultural distance covered can seem important, often the deeper distinctions between different examples of comparative religious ethics (hereafter "CRE") hinge on the primary intellectual goals of the interpreters. Aims for CRE are usually either historical-interpretive, comparative-typological, or philosophical-theological, albeit with frequent cross-pollination and combinations of various sorts, depending on the needs of the study. Primarily historical studies aim to sort out and evaluate differing interpretations of religious texts or other data, in order to chart changes over time in a tradition or region. Much of the scholarship that has gone by the name of "religious ethics" could fit under this category, especially when it is primarily focused on studies of past thinkers or themes in a tradition. This may happen with Christian or other Western materials (e.g. MacIntyre 1988), or with non-Christian materials (e.g. Kelsay 2007).

The most explicitly comparative goals in CRE originally grew out of efforts to construct typologies of differences across religions. This sort of maneuver is perhaps most commonly identified with classic versions of the phenomenology and history of religions (e.g. Eliade 1959). But some of the most illuminating and early versions of the typological method of comparison relate to the sociological study of religious ethics, as with Ernst Troeltsch (1931 [1912]) and Max Weber's (1958 [1905]) examinations of the differences between "church" and "sect" types of Christian social organization. And as explored further

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

below, many more recent works that present themselves as examples of CRE construct analogical relationships between ideas that are roughly typological in character.

The third main kind of intellectual goal is philosophical or theological, and is frequently central in conceptually oriented comparative scholarship. Studies in this vein explore fundamental ethical issues through analysis of key concepts and theories, via imagined or extant debates between positions, in order to articulate precisely the best account of some difficult, morally or religiously significant matter. Some classic works in CRE exemplify this sort of approach, such as Yearley (1990), which compares the virtue theories of the early Confucian thinker Mengzi and the medieval Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas. Yearley probes these thinkers' accounts of virtue in general, as well as their conceptions of the virtue of courage, in order to raise and address fundamental ethical questions about dispositions and moral psychology, as well as the nature of virtue. Yearley (1990) also exemplifies the way in which comparison can generate creative new ideas, not just with regard to particular moral concepts, but also in terms of laying out productive theories and approaches in religious studies more broadly. In this case, Yearley explores the differences articulated by anthropologists of religion between experience-near "primary theories" and experience-distant, frequently more "religious" "secondary theories" about reality. Yearley uses his case study to suggest that there is another, mediating realm he calls "practical theory," in which he contends comparative studies of ethics are likely to be most fruitful.

The three types of aims laid out above are not mutually exclusive, and the most successful books are able to accomplish more than one. Angle (2002), for example, has elements of all three, although he primarily pursues historical and philosophical goals. The study examines the intellectual history of "rights talk" in modern China, from the initial adoption of the Japanese-derived neologism *quánlì* 權利 for "rights," to the subsequent debates in Chinese about this novel concept, traced up to the post-World War II era of "human rights." *Quánlì* may mean "power," "right," or "privilege," and so debates about this idea took distinctive forms, because of this range of meaning. All of this illuminates the contested history of human rights ideas in China, and does so without presuming the adequacy, necessity, or sufficiency of Western language accounts of rights or human rights. Nevertheless, Angle is well aware of Western language debates about rights, and does a fine job explicating the ways in which Chinese debates about *quánlì* were similar to and different from Western accounts. He does this in order to probe strengths and weaknesses in both Western and Chinese accounts, and through this analysis he defends a novel approach to a fundamental ethical concept ("rights"), while also articulating an astute general approach to historically and culturally self-critical conceptual analysis.

Angle describes his approach as a combination of "rooted global philosophy" and "constructive engagement" between thinkers shaped by various traditions (2009, 6–8). "Rooted global philosophy" combines rootedness in a developed intellectual tradition, such as Confucianism, Augustinianism, or Kantianism, with a concern to engage and learn from other traditions across time and around the globe. "Constructive engagement" suggests the attitude of open-ended debate and truth-seeking, with the possibility that particular positions, even if well rooted in some tradition to which one is loyal, might be revised or developed if warranted. While Angle prefers the language of philosophy, scholars of religion might well practice some version of "rooted global theology" if the traditions they study are theological in character. Or scholars of religious ethics might engage in a form of CRE that Yearley has called a new form of "natural theology," focused on the human self as a nexus for encountering "the sacred" (1997, both 151; for critical discussion, see Lee 2013). Many variations are possible.

Engaging across intellectual and cultural differences in these ways presents both possibilities and dangers. Different thinkers and traditions have different emphases, and discern a variety of problems, quandaries, and issues, which they articulate in a great variety of languages, as well as a wide variety of explicit, logically structured theories. Relating and comparing different religious ethics is above all a challenge of interpretation: how to understand, learn from, and possibly criticize various others, in relation to our own concerns. And interpretations of religious ethics are inevitably interwoven with evaluative judgments of various sorts, which generate their own difficulties (Stalnaker 2008).

The fundamental tension of all versions of this endeavor concerns the relation or balance between "understanding the other" and "relating to our own concerns." This is a challenge precisely because cultures and religions vary in their characteristics and emphases, just as languages do. Real variations invite curiosity but also generate possible confusions, as unfamiliar theories and ideas may be shoehorned into ill-fitting but familiar intellectual boxes.

One evasive approach to these issues is tempting, but should be rejected. Some scholars confidently report that they are representing some Other "in their own terms," thereby avoiding the problem of how to relate *our* account of another thinker or tradition's views to our own ethical or scholarly concerns. But as Hans-Georg Gadamer has shown (1989), all interpreters bring certain prejudgments, values, and interests to their studies, which are formed by their own education and experience, and are unable to function as purely neutral vehicles for representation of other human cultures or ideas. For a fuller version of this argument, focused on religious studies and CRE, see Lewis (2015, 83–118).

With regard to ethics, Enlightenment-derived Western ways of understanding human life, ethics, and politics may or may not be the best or most adequate ways of framing the problems of life, or of offering responses to them. That these formulations are framed in universal terms is hardly unusual, when compared to other philosophies and religions around the world, and does nothing to settle the question of their adequacy; perhaps the ultimate philosophical or theological question is which of the many ethics that make universal claims is best, if any are. CRE reveals that there are no logically inevitable starting places for ethics, despite Enlightenment pretensions; CRE also provides the most explicit and globally open way to grapple with the ethics that humans have developed so far.

A more nuanced comparative question would be, what are the strengths and weaknesses of Enlightenment-derived and other forms of ethics? This way of posing questions about truth and value in religious ethics is better because it recognizes the complexities of different traditions, constituted in part by lively debates and various possibilities, which ought to move people beyond the MacIntyrean hope of "vindicating" one tradition against all others, as if traditions were discrete packages that might be weighed up to see which was heaviest (1988, 368; and 1990). MacIntyre too would reject any idea of a uniform weight scale for judgment of this sort, of course. But he does not want to give up the idea that entire traditions might be evaluated as wholes, even if there is no universal measuring stick or standard of judgment all can agree on. For an aggressive and stimulating recent effort to defend whole tradition comparisons in ethics (although not religion ranking and the "vindication" of traditions), especially with regard to conceptually oriented comparisons, see Decosimo (2018). Decosimo seems more concerned to exonerate suspect traditions like Islam than to vindicate his own tradition. Looking for both strengths and weaknesses also recognizes the range of theoretical possibilities in ethics, and the diverse ways in which different ethical theories chart difficulties in life that may require regulation or at least response.

Positions on various specific issues may be intellectual rivals because they logically conflict, but whole religious and philosophical traditions are much harder to characterize simply as friends, enemies, or

anything else, because they are not individual agents, but instead contain multitudes – of people, ideas, and possibilities. In any case, it must be a matter of interpretation and argument, rather than assumption, that elements of different ethics are in competition or conflict, rather than harmony or some other relation. To reify wholes and see these as antagonists, as in MacIntyre's talk of "rival traditions" (1990), risks blinding us to the details that make all the difference when pursuing conceptually attentive comparative analysis. It may also skew a scholar's interpretive stance so that learning from others becomes suspect, rather than a primary aim of comparative inquiry.

Nevertheless, all of this is simply an abbreviated argument for the *difficulty* of adequately characterizing the ethical commitments of whole traditions by typical scholarly standards of accuracy and insight, not the impossibility or in principle wrongness of such efforts at holistic understanding. As Decosimo has argued (2018), comparisons of such accounts are certainly possible, and even at times warranted. Scholarly reticence with regard to characterizing the ethics of whole traditions can leave the field of debate clear for bigots and demagogues who do not hesitate to characterize whole traditions or peoples, often very simply, in order to mobilize people's loyalty and/or antipathy for others in ways they find congenial. Analyzing and criticizing such bad arguments certainly falls within the realm of reasonable comparative ethics, even if all scholars understand the limitations of generalizations about whole traditions. However, if one is not trying to fight against ill-considered prejudices, but is instead looking to pursue more typical scholarly goals like those discussed earlier, precise handling of various ethical positions is easier to achieve when studying and comparing objects of smaller scope than "Christianity" or "Islam" (Stalnaker 2006, 13–17).

Thick and Thin

Probably the most common way of theorizing the hermeneutical problems endemic to CRE and cognate activities builds on the metaphorical contrast between "thick" and "thin," which scholars have frequently applied to moral concepts but which also imply larger theories of interpretation and comparison. While he drew on a version of the distinction introduced by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle, Clifford Geertz (1973) is almost certainly the original and most influential source for the thick/thin distinction in contemporary CRE. Here Geertz gives an account of ethnography as deeply interpretive "thick description," in contrast to "thin," uninterpreted recording of visible actions. His point is that because human action is, with few involuntary exceptions, intrinsically social and meaningful, ethnographic analyses must consist of interpretations of human beings' mutual interpretations and the actions they accordingly take in constant response to each other. To capture the meaningfulness of this action, informed by a shared web of symbolic significations, such ethnographic description must be "thick," in the sense that it gives a holistic, evocative account of how particular actions are informed by broader horizons of meaning that give them their sense and point.

Philosophers such as Bernard Williams (1985), Martha Nussbaum (1988), and Michael Walzer (1994), among others, took up the thick/thin distinction and applied it in various ways to specifically moral concepts and discourse. Two strands of this discussion are most relevant for CRE. First, exemplified by Walzer's treatment, the distinction can be tied to social criticism and the challenges of building solidarity across different cultures and traditions, which partake of different "thick" languages and theories of morality and politics, but likely share commitments to "thin" but important values such as human rights.

And second, as with Nussbaum's treatment and subsequent discussions, such as Van Norden (2007), the distinction is deployed to help sort out similarities and differences between different moral discourses in order to make differences and disagreements more perspicuous and productive. When used this way, "thin" comes to refer to abstract, generally shared ethical concepts, such as "virtue" or "flourishing," which can serve as anchoring or guiding terms for comparative analysis of different "thick" moral discourses or theories. Local ways of knowing and judging deserve some contemporary version of "thick description," because of their richness, complexity, and interest. But to make that richness and import salient, that description needs to be organized in relation to suitable "thin" concepts that are more easily grasped by potential readers.

This pattern of comparing different religious ethics with reference to more abstract and common general ideas, in order to organize and elucidate the significance of more detailed study of particular objects to be compared, is so common as to seem inevitable in CRE. (For further general discussion about comparison in religious studies, which goes far beyond the subject matter of ethics, however broadly construed, see Patton and Ray 2000, Smith 2004, and Freiberger 2019). Different interpreters do use somewhat different terminology: besides "thick" and "thin," Robert Neville (2001, 9–16), for example, discusses "vague categories" that facilitate productive comparisons. Stalnaker (2006) discusses these points in terms of a contrast between "bridge concepts" that are designed to organize comparisons around productive general themes that highlight significant similarities and differences between the ethics to be compared, and the more embedded and densely described "vocabularies" of moral practice, analysis, and argument that make up the ethics to be compared. But all these various ways of putting the methodological point are ways of updating the ancient Aristotelian idea of general types, of which several particular things may be seen as examples, because they share some or all of its general features, and thus stand in analogical relations to other tokens of the type.

All of this may seem uncomplicated, but choosing and properly characterizing the "thin," "vague," or "bridge" concepts can be very challenging, depending on the objects compared. And no decision procedure will guarantee success. Consider some examples. In his discussion of "thick" and "thin" concepts, Van Norden (2007, 17) begins by discussing various "thick" theories of what the sun is: a god, a hot stone, the quintessence (*jīng* 精) of the *qì* 氣 of fire, or a mass of fusing hydrogen and helium. These are certainly incompatible accounts of the sun, but by choosing an example that has such an objectively obvious and singular referent, Van Norden in this example obscures the difficulties that often crop up in CRE studies where no such universally available obvious object of theorizing is available, as is frequently the case.

Sometimes it seems that two different traditions are not debating about a single topic, even if a "thin" description can be concocted that might seem to cover both. Consider divine grace in the Christian tradition, compared with *qì* 氣, "vital energy," in various Chinese traditions. Trying to bring these two ideas together for comparison, a scholar might reach for some highly abstract description such as "extra-human forces that are necessary to flourish as a human being." But the underlying theories, vocabularies, and religious practices are so different that healthy skepticism about this comparison seems warranted, unless and until it could be assuaged through illuminating analysis. And the sheer vagueness and abstractness of the "thin" bridge concept in this case seems unlikely to generate unexpected but revealing avenues of interpretation into either object compared.

In other cases, what seems like a promising topic for comparison turns out, on closer examination, to be treated with much more care by one thinker or tradition than another, despite first impressions to the

contrary. For example, Decosimo reports that he had to abandon a planned comparative study on the virtue of religious outsiders in Thomas Aquinas and al-Ghazālī, because al-Ghazālī had so much less to say about this topic than Aquinas (2018, 11). While explaining such divergences does seem like a potentially interesting problem, it does not seem likely to generate substantial philosophical or theological developments on the topic, precisely because the sparse treatment on one side provides little material to work with.

There are many intermediate cases where it is simply unclear, before proceeding to do deeper research, whether asymmetries of treatment between sources are a problem sufficient to eclipse potential comparative insights. There is, for example, a much more developed and systematic account of courage in Aquinas than in Mengzi, but Yearley (1990) was still able to generate a number of suggestive insights from this comparison.

A different sort of asymmetry can creep in when a natural language term for some potential thin concept carries with it suppressed webs of connotation from its history in the language. This issue affects many important ethical terms that have potential as comparative topics, such as "justice," or "love," or "freedom," or virtue terms like "humility" or "bravery." Noting and correcting particular shadings of meaning in such ideas seems essential to redeploying them as a thin concept that can bridge between religious worldviews or ethics, and even then the natural language sense of the term is always latent in the study and the mind of the scholar. For example, Van Norden discusses a thin concept of "humility," which he articulates as "the stable disposition to have an appropriate attitude toward one's own worth as a person, as well as having the feelings and reactions that fit with that attitude" (2007, 19–20). As a stipulative definition of a comparative topic, this seems both substantive and precise, and articulates a fundamental ethical issue, so it seems promising as a topic for inquiry. But the English word "humility," with its connotations of low self-regard, seems more appropriate for certain (more or less Augustinian) Christian accounts of proper attitudes toward one's self, than another example Van Norden notes, that of Aristotle on "great-souledness" or "magnanimity."

Another important and basic issue is the potential complexity or multivocality of even seemingly singular "thin" or "bridge" concepts. This cuts across the difference between abstract and embedded concepts or theories highlighted by the terminology of "thick" and "thin." It also addresses a fundamental *theoretical* question in comparative ethics, which is how various thinkers and traditions parse the moral life and emphasize some parts rather than others. For example, Stalnaker (2006) decided to use "the will" as a bridge concept, despite its multiple meanings and aspects in Augustine's late antique context, as well as his own thought. While there was no cognate word in Xunzi, the early Confucian thinker that was the other subject of the study, that gathered together the same issues, let alone one that was equally central to his thought as a whole, Xunzi did have numerous ways of discussing aspects of what we call the "will," which provided a considerable amount of suggestive material for comparative study. And one could construct a comparative study around a richly multivocal ethical concept that is highlighted in Confucianism, such as *lǐ* 禮, "ritual" or "ritual propriety," that is relatively less central in many Western thinkers, especially after the eighteenth century. In either case, the value of the comparison would have to be demonstrated by what it illuminated on one or both sides, in the service of whatever historical, comparative, or philosophical/theological goals the scholar was pursuing. And individual scholars' judgment when pursuing comparisons is essential to whatever success they may achieve.

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CHAPTER 49

Ethnographic

Jung H. Lee

Ethnography refers generally to interpretive work that aims to produce descriptive accounts of a people's culture, most often through qualitative fieldwork and various methods of participant observation. Although ethnography has long been a disciplinary focus of anthropology since the late nineteenth century, its practice continues to gain currency across disciplines, particularly in those fields where analysis can profit appreciably from detailed, nuanced descriptions of comparative forms of life. Presumably, such "thick descriptions" can bring into relief dimensions of local systems of meaning that can speak to a people's specific religious and ethical beliefs. In this regard, ethnographic approaches to comparative religious ethics (CRE) attempt to provide holistic accounts of the moral life in comparative contexts that give voice to the concrete, lived quality of ethical existence that is often lost (or never fully articulated) in theory and text.

Historically, ethnography has involved "the peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience in the world of these others" (Van Maanen 2011, xiii). Although the general notion of an empirical approach to the study of ethics can be traced as far back as the early twentieth century in the work of anthropologists like Bronislaw Malinowski and sociologists like Edvard Westermarck (1906–1908), it has only been within the last thirty years that there has been a concerted effort by anthropologists, religious ethicists, and moral philosophers to self-consciously apply the methods of ethnography or what Bernard Williams (1986) called the "ethnographic stance" to the study of ethics. This concern with lived ethics informs the more specific focus on the formation of the moral subject in regard to notions of practice, the emotions, agency, and virtue. Beyond thicker descriptions of the moral life, ethnographic approaches to the study of ethics also present opportunities for examining how different discursive communities appropriate moral vocabularies, share patterns of reasoning, and embody their respective institutional memories. Likewise, advocates have suggested that assuming the ethnographic stance enables ethicists to not only examine the lived ethics of everyday actors in fine, descriptive detail but also to facilitate a genuine, self-reflexive engagement with the normative commitments of the ethnographer herself.

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Historical Context

According to James Laidlaw, there is no connected history of moral inquiry in the discipline of anthropology that includes "sustained debate on specific interpretive problems, or distinctive concepts contributed by particular authors or schools, or which reflects changes in general theoretical orientation" (Laidlaw 2002, 311–312). The historical roots of this lack of engagement can be traced to the strength of certain disciplinary orthodoxies in anthropology and philosophy that proved resistant to the idea of an anthropology of ethics. On the one hand, Durkheimian (1924) and structuralist voices in anthropology tended to conflate the good with the social so completely that conceptual space for an independent understanding of ethics did not seem necessary. Conversely, the reputation of anthropologists among moral philosophers and religious ethicists as conceptual relativists who had not seriously considered the philosophical implications of their view of cultures limited the willingness of philosophers and religious ethicists to seriously engage the resources of anthropology.

While Laidlaw is certainly correct to note the lack of a connected history in both anthropology and philosophy, there are historical precedents – some as far back as the early twentieth century – in the social sciences, philosophy, and religious studies that anticipate and sometimes prefigure the kind of self-conscious application of ethnography to the study of ethics that has emerged across disciplines in the last thirty years. One striking early example of an ethnographic approach is the work of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, particularly his *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* (1926). Although the putative subject matter of Malinowski's study is "primitive jurisprudence" in Melanesia, the particular method that he employs in studying the application of law and order among the Trobrianders reflects a "new line of anthropological field work," or what he described as "the study by direct observation of the rules of custom as they function in actual life" (1926, 125). Malinowski suggests that the holistic understanding of the "cultural context of a primitive system of rules" may be as important, if not more so, than the mere "enumeration of rules" or the recital of a reductive *corpus juris*. By engaging in such methods of inquiry, the ethnographer brings into relief how "the commandments of law and custom are always organically connected. . . that they only exist in the chain of social transactions in which they are but a link" (1926, 125). Thus, the true problem is not simply how "human life submits to rules" but "how the rules become adapted for life" (1926, 127).

Malinowski's study of Melanesian jurisprudence, though not explicitly concerned with ethics or morality *per se*, provides a template for how contemporary anthropologists, religious ethicists, and moral philosophers are attempting to employ the methods of ethnography to examine the ethical lives of moral actors and communities. In essence, Malinowski suggests that the goal of the ethnographer should be "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (1922, 25). He notes that the ethnographer, if she is to actually grasp the native's point of view, cannot be solely concerned with the official documents of the community nor the canons of its normative traditions but with what he called the "*imponderabilia* of actual life," or "such things as the routine of a man's working day, the details of his care of the body. . ." (1922, 18). According to Malinowski, it is through the study of such imponderabilia that we can begin to appreciate the ways in which normative concepts and principles get woven into the fabric of the moral life.

The work of Richard Brandt (1954) and John Ladd (1957), the former on Hopi ethics and the latter on Navajo ethics, represent early attempts on the part of moral philosophers to engage in ethnographic

fieldwork to examine particular moral communities. Their excursions into ethnography were animated in some measure by a frustration that anthropologists had largely ignored ethical questions or had not answered those questions in ways suitable for a philosophical audience. Although both works are limited in terms of their ethnographic sophistication – indeed, Brandt and Ladd readily acknowledged their lack of linguistic competence (both worked primarily through interpreters) and brief exposure to their host communities – they suggest how ethnography can be employed by ethicists in the service of normative reflection and anticipate later, more fully realized studies.

Unlike earlier anthropologists who were only vaguely familiar with ethical theories in moral philosophy, Brandt and Ladd approached their fieldwork as students of ethics who were guided by certain theoretical questions appropriate to mid-century Anglo-American philosophy. Brandt employed such techniques as asking various informants to evaluate the ethical propriety of assorted actions (e.g. gambling, adultery), the desirability of certain normative goals, and how certain stories could be explained in terms of their moral lexicons. By engaging in such techniques, Brandt hoped to arrive at psychological explanations of Hopi norms that would provide a fuller picture of the fine structure of the Hopi value system, a system that he ultimately believed was largely premised on the principles of utility and reward.

Building on Brandt's research, Ladd ambitiously set out to provide a general theory of descriptive ethics that could be applied to diverse cultural contexts. Like Brandt, Ladd engages in his own fieldwork among the Navajo, though unlike Brandt Ladd understands his own work as self-consciously assuming the ethnographic stance insofar as he aims to present the Navajo ethical system as it appears to the "Navaho moralist informant." Although the work of Brandt and Ladd possesses certain shortcomings in regard to the integration of ethnography and ethical analysis, these studies represent an important departure from analytic moral philosophy in expanding the methodological imagination of the ethicist to consider new forms of data for analysis and to seriously reflect on the ethical dimensions of the human condition in different cultural contexts.

We can discern the influence of Brandt and Ladd in the field of CRE when it first emerges as a focused academic subject in the 1970s, most notably in the work of David Little and Sumner Twiss. In *Comparative Religious Ethics* (1978, ix) Little and Twiss self-consciously align their "new method" with the "social scientific tradition" of Weber as well as the work of anthropologists like Malinowski in highlighting the "processes of practical reasoning in different cultural settings." They explicitly adapted Ladd's descriptive ethics to capture the justificatory patterns present in the normative traditions of early Christianity, the Navajo, and Theravada Buddhism. Although anthropological work clearly informs Little and Twiss's understanding of the moral life, it does so narrowly in regard to the ideal-typical structures of reasoning and the patterns of justification in the normative beliefs of each respective tradition.

Unlike Malinowski who drew on the imponderabilia of everyday life to compose a picture of the moral life in the round, Little and Twiss privilege the propositional content of norms and principles and largely ignore the "day-by-day operational beliefs of practitioners" (Little and Twiss, 252), not to mention the concrete practices and actions that constitute their lived realities. For Little and Twiss, the productive value of the ethnographic case material produced by anthropologists like Malinowski, at least in comparative contexts, is diminished by its "non-theoretical pragmatic holism" that supposedly only seeks to render intelligible the cultural worlds of its subjects. This critique of ethnography as limited in terms of its theoretical and analytical value for the study of religious ethics remains a concern in the field even as more ethnographic approaches to CRE have emerged.

The Ethnographic Turn

The "ethnographic turn" in contemporary ethics can be interpreted as the result of certain historical and institutional forces within the past fifty years in moral philosophy, anthropology, and religious ethics that have conspired to make this movement possible. We can appreciate the current maturation of ethnographic approaches in CRE most fully by contextualizing the intellectual pressures that led to its current revival across disciplines.

In modern moral philosophy, there has been a frustration on the part of critics over the abstract and highly theoretical nature of much ethical analysis and the seeming lack of recognition of the complexity of moral life. Elizabeth Anscombe (1958), Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), and Bernard Williams (1985) noted in different ways the poverty of modern moral philosophy, primarily in the forms of deontology and consequentialism, to speak to the richness of moral life, beyond the realm of moral reasons, in the emotional and social dimensions of human experience. What these critics suggested was that moral philosophy required a "dimension of social explanation" (Williams 1985, 131), a thicker description of human life, to provide a more complex picture of moral speech and action.

Bernard Williams describes such a dimension of social explanation in what he terms the "ethnographic stance," or "the situation of an observer who has an imaginative understanding of a society's ethical concepts and can understand its life from the inside, but does not share those concepts" (1986, 203–204). Having an imaginative understanding from the inside allows the sympathetic observer to "report, anticipate, and even take part in discussions of the use they make of their concept" (Williams 1985, 142), to understand the evaluative content of ethical concepts in ways beyond the reach of an external evaluator.

While modern moral philosophy suffered from being unable to provide an adequate account of the substance of ethical life, the historical impediment to the development of something like an anthropology of ethics or ethnography of ethics in the field of anthropology seems to have stemmed not so much from a general lack of exposure to moral phenomena or normative behavior among research subjects but from the dominance of approaches and theories within the field that tended to reduce the moral to some variety of the social good. Accordingly, anthropologists have tended to focus on questions of power, structure, and institutions even though ethnographers commonly report that their subjects are constantly speaking and acting in ways that involve the human good. Thus, unlike moral philosophers who have lacked the empirical data to pursue an ethnographic study of ethics, anthropologists have in some ways lacked the theoretical imagination to discern the moral contours of their research subjects and communities.

For comparative religious ethicists, the turn to ethnography and ethnographic methods was animated by a reaction against the more formalist and positivistic methodologies of earlier generations and the perceived elitism of textual studies centered on orthodox traditions. Beyond embracing a general methodological strategy of pragmatic holism, ethnographic approaches to CRE held the promise of dynamically capturing the lived realities of moral agents and communities. Religious ethicists would no longer be doing "veranda ethics," writing and reflecting on ethics at a social remove from the subject matter, but instead observing and participating in the forms of moral life that had previously been ignored or only partially chronicled.

It was also thought that a greater focus on ethnographic methods and the retrieval of ethnographic data from fieldwork would diminish the dependence on textual sources that had for so long defined the discipline, even among holists who for the most part still relied heavily on sacred texts and their

commentaries. Exacerbating the problematic nature of the exclusive focus on textual studies in religious ethics was the fact that most of the energy in the field was directed at canonical works in orthodox traditions that tended to privilege the intellectual production of elites. Particularly for comparative religious ethicists, the opportunity to study non-Western moral communities through the vehicle of ethnography held the promise of breaking away from the perceived ethnocentrism and imperialism of Christian ethics and Western moral philosophy.

Beginning in the early 2000s, anthropologists and religious ethicists like Richard B. Miller (2003), Saba Mahmood (2005), and Anand Pandian (2009) initiated a rehabilitation of the study of ethics within anthropology and religious ethics not merely as a sub-discipline or one object among many objects of inquiry but as a central dimension of social analysis more generally. This acknowledgment of the centrality of ethics in all spheres of human life has led anthropologists and religious ethicists to take this fundamental insight and examine the particular manifestations of the ethical in the everyday speech and action of moral agents, especially those dimensions centered around practice and discipline, virtue and tradition, and agency and freedom. Although these competing approaches to ethnography and ethics draw on different theoretical and philosophical sources and reflect, to a certain extent, different methodological and disciplinary goals, they seem to share certain assumptions about moral inquiry.

First, in viewing ethics as an integral part of the human condition, ethnographers have privileged the everyday or ordinary rather than the discursive production of the elites or the formal theorizing of professional ethicists and philosophers. In other words, the ethical is to be found in the details of everyday life "from the bottom up" (to use Richard Miller's phrase) in our habits and practices, in our mundane speech and insignificant utterances, rather than the explicit rules and principles of the normative tradition or the theoretical abstractions and sacred ideals of philosophers and religious founders.

Second, many recent works in the field have recognized the ethnographic utility of the concept of subjectivity or subject formation in addressing the complex location of the individual within a moral community. The study of subjectivity, particularly when it is documented in ethnographic detail, can reveal how human beings in their everyday speech and action reflectively negotiate their sense of agency and freedom within the sociocultural structures in which they are embedded.

Third, the recent work in the anthropology of ethics implicitly makes the argument for the essential comparative dimensions of ethnography. Assuming the ethnographic stance requires not only understanding the worldview and ethos of a moral community from the inside but also demands that the observer recognize that there are "alternatives to any such system" (Williams 1986, 204). Saba Mahmood's work on the women's mosque movement in Egypt illustrates just how ethnographic accounts can dramatize ethical variety in ways that challenge some of our deepest held convictions. In *The Politics of Piety* (2005, 5) Mahmood provides an ethnographic account of women pietists in Cairo as a way of "parochializing" the discourse of Western liberal feminism in regard to notions of subjectivity and moral agency. Mahmood argues that secular feminist liberalism lacks the conceptual resources to appreciate the "conceptions of self, moral agency, and politics that undergird the practices of this non-liberal movement." Through framing "ethnographic vignettes" against key analytic concepts in liberal feminist thought, Mahmood is able to ask whether a new form of agency is possible in a social imaginary where women can be attached to "patriarchal forms of life" and not resist "the subordinating function of power" (2005, 154). For Mahmood, to do justice to the ethnographic stance challenges the ethnographer to be a witness to the richness of particular moral systems as well as the existence of the variety of moral worlds.

Finally, the ethnographic approach to ethics encourages self-reflection in ways that are often lost in traditional ethical theory or normative inquiry. In fact, some scholars like James Laidlaw have argued that ethnography itself can be considered a kind of ethical practice in the sense that it requires "*taking seriously* the forms of life we describe" (Laidlaw 2014, 46). Although in principle other forms of ethical reflection may be just as fruitful as ethnography in promoting the kind of reflexivity that Laidlaw describes, the wager is that in the ethnographic encounter itself the observer, if she is to be successful, will come to know the forms of life she is thickly describing in ways that reflexively challenge her own.

Current Challenges and Future Prospects

There is little doubt that the recent ethnographic work of anthropologists, religious ethicists, and moral philosophers has pushed the methodological boundaries of the study of ethics and contributed significantly to contemporary debates in moral philosophy, religious ethics, and anthropology, most notably in regard to notions of lived or ordinary ethics, subjectivity, and virtue and tradition. Having said that, there are questions and points of tension that need to be addressed if it is going to have the kind of impact envisioned by its leading advocates.

Toward the end of his career, the eminent anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard supposedly had some misgivings over the methodological direction of anthropology. In particular, he worried that the discipline, haunted by a sense of insecurity about the adequacy of data and the propriety of inference and theory, was being transformed into a cult of fieldwork where you could putatively eliminate the gap between data and theory by *seeing* everything and *immersing* yourself completely into one's cultural context (see Gellner 1981). John Kelsay makes a similar observation in regard to the use of ethnography in CRE, noting how over the last thirty years a number of "edifying discourses" have been produced that show great sensitivity to context and the stance of the interpreter but do little in terms of critical analysis or moving the theoretical debate forward (see Kelsay 2012). For Kelsay, the preoccupation with the ethnographic stance can lead some researchers to focus almost exclusively with communicating the ethnographic detail of their subjects and social locations rather than engaging in the critical work of analysis where the normative assumptions of the subjects *and* interpreter can be examined and perhaps even challenged. Such a poetics of the moral life can also marginalize the relevance of political and institutional questions in regard to the dynamics of power in the interpersonal and social contexts of the agent.

In a similar vein, while there has been a renaissance of ethnographic writing in comparative contexts, ranging from richly textured accounts of embodied ethical listening in Egypt (Hirschkind 2006), the ethics of the everyday in India (Das 2006), and the phenomenology of suffering in Micronesia (Throop 2010) among others, comparative ethicists seemingly lack a critical vocabulary or classificatory scheme for thinking through the theoretical consequences of competing ethnographies. Indeed, there does not seem to be a consensus about what case material should even be considered "ethical" or "moral" since most accounts tend to be hyper-particularistic or non-committal in regard to terminology.

Lastly, while ethnographers have extolled the virtues of ethnography in creating the conditions for greater self-reflexivity for the interpreter, the meaning of reflexivity needs to be articulated so that it does

not become an exercise in intellectual indulgence. Beyond merely reflecting about the forms of life under study vis-à-vis the worldview and ethos of the interpreter, the exercise of reflexivity must go further to actually questioning and challenging the ethical worldviews of the subjects *and* interpreter, to articulate and ultimately justify one's normative commitments. This further critical act would be the real meaning of taking different forms of life seriously as an ethical practice. The challenge, then, for ethnographic approaches is not just bringing into focus dimensions of human experience and conduct historically ignored by the discipline but critically engaging the "case material," theoretically and normatively, to truly sustain an empirical study of ethics.

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CHAPTER 50

Pragmatism

Michael R. Slater

Pragmatism is an American philosophical movement that traces its origins to the writings of Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914) and William James (1844–1910). Along with John Dewey (1859–1952), these three philosophers are widely regarded as the major "classical" pragmatists, and virtually all later pragmatists have drawn inspiration from one or more of these seminal thinkers. Although the term is sometimes used in ways that suggest a single, cohesive philosophical outlook or set of views, it is difficult to specify exactly what it means to be a pragmatist, and there have been and remain significant philosophical differences between different versions of pragmatism. To give but a few examples, Peirce, James, and Dewey were all empiricists and verificationists, whereas many pragmatists today tend to downplay or reject these epistemological views. Peirce was a staunch realist who saw nominalism as a threat to both science and philosophy, while most later pragmatists have tended to defend various forms of nominalism; and James saw pragmatism (among other things) as a means of defending religious faith in a modern scientific age, in contrast to fellow pragmatists who have either had little interest in religion or seen it as incompatible with pragmatism. Despite these important differences, however, it is possible to identify some philosophical commitments that most pragmatists have tended to affirm. These include *fallibilism*, or the view that all (or at least most) of our beliefs are corrigible and incapable of being known with absolute certainty; *experimentalism*, or the view that the experimental methods of science can and should be applied to other domains such as philosophy, morality, and religion, with the aim of arriving at progressively better theories and practices; and, very broadly speaking, some version of *semantic pragmatism*, usually either in the form of views that take the meaning of words, sentences, and other signs to consist in the practical consequences or effects which follow from them, or in the form of views which understand meaning as determined by use (and by the norm-governed social practices in which language-use occurs).

Since pragmatism is primarily a philosophical movement, and also for reasons of space, this entry will focus mainly on the ideas of major philosophers in the pragmatist tradition, with special attention given to Peirce, James, and Dewey. And since pragmatism was but one aspect of the larger philosophies of these thinkers, it will also leave many other aspects of their philosophies out of account, such as Peirce's semiotics and James's radical empiricism. Given the purpose of this volume, however, it will briefly touch upon Peirce's, James's, and Dewey's religious and ethical views, with the proviso that none of them can be straightforwardly described as a "religious ethicist." Having examined their respective versions of

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

pragmatism, it will then briefly consider the "renaissance" of American pragmatism that began in the latter part of the twentieth century. For works that cover the history of pragmatism in greater detail, see Misak (2008 and 2013), and Talisse and Aikin (2011).

Peirce

Charles S. Peirce was the founder of pragmatism, and as will become clear, he conceived of the doctrine far more narrowly than most later pragmatists. Indeed, Peirce initially conceived of pragmatism simply as a theory of meaning inspired by the methods and assumptions of modern science, and in his famous 1878 essay "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (Peirce 1992, 124–141) he argued that it gives us our best account of the meaning of unclear conceptions. There we find him arguing that what is "tangible and practical" is "the root of every real distinction of thought, no matter how subtle it may be; and there is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice" (Peirce 1992, 131). Peirce goes on to formulate what he termed the "pragmatic maxim" as follows: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (Peirce 1992, 132). Although Peirce often stipulated that his pragmatism was strictly a theory of meaning and not a theory of truth, he perhaps unwittingly invited this connection by offering a pragmatic account of the meaning of terms like "reality" and "truth." As he writes toward the end of the essay, "[The] opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality" (Peirce 1992, 139).

Peirce eventually came to worry that his initial formulation of pragmatism was too nominalistic, a worry that was confirmed, in his view, by how his idea had been appropriated by self-described "humanist" pragmatists like F. C. S. Schiller, who regarded concepts simply as human tools for solving human problems. In order to keep his idea safe from such "kidnappers," Peirce renamed it "pragmaticism," and increasingly stressed the realist philosophical assumptions behind his conception of pragmatism (although "ideal-realist" assumptions would be more accurate, as some scholars of pragmatism have observed). Under the terms of Peirce's mature pragmaticism, truth should be understood as "that to a belief in which belief would tend if it were to tend indefinitely toward absolute fixity" (Peirce 1998, 336), or variously, as the opinion that would "ultimately prevail if investigation were carried sufficiently far" (Peirce 1998, 457). This mature formulation of Peirce's conception of truth is, by design, incompatible with the claim that truth is reducible to properties like utility or justification, as some pragmatists have held (or at least been accused of holding). But at the same time, it also appears to assume that truth is ultimately determined by the future outcome of investigation – a social practice that we and possibly other finite, sentient beings engage in – and not by reference to an objective reality that exists independently of our representations of it.

Peirce regarded ethics as one of the "three normative sciences," along with aesthetics and logic; but he did relatively little work in this field, especially when compared to his extensive work in theoretical areas of philosophy such as logic, philosophy of language, epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science. Yet, as the work of contemporary philosophers like Karl-Otto Apel (1922–2017), Cheryl Misak (b. 1961), and Robert Talisse (b. 1970) shows, Peirce's ideas can be creatively and fruitfully applied to a number of fundamental issues in ethics and political philosophy.

Finally, while Peirce did not write extensively on the subject of religion and had a notoriously dim view of theology, he nevertheless produced several highly original essays in the philosophy of religion, notably "Evolutionary Love" (Peirce 1992, 352–371) and "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" (Peirce 1998, 434–450), both of which provide insights into how his Christian faith informed his philosophy. The latter essay, in particular, reveals not only Peirce's interest in traditional theological topics such as natural theology, but also brings together a number of important themes in his philosophy in highly creative ways, including his abductive approach to inquiry, his views on the fixation of belief (or how beliefs are formed), his categories of firstness, secondness, and thirdness, and his Galilean doctrine of the natural light, which maintains that our minds have been created in such a way that we can discover the truth about reality.

James

Although Peirce was the founder of pragmatism, it was William James who began the pragmatist movement in his 1898 essay "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" (James 1977, 345–362). There, and more extensively in works like *Pragmatism* (1907) and *The Meaning of Truth* (1909), James developed his own distinctive and influential version of pragmatism that drew inspiration from Peirce's ideas but took them in a new direction. Whereas Peirce conceived of pragmatism as a theory of meaning designed to help make philosophy more scientific, James conceived of it above all else as a metaphilosophical view, a "mediating way of thinking" or approach to philosophy that could be put to effective use in resolving a host of traditional philosophical problems, not only by professional philosophers but by everyday people as well. By applying the pragmatic method of examining the practical consequences that follow from accepting one philosophical view rather than another, James believed, we can show whether it makes a practical difference to anyone if one view rather than another were true (James 1977, 377). Although philosophers tend to be drawn to extreme positions in the name of intellectual consistency, James believed that what many of us want today is a philosophy that can combine a "tough-minded" commitment to the scientific method and a respect for empirical facts with a "tender-minded" commitment to human values and freedom, as well as a desire to connect with and find fulfillment in something greater than ourselves (James 1977, 362–376). Enter pragmatism, which "preserves a cordial relation with facts" but "neither begins nor ends by turning positive religious constructions out of doors – it treats them cordially as well" (James 1977, 376).

James's pragmatism performs the above-mentioned balancing act by accepting the experimental empiricism of modern science without accepting the materialist metaphysics that is often wedded to it. If, James argues, we conceive of theories in general in the same way that they are conceived in modern science – namely, as "*instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest*" (James 1977, 380) – then the primary question becomes not whether our theories are absolute transcripts of reality, but rather whether they are useful instruments for achieving the particular aims that we have as inquirers. Theories of a religious or theological nature can be useful instruments, too, even if they serve a different function than scientific ones.

Another important and often misunderstood feature of James's pragmatism is his pragmatic theory of truth. Considerable disagreement exists among scholars over how to understand James's account of truth, but some of its general characteristics can be described in fairly straightforward terms. James accepted the traditional view that truth is a property of agreement or correspondence between things like beliefs and propositions on the one hand and reality on the other (James 1977, 429). But he also maintained

that this traditional conception of truth – the correspondence theory – is incomplete and practically useless without an account of what it *means* for a belief or proposition (or an idea, as James usually says) to "agree with" or "correspond to" reality. What the pragmatic theory of truth presents is an account of the meaning of truth, in which – at least for practical purposes – having an idea that agrees with reality means having an idea that we can *verify* through a process of inquiry (James 1977, 430). Such inquiries can be either theoretical in nature (as when we verify a scientific hypothesis through investigation, or when we confirm that we have the right answer to an equation by checking our math) or practical (as when we determine that a map is accurate when it successfully leads us to our destination). But in either case, *successfully doing something* is required for us to determine that our ideas are true; we cannot arrive at the truth in any other way. For practical purposes, then, truth should not be thought of as a transcendent, ready-made, and static property that obtains between ideas and their objects – which is a decidedly metaphysical view of the nature of truth, and one that is premised on the representationalist idea that true beliefs copy or mirror their objects. Rather, truth should be understood as something that is *made* through successful inquiry. A theory of truth of this sort raises many questions, including what sort of role reality plays in determining the truth of an idea (in addition to the role of human inquirers), and what sort of relationship obtains between having a true belief and having a useful one. James's answers to these questions are not always consistent, but he often took pains to insist that his theory of truth was realistic as well as "humanistic," and that an idea could not be true if it did not successfully lead us to its object or put us into successful working relations with reality (see, for example, James 1975, 104–119).

Unlike Peirce, James wrote extensively on the subject of religion, and in many cases we find that his religious and ethical views are deeply interwoven. Indeed, in works such as "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" (James 1977, 610–629) and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (James 1985) we find him arguing that although morality is autonomous from religion there are nevertheless certain moral goods that cannot be realized apart from religious faith. James's religious and ethical writings have had relatively little direct impact on the field of religious ethics, however, perhaps due in part to the tradition-oriented nature of the field and the fact that James did not squarely stand within a religious tradition. Yet, the last decade has witnessed a growing scholarly interest in James's religious, ethical, and political thought, and the time is ripe for a reassessment of his contributions to the fields of theology and religious studies. For two recent examples of this trend, see Bush (2017) and Slater (2009 and 2014).

Dewey

John Dewey's mature philosophical views were deeply influenced by James's, in particular James's empirical psychology and pragmatism. Yet, Dewey began his philosophical career as a Hegelian, and in many respects his version of pragmatism (which he sometimes called "instrumentalism") represents a synthesis of Hegelian and Jamesian ideas. Like James, Dewey thought that our minds are not merely passive but active in relation to the world; that concepts, beliefs, and theories are human instruments for dealing with human problems, and that they should be evaluated (and if needed modified) in light of how well they work as responses to those problems; and that the tasks and problems of philosophy need to be reformed in light of modern developments such as the rise of the scientific method and of modern democratic values and institutions. But like Hegel, Dewey also believed that we are fundamentally historical and social beings who exist in a dynamic relationship with the natural and social worlds of

which we are part, and that the various dualisms that we have inherited from our philosophical and religious forebears are problematic and need to be overcome.

Dewey's version of pragmatism – and, indeed, his philosophy in general – is based on the novel account of experience that he encountered in James's writings, and understanding this distinctive conception of experience is of crucial importance for understanding his major philosophical works, including *Experience and Nature* (1925), *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), and *Art as Experience* (1934). One of the clearest and most concise presentations of Dewey's pragmatism and conception of experience appears in his seminal 1920 essay "The Need for Recovery of Philosophy" (Dewey 1973, 58–97). Here we find Dewey rejecting the "orthodox" view of experience that has dominated the history of modern and contemporary philosophy, and arguing that experience, properly understood, is not primarily a matter of knowledge, but rather "an affair of the intercourse of a living being with its physical and social environment"; is not essentially subjective or private, but rather suggests about itself "a genuinely objective world which enters into the actions and sufferings of men and undergoes modifications through their responses"; is not restricted to the past or what has been "given," but is also experimental, an effort to change the given that is characterized by "projection," or reaching forward into an unknown future; is not discrete, but rather marked by connections and continuities; and is not opposed to thought or reason, but rather "full of inference" (Dewey 1973, 61). Experience, furthermore, always occurs in an environment, involves reference to activities that are either favorable or unfavorable to the organism that undergoes it, and is prospective, in the sense that it is connected with "activities whose import lies in their objective consequences – their bearing upon future experiences" (Dewey 1973, 68). What successful living for human beings requires is "reflective intelligence in the process of experience" (Dewey 1973, 69), or what Dewey elsewhere simply calls *intelligence*, a form of reflective, collaborative, and experimental inquiry in response to perplexing or problematic situations. The aim of intelligent inquiry is not to arrive at beliefs which correctly represent their objects, but rather, as Dewey writes in "The Development of American Pragmatism" (1931), to take account of "the way in which more effective and more profitable relations with these objects may be established in the future" (Dewey 1973, 54).

Another important feature of Dewey's pragmatism is his belief that our inherited traditions need to be modified or even rejected when they inhibit the solution of pressing problems or the growth of thought and human values. In the case of the Western philosophical tradition, what needs to be overcome are inherited philosophical assumptions and problems that inhibit our attempts to deal satisfactorily with what he called "the problems of men." Chief among these is the false assumption that experience is centered in a subject that lies outside the natural world, which gives rise to what Dewey calls "the spectator theory of knowledge" and a fruitless preoccupation with arriving at knowledge of Reality in general and of knowledge in general (Dewey 1973, 74–97). Indeed, Dewey's philosophy rejects a number of dualisms that have dominated the history of philosophy since Plato, including subject versus object, mind versus body (or mind versus matter), and theory versus practice, on the grounds that these distinctions are not merely false but pernicious in their effects. In the case of religious traditions, Dewey held that supernatural forms of religious belief and the practices and institutions associated with such beliefs have not only had the historic effect of depreciating natural social values, but have also inhibited human beings from fully realizing those values. What he proposed was not the elimination of religion per se, but rather the need to emancipate what he called "the religious function in experience" – its capacity to "lend deep and enduring support to the processes of living" – from its historic bondage to religion (Dewey 1934, 15). A fully naturalized and secularized "common faith" in

which individuals and communities can achieve a form of self-unification in the service of ideal ends, Dewey believed, could allow us to preserve and increase the historic goods of religious faith while also allowing us to dispense with supernatural beliefs (as well as practices and institutions connected to such beliefs) that are neither tenable nor desirable in the modern world.

Dewey wrote more extensively and systematically on the subject of ethics than any pragmatist before or after him. His major work on the subject, *Ethics* (1st ed. 1908, 2nd ed. 1932), co-authored with James Hayden Tufts (1862–1942), covers a wide range of topics including the history of morality in Western civilization, moral theory, the nature of moral reasoning, and issues in applied ethics such as political, economic, and business ethics. Dewey also discussed the nature of morality at great length in his other major works, notably *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), where he argues (among other things) for the need to integrate our beliefs about matters of fact with our beliefs about what is valuable, and that inherited moral values and practices have no intrinsic value per se, and only *become* valuable when they result from a successful and critical process of inquiry.

Dewey's reception by religious ethicists has been mixed, ranging from Reinhold Niebuhr's trenchant criticisms of his moral and political philosophy (in particular its profound optimism about human beings and their capacity for social improvement) to Jeffrey Stout's more recent Dewey-inspired synthesis of pragmatism, Hegelianism, and democratic values in works such as *Democracy and Tradition* (2004).

Neo-pragmatism

Pragmatism was the major current in American philosophy until the 1940s, when it began to be supplanted by new philosophical trends emerging from Britain and Europe. Beginning in the 1970s, however, a renewed interest in pragmatism emerged due to the work of influential philosophers such as Richard Rorty (1931–2007) and Hilary Putnam (1926–2016), both of whom traced many of their most important philosophical insights to James and Dewey. Rorty's version of pragmatism, developed in such works as *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) and *Philosophy and Social Hope* (1999), represented an attempt to combine certain strands of James's and Dewey's versions of pragmatism with the philosophical views of a number of later philosophers including Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Sellars, Davidson, and Derrida, and sought in its own way to carry on Dewey's aim of radically reconstructing philosophy. Putnam's version of pragmatism, in turn, sought to show the enduring relevance of James's and Dewey's thought, particularly with regard to perennial philosophical issues such as the relationship between mind and world, the nature of rationality, and the relationship between facts and values, while also seeking to correct certain mistaken views that he identified in James's, Dewey's, and especially Rorty's versions of pragmatism. More recently, novel anti-representationalist versions of pragmatism that build upon the work of Sellars, Davidson, and Rorty have been developed by two of Rorty's students, Robert Brandom (b. 1950) and Jeffrey Stout (b. 1950), and also by the Australian philosopher Huw Price (b. 1953)).

Stout, in particular, is noteworthy for having established the importance of pragmatism as an approach in the field of religious ethics, and his major works *Ethics after Babel* (1988) and *Democracy and Tradition* are arguably the most important works in ethics in the pragmatist tradition since Dewey. Some of the distinctive features of Stout's approach to religious ethics include its non-confessional character; the primacy of its philosophical commitments, including its commitment to anti-essentialism, anti-representationalism, and historicism; its acceptance of the fact of ethical pluralism; and its critical attention to and defense of the role of traditions in moral life.

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3 Concepts

CHAPTER 51

Cosmology

Frank E. Reynolds[†] *and Jonathan W. Schofer*

Introduction

Throughout history human beings have developed and deployed cosmologies representing their environment and their own place within it. Cosmologies generally depict temporal and spatial dynamics at the broadest scales: the full expanse of the universe, with a time span from creation to end or radical transformation. With the exception of those developed by modern science, most cosmologies have been explicitly religious. Some have given a prominent position to one or more divinities that transcend cosmic time and space. Some have affirmed the importance of sacred beings, forces, and/or processes that operate within the cosmic milieu itself. Some have done both. All of these distinctively religious cosmologies have focused attention on various connections between the structure and dynamics of cosmic realities on the one hand and the meaning and direction of human life on the other.

Religious cosmologies exhibit tremendous variations, not only in their contents but also in the modes through which they have been expressed, which may include myth, narratives, poetic expressions, and visual images (both two dimensional and three dimensional). In addition, cosmological insights have been conveyed, developed, and appropriated through ritual performance, divination, philosophical reflection, and other means.

The ways in which specific cosmologies have been correlated with ethical orientations are clearly a matter for empirical study. In each case there are at least three issues that need to be considered. First, virtually all established cosmologies set out background understandings of the world and human nature that provide contexts for ethical claims concerning social organization, communal activity, and individual character. Second, these cosmologies delineate various levels of reality (divine, natural, social, and individual) that condition norms for action and character, specifying their relative importance and modes of interaction. Third, most cosmologies have also included discussion of ethical attitudes and behavior, identifying unethical attitudes and activities and setting out sanctions that encourage ethical compliance.

This chapter examines three examples of the relations between cosmology and ethics in traditional religious contexts, each highlighting a particular issue: multiple cosmologies within a given tradition, the degree of order in a given cosmology, and practices of divination. In the final section we will consider the split that developed between cosmology and ethics during and after the European Enlightenment, and also the recent surge of interest in new ways of understanding the relationship between them.

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Overlapping Cosmologies, Overlapping Ethics

Many religious traditions affirm multiple cosmologies. Among these traditions there are a few in which overlapping cosmo-ethical orientations, taken together, reveal important aspects of religio-ethical structure and dynamics. In Christianity, for example, cosmo-ethical orientations preserved in the Hebrew Bible are maintained in creative relationships with related but quite different cosmo-ethical orientations associated with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. A comparable but quite different example of this pattern is found in the Buddhist tradition in which an ethically oriented "samsaric" cosmology coexists with an ethically oriented "Buddhic" cosmos brought into being by the achievements and teachings of the Gautama Buddha. Though these two cosmo-ethical orientations coexist in most Buddhist communities, we will here focus attention on the Theravāda tradition that developed in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia (see Reynolds 1985).

The samsaric cosmology of Theravāda teaching affirms that all phenomenal realities arise from the co-dependent interaction of a set of twelve different components (ignorance, dispositions, consciousness, name and form, the six gateways, contact, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, old age, and death). In the many individual world systems that come into being within this all-encompassing samsaric universe (particularly our own), human beings occupy a central position. They have the capacity, through meditation and various forms of moral action, to generate a great deal of happiness and pleasure while minimizing the extent of their pain and suffering in their present life and in their future lives as well. This samsaric ethic has several different dimensions. It includes an emphasis on the mitigation of vices and the cultivation of virtues. It includes a notion of karmic retribution for evil deeds and karmic reward for good deeds. It includes a sense of social responsibility that involves generally applicable rules of individual behavior, as well as specific responsibilities associated with particular social functions. It also includes an ethic of care that places great value on care for Buddhist teachings and institutions, as well as care for human persons and other sentient beings.

However, Theravādins have also affirmed the reality of another, closely correlated cosmology. It includes the samsaric cosmo-ethical order but also recognizes the availability of a higher level of religio-ethical practice. Ignorance is overcome by wisdom, craving is replaced by compassion, and the ongoing experience of impermanence and suffering gives way to liberation. Theravādins often characterize this higher level of ethical practice as the Noble Eightfold Path – a mode of religio-ethical activity that includes right view, right thought, right speech, right conduct, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation. Nibbana is the name for the final liberation that is achieved when the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is perfected.

Within the Buddhic cosmology where its samsaric component and its distinctive soteriological component overlap, the relevant ethical tensions and continuities for individuals and for society are legion. For example, there are actions that are directed toward the proper acquisition of wealth and the proper exercise of political power that are positively valued in the context of samsaric ethics. Yet they are irrelevant, if not antithetical, to the life that is to lead as quickly as possible to the transcendence of samsaric limitations. Conversely, there are other aspects of samsaric ethics, the rooting out of vices and the cultivation of virtues, that are given particular salience because, in addition to their positive contribution to human flourishing within the samsaric process, they also serve as appropriate preparation for future entry into the Noble Path that culminates in liberation.

Some Theravāda practitioners take a more negative ethical approach that focuses on rooting out samsaric vices, the practice of a version of the Noble Path that emphasizes a radical form of ascetic withdrawal, and an interpretation of the goal of nibbana as cessation. A far larger group takes a much more positive approach that involves the cultivation of samsaric virtues, the practice of a version of the Noble Path that features more moderate forms of ascetic practice, and an understanding of nibbana as liberating fulfillment.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the complicated pattern of overlapping cosmologies with different but closely correlated ethical implications, this Theravāda approach has – over the centuries – proved to be remarkably flexible and resilient.

Cosmologies of Ethical Order

One very pervasive cosmological concern is setting out some form of order in the universe. This order can appear in a number of variations. One type, common in Indian and European religions, asserts that there exist homologies between the individual, the society, and the cosmos, and right action consists in maintaining and reinforcing those correspondences. A second type argues that a harmony between individuals, society, and cosmos can be earned, either through individual attunement with the cosmos (as in forms of Daoism) or through communal and ritual alignment (in forms of Confucianism). A third type of order, our focus in this context, concerns not structure but process. The cosmos is presented as being just, such that good actions bring good results and bad actions bring bad results. This kind of account is expressed through the concept of karma in Hinduism and Buddhism, and through images of divine justice in the Hebrew Bible and the religions that have emerged in relation to that corpus, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Within and across these groupings there is of course a wide range of cosmological images and concepts, and a given religion or person may maintain more than one.

Accounts of cosmic justice assert human notions of good and bad, just and unjust, are somehow embedded in the nature of existence. The ethical order may be preserved by one or more deities or by impersonal forces, but a key feature is that human actions or character states generate consequences according to a normative assessment. From this relatively simple starting point, many variations and debates appear: the relative significance of actions and intentions, the possibilities for transfer of merit and culpability, whether or not an individual may receive the reward or punishment of a larger community, whether the consequences of an action appear during life or after death, and others.

We can focus on notions of justice in rabbinic Jewish literature, which classical or late ancient develop various cosmologies from the Hebrew Bible (see Knight 1985). In rabbinic accounts of divine justice or "reward and punishment," cosmology and theology intertwine. In many cases rabbis present God as central to the maintenance of justice, at the center of a perfect heavenly judicial system that includes an honest judge along with witnesses and attorneys. Other passages present consequences as emerging from an action, without any specific mention of direct divine involvement. In such ethically charged cosmological contexts, human action does not consist of singular, discrete events, but rather each action brings results that come at some point in the future. One is placed in a constant state of anticipation, always looking ahead to the possible consequences of one's actions. Such an anticipatory state can be maintained indefinitely, particularly when the ultimate consequences are deferred to an existence after death.

The consequence of a given action may have varying degrees of correspondence to the act itself. In some cases, rabbis assert that there exists an exact correspondence, such that the results match the act "measure for measure." In other cases, God's excess compassion and mercy can mean that punishment is suspended or annulled. A third possibility is when an apparently trivial sin brings great consequences. A rabbi may claim "malicious speech" is a greater transgression than the three paradigmatic sins of rabbinic culture (idolatry, incest, and murder), or that a moment of arrogance can bring death. Such hyperbolic claims exhort the reader or listener not to ignore the seemingly small aspects of religious and communal life. In these cases and others, scholars need to address the pedagogical and homiletic features of claims concerning the workings of the cosmos (Schofer 2005).

Cosmic order is a far from universal feature of religious ethics. Many cosmologies portray flawed or conflicting gods, or impersonal forces, shaping the world and impacting human life. One of the great distinguishing features of modernity, in fact, is the break with ideals of order (Nietzsche 1967; Foucault 1977). From these latter perspectives, notions of cosmic homologies, harmony, or justice may appear naive or problematic. However, with all their difficulties, cosmologies of ethical order represent a creative attempt to highlight human action as immensely significant, and to assert, despite great evidence to the contrary, that the world reinforces and upholds notions of what is right and wrong.

Cosmic Divination

When cosmology is prominent in ethical outlooks and practices, a key question emerges in situations of conflict and ambiguity: how can the cosmos be interpreted in order to find guidance? In many cultures, philosophical and casuistic modes of inquiry have become highly legitimated approaches for resolving such conflicts. However, in numerous religious frameworks, hermeneutic methods broadly characterized as "divination" have been (and remain today) crucial for deciding questions of ethical import.

Scholars have discussed the links between divination and ethics, characterizing divination as an attempt to align human action with divine intent, or a way of thought that interprets a given person's situation and clarifies relationships with other individuals, the community, and cosmic powers (Turner 1975; Sullivan 1985; Grillo 1992). One can illustrate links between divination and ethical behavior through the case of the Quiché of Guatemala.

The act of consulting the universe through divination is on occasions modeled as an essential element in cosmogony itself. In the opening chapter of the great Mayan account of cosmogony, the Council Book or Popol Vuh, the gods strive to form human beings as creatures who can walk, work, talk, visit shrines, give offerings, and call upon their creators by name. After their first two attempts fail, they consult a divine elderly couple who are both "daykeepers," versed in the skills of divination. This couple counts out the days according to the Mayan calendar, sets out lots of corn or coral seeds, and asks if the gods' plans for creating humans will succeed. The reading is affirmative, and creation moves forward.

Today, Quiché divination centers on methods associated with the elderly divine couple of the cosmogonic myth. The full process is called "understanding" (*ch'obonic*) and the subject matter may include any of a wide range of problems concerning right action. Some clearly concern ethical matters, such as whether one owes work or a favor to another person. Others are initially diagnostic (what is the cause of

a given illness) or concern decisions that may not be primarily ethical (whether or not to take a trip), though even in these cases, the conclusion of the divination may be ethically significant.

The process of understanding centers upon the diviner's experience of internal "lightning" (*coyopa*), a sensation that has been described as tingling, jumping, or twitching in the blood or muscles. This lightning is seen as similar to the sheet lightning that occurs over sacred lakes in the four directions of east, west, north, and south, and these lakes are invoked in given acts of divination. A diviner interprets the lightning through a complex system based on where it occurs in the body. Internal lightning at the front of the body indicates a present or future event, while that on the back indicates the past. Movement on the left side of the body concerns a female, while that on the right concerns a male. As a daykeeper, the diviner's expertise stems from knowing the Mayan calendar and the particular meanings and powers associated with each day. In the divining process the daykeeper counts out the days of the calendar, and when lightning occurs in the blood, the day that is counted becomes significant for the daykeeper's counsel. In addition, the daykeeper sorts lots that mirror the authority of the municipal hierarchy.

The cosmological symbolism of this divination is multi-layered. Spatially, the diviner's body is a microcosm of the natural world, drawing upon its powers. Temporally, cycles of time are invoked through the counting of days, and the movement from past to future is examined through the location of the internal lightning. The social world, moreover, is integrated into the process, whether through the lots representing the community, or through the place in the body where lightning appears (Tedlock 1992, 1993, 1996).

Cosmic divination is a process in which the diviner works at the intersection of her or his body and intuition, knowledge of the client and the case at hand, and rituals such as counting the days and the sorting of lots. Divination is an interpretive, homiletic practice of making cosmo-ethical orientations and particular objects or texts "speak" to a given situation in order to generate knowledge and guidance for action in practical real life situations (Smith 1982).

Developments in the Modern Context

For many contemporary thinkers this discussion of ethics as intertwined with cosmology may seem odd. Or, if not odd, at least seemingly unconnected to normative ethical reflection viable in an intellectual community influenced by the European Enlightenment. This section discusses the turn away from religiously oriented cosmologies that has characterized influential ethical approaches that have emerged in the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment context. We will then go on to consider the work of one outstanding contemporary philosophical ethicist who has been a leading figure in *The Return to Cosmology* (Toulmin 1982).

The Rejection of Cosmology

There are at least two very powerful factors in Western European history that have contributed to the severing of the traditional bonds between cosmological understandings and ethical orientations. One factor has been the decline in the ethical legitimacy that the various European religions (and their teachings) have suffered, beginning with their involvement in the wars that tore the continent apart during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A second factor has been the somewhat later

emergence and rise to prominence of a powerful and convincing scientific cosmology that is devoid of any intrinsic ethical significance.

In the face of these developments a number of Western thinkers in the seventeenth century began a search to find a new basis for philosophical reasoning that would not depend on accounts of the cosmos (Toulmin 1990). During the last four centuries the many influential ethicists who have participated in this Enlightenment project have focused their attention almost exclusively on interactions among human beings and have grounded their characterizations of ethical action in various forms of rational formalism and/or the exercise of practical reason. Though it is true that the presence of positively oriented cosmological thought and imagery has never been completely eclipsed, it has definitely been relegated to the periphery.

A more recent departure from traditional religious cosmologies and the ethical orientations associated with them came to the fore in the existentialist movement that flourished, particularly in France, during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Most existentialist thinkers did not reject the connection between cosmology and ethics. Quite to the contrary, they had a cosmological orientation of their own and affirmed an ethical orientation that was directly correlated with it. From the existentialist perspective the cosmological environment in which human beings are inextricably trapped, including both its natural dimensions and its social dimensions, was characterized by nastiness, meaninglessness, and absurdity. The ethical response that they called for, the only one that seems at all viable in the kind of cosmos that they experienced and portrayed, was an individual assertion of human freedom and defiance made with the full knowledge of its ultimate futility.

Within the past several decades there has been a remarkable resurgence of interest in cosmological orientations associated with very different kinds of ethical imperatives. These more recent cosmological orientations are distinguished by ways in which they set the stage for mutually beneficial interactions between human beings and the natural world in which they are situated. In some instances this interest is focused on the way in which human interactions with the natural world can provide an antidote to the spiritual and ethical malaise that characterizes so much of modern life. In other instances this interest is focused on the formulation of a new kind of environmental ethic designed to assist in the effort to stem the ever-rising tide of non-sustainable "development" that is wreaking havoc in the natural world on which human life depends. In many cases these two closely related foci of interest are addressed jointly by a single author.

A Return to Ethical Cosmology

The writings of the Czech philosopher Erazim Kohák provide a powerful example of a bifocal approach. In *The Embers and the Stars* (1984) Kohák sets forth a two-staged interpretation of the development of the spiritual and ethical malaise that pervades late modern experience. The first stage involves the formulation of what he calls "theoretical nature-constructs," a process that he associates with the rise of the natural sciences. The second stage is characterized by the development of a world of technologically developed artifacts that embodies these theoretical constructs (the world of denatured, dehumanized, depersonalized experience that is so vividly depicted by existentialist authors).

In response to this situation Kohák evokes for his readers a cosmologically oriented philosophy of personalism that has, as its central component, the recovery of a moral sense of nature. The approach involves a phenomenological "bracketing" that suspends the impersonal world of theoretical constructs and technologically generated artifacts. This process of bracketing opens the way for the recovery of a

direct experience of the natural environment within which we live. The natural world that he claims to uncover through this strategy is a cosmos of personalized interactions within and between various levels of being that are ordered in ways that are rich with moral significance.

Kohák is not proposing to replace the modern scientific cosmology with the cosmoethical orientation. Rather, he advocates a dually structured cosmological understanding that has certain affinities with the paired cosmologies in the Theravāda Buddhist context (see above). In Kohák's case, the dual understanding encompasses a primary religio-ethical cosmology that can be discerned through a direct experiential interaction with the natural world. It also encompasses a secondary cosmology that is associated with the abstract constructs of the natural sciences and the world of technological artifacts that they have generated. Certain areas of overlap are envisioned between the two cosmologies as well as tensions between them. In the areas where there is overlap he affirms that the personalistic and moral orientation of the primary cosmology must take precedence over the highly useful but essentially amoral and impersonal orientation of the secondary cosmology.

In a postscript in which he identifies his own approach to ecological ethics, Kohák affirms the fundamental need "to think through and live through the whole philosophical question about the place of humans in the cosmos and in nature" (Kohák 2000, 161). This is required in order to evoke the sense of cosmic belonging that provides the experiential basis for an ethic of human frugality and environmental sensitivity. Though rejecting the notion that technologies can solve the ecological problems that we presently face, he does recognize that they have an important secondary contribution to make.

In addition to Erazim Kohák, there are many other ethicists, including many who work in the context of major religious traditions, who are now creatively involved in the effort to relate viable cosmological understandings with urgent ethical concerns. There is every reason to believe that this is a trend that will continue far into the future.

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CHAPTER 52

Ritual

Francisca Cho

Ritual and Moral Action

In common parlance, the term "ritual" – both religious and secular – denotes a pattern of regularly performed or scripted behavior, usually in a ceremonial context. At first blush, rituals seem to have little to do with moral actions, if the latter are understood as deeds that are guided by principles that help people to negotiate their way through everyday life. A link between ritual action and moral action has been suggested, however, by historians of religion who see rituals as outward expressions or enactments of myths. Myths, in turn, are understood to be narrative accounts of a society's most profound beliefs about the world – such as the way it came into existence, our personal roles in relation to it, and the ultimate destiny or purpose of existence in such a world. These beliefs, in turn, comprise the fundamental principles that help us to see what is moral. Moral acts can be expressed in specific ritual behaviors, such as the custom of widow burning (*sati*) in India, based on beliefs about the identity and duty of a wife in relation to her husband. Or they can be negotiated day to day based on the reasoning supplied by the mythological worldview. One might decide against an abortion, for example, based on the reasoning that all matters of life and death should be left to the will of a creator God.

This way of linking ritual to myth participates in a longstanding interpretive strategy that sees religion as primarily an intellectual activity. Myth, ritual, and even morality are outgrowths, in this view, of the human need to make sense of the world. Sense making, in turn, is a function of making propositions about the world that will allow us to act meaningfully and properly within it. In the recent history of ritual studies, however, scholars have become more interested in ritual as a qualitative experience in and of itself, rather than as the mere physical execution of an intellectual text. In this view, ritual is "pure activity," completely meaningless with respect to intellectual propositions, but quite meaningful relative to itself. Ritual and ritual players may be sustained through time as a social institution or fact, but the viability of ritual is a matter of the sensual, aesthetic, psychological, and neurological satisfaction attained by the participants. Hence, rituals have no objectives external to themselves, such as making sense of the world or even building collective solidarity. Contrary to functionalist interpretations, ritual is its own aim and its own value (Staal 1979, 9).

The focus on ritual as an experience to be enjoyed rather than as a text to be read displays the influence of performance theory, which is the study of theater, and the work of sociologist Erving Goffman, who extends the concept of performance to social and cultural action. Victor Turner, for example, extends the

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category of ritual from discrete ceremonial settings to larger social dramas in which historical tensions and ruptures are negotiated and social change is brought about. Contrary to the prior reading of ritual as socially conservative, always acting to preserve existing ideologies and world-views, Turner suggests ritual is a form of cultural performance that negotiates reality in an ongoing manner. This nexus between ritual performance and social innovation suggests a new way of tying together the categories of ritual action and moral action. The new link can be forged upon the basis of a qualitative experience rather than an intellectual operation. The focus on experience and performance allows one to encompass the possibility of social change and, more importantly, predicates such social evolution on the transformation of the individual. And to the degree that ritual action can be transformative of the individual, it is also a moral practice. It will help to examine specific historical expressions of these ideas.

The lack of precise linguistic equivalents to the terms "morality" or "ethics" in comparative religious traditions points out, of course, the cultural specificity of these words and their traditions of inquiry. More importantly, however, this problem of translation opens up an opportunity to enhance our moral investigations by forcing us to accept rough terminological equivalents from other cultures, with the result that new connotations and meanings of morality come into view. Hence, this chapter on the role of ritual in moral inquiry will draw upon the examples of Chinese religions – particularly the articulate and text-based traditions of Confucianism and Daoism. Although neither of these traditions has a history of discussions that parallel the Western discourse on morality, both of them, by virtue of their religious goals, are profoundly concerned with how people should behave. The goals of sagehood and unity with the *Dao* ("the Way"), respectively, may be described as forms of spiritual realization that are predicated on proper conduct within the social and natural spheres. This conduct is a matter of ritual action, which is expressed as forms of cultural and physical performance. And like the recent moves in ritual studies, performance is a matter of a qualitative experience that is self-referentially "holy" and which expresses a level of skillfulness that is a form of transformative and "great" knowledge (*dazhi*).

These Asian paths, to be sure, are embellished by their own mythologies and systems of meaning-making – they are, after all, highly literate traditions. This entry will draw upon their meaning systems in order to help the reader make sense of their practices. These texts, however, repeatedly aver that intellectual knowledge is inferior to the embodied knowledge of action – a point we would do well to keep in mind.

Ritual Action in Confucianism

The conflation of ritual and moral action is superlatively expressed in the Confucian concept of *li*, or "rites." For the philosopher Confucius, the goal of sagehood, which entailed the rectification of one's mind (*xin*), first presumed the mastery of formal social behavior, codified in the rites. The rites originally derived from the highly formalized court rituals of the Zhou dynasty (1046–221 BCE). In the hands of Confucius, however, the rites were centered on social behavior, and hence came to signify "propriety." The specific rules of social interactions derived from the five major social relationships recognized by Confucianism, which are posed as reciprocal, though mostly hierarchical, relational pairs: ruler and minister, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, friend and friend (*Doctrine of the Mean* 20). These "universal ways" of Confucianism define a social and moral world. As a social–ethical system of thought, the emphasis on *li* evinces the belief that order and harmony depend on the ability of

every individual – especially the ruler – to play his social role to perfection. Role playing consists of action that is observable to all: "Look at the means a man employs, observe the path he takes and examine where he feels at home. In what way is a man's true character hidden from view?" (Lau 1979, 64). Proper social performance was a matter of attaining an intuitive knowledge of the appropriate words and actions in every social situation. No act was exempt from this demand. As Confucius states:

> Do not look unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not listen unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not speak unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not move unless it is in accordance with the rites. (Lau 1979, 112)

To be sure, Chinese history has demonstrated that the principle of the rites/propriety, with its attendant value of righteousness (*yi*), is perhaps more conducive to the rule of an oppressive social conformity than to the production of sages. In addition, given the hierarchical nature of most social relationships, the actual practice of Confucian moralism has tended to be expressed in the oppression of those on the low end of the power scale. The Confucian fixation on outer appearances as a reliable indicator of moral worth has also encouraged an ethos of "saving face" that values ceremonial behavior in its most pejorative, empty sense rather than sincere action. History demonstrates that it is easy to reduce Confucianism to formalism and political advantage. Such practice neglects the religious and cosmological sides of Confucius, which cherish ritual social action as a method of completing the individual and bringing her into harmony with society, as well as the natural world.

The religious ideal of sagehood is grounded in a cosmological view that unites human action to the larger natural environment. The Confucian "heaven" (*tian*) is an amalgamation of both nature and a moral consciousness that does not entail supernatural agency or will. Heaven is better described as the principle of synchronous activity so prevalent in Chinese correlative cosmology. The body politic, as well as the individual human body, are microcosms of the natural universe, and all three work in sympathy. As one text states, humans form a triad with heaven and earth. Individual cultivation leads to the cultivation of others, to the development of the nature of things, and ultimately to the nourishing of heaven and earth (*Doctrine of the Mean* 22). Socially prescribed action does not take society as its end; rather, it is the means by which individuals can actualize the Way (*Dao*) that ultimately unites all things. Ritual action is therefore more than an arbitrary set of rules and social customs. On the other hand, the value of ritual action does not lie in its enactment of metaphysical principles or truths, but rather in its very performance – in its qualitative experience that actualizes the ideal of becoming fully human.

The Confucian concept of humanity, or humanness (*ren*), is the linchpin of its moral system in that it is entirely focused on human interrelationships. The teaching can be reduced to "love your fellow men" (Lau 1979, 116), and an inverse rendition of the Golden Rule: "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire" (Lau 1979, 135). These familiar injunctions do not flow from an omnipotent lawgiver, or from rational principles. They articulate the fact that it is only in the course of social and familial interactions that one can experience the grace and fulsomeness of the *Dao*. Significantly, the rites include the meanings of "etiquette" and "refinement," which are more matters of ritual norms than rational discernment. It is primarily by appropriating the external forms of culture that humans can attain the experience of graciousness. Social rules both define and create such harmony because without them, we do not know "where to put hand and foot" (Lau 1979, 118); we do not know what to say, or what to do, and as a result, others cannot know our meaning nor our intentions.

Ritual performance is a key element of peak religious states such as ecstasy, trance, and meditation. The quality of consciousness denoted by these states is usually induced by ritual contexts and practices. This connection between ritual performance and qualitative experience is also present in the secular arenas of theater and the kind of social performances specified by *li*. What ritual induces, ideally, is the reality of what is symbolized, so that "the invisible world referred to in ritual is made manifest and the subject placed within it" (Myerhoff 1990, 246). Such states, to be sure, cannot be scripted or willed, and may hinge on the triggering of certain neurological activity – an event more easily subject to direct physiological than social manipulation. More important, however, is the observation that ritual actions pack a punch precisely because they are embodied – literally performed by the body to create distinctive spaces and experiences, all within the moral course of human interaction. The terminology of "performance" indicates the priority of embodied action in determining the nature of our thinking as well as our emotions. The social choreography of the Confucian rites is certainly liable to affectation, but it nevertheless forms the necessary condition for the fusion of symbol and consciousness that paradoxically transforms choreography into sincere action.

Contrary to some cultural tendencies to separate the rational faculties from the "baser" instincts of the body, Chinese traditions might be described as practices of self-cultivation that view the body as foundational. The generalization can be sustained across disparate Chinese practices such as Confucianism and Daoism, in spite of their significant intellectual disagreements. Confucianism, as we have seen, is primarily enamored of the social body, with its emphasis on the proper enactment of hierarchical, rule-governed relationships. This social play, however, rests upon the cultivation of individual physical performance, with much emphasis on propriety of appearance, physical comportment, and speech. The rites go beyond a system of action guides and hold out the ideal of ritualizing every social interaction so that each encounter is fully moral and humanizing. Daoism, on the other hand, with its severe allergy to systems of rule-governed behavior, is pointedly critical of the rites but nevertheless in harmony with the Confucian focus on physical self-cultivation. Indeed, its textual references to "concentrating the breath in order to become supple like the babe" (Lau 1963, 66) and making the body like a "withered tree" and the mind like "dead ashes" (*Zhuangzi* ch. 2) attest to the cultivation practices broadly known as "inner alchemy" (*neidan*) that make up a large part of Daoist tradition. Perhaps more literally embodied than Confucian action, this vast system of exercise, breath control, meditation, sexual yoga, and dietary practices are rituals in the most specific sense. Concomitant with its rejection of the rites, Daoism turns to concrete physical forms of self-cultivation as a path to moral excellence.

Daoist Ritual Action

The reputation of Daoism, both in the eyes of its Confucian critics and in much of Western scholarship, is that it is an amoral (if not downright immoral) philosophy that laughs at social obligations and, indeed, at civilization itself in an anarchistic pursuit of individual freedom and spontaneity (*ziran*). Daoism turns the Confucian faith in social rituals upside down by envisioning a path of action that arises effortlessly (*wuwei*) when the mind has been released from conventional discriminations. Daoism has not been appreciated as a moral system because of a prevalent tendency, across cultures, to associate morality with value discriminations between "good" and "bad" that are encoded in specific rules of behavior. This emphasis on the discriminating mind as the basis of right action is evident in

contemporary Western concerns with moral reason (Cho 1998), as well as in the Confucian principle of the "rectification of names" (*zhengming*).

Daoist morality, on the other hand, challenges us to imagine right action in the space beyond value distinctions and certainties. This goal is anchored in the observation that values, in and of themselves, are never self-sustaining. Both aesthetic and moral distinctions are defined relative to each other in some particular social context, rather than signifying absolute properties. In modern terminology, we might say that perceptions of beauty and goodness are notoriously culture and time specific. Cultural conventions, however, develop an aura of absoluteness and weaken our ability to respond appropriately to evolving circumstances. "Therefore the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practices the teaching that uses no words" (Lau 1963, 58). Besides expressing Daoism's minimalist ethic, this passage counsels detachment from fixed moral conventions.

Daoism addresses the apparent contradiction of a morality outside the boundaries of fixed values and rules by exchanging social rituals for the rituals of self-cultivation. Perhaps even more pervasive than its reputation for amorality, Daoism is portrayed as a madcap, bohemian way of life that values individual freedom above all else. This picture obscures the centrality of inner alchemy practices that are governed by all of the disciplines and exactions of ritual. To be sure, there is nothing overtly other regarding, and hence morally inclined, about yogic disciplines and the pursuit of physical immortality. The current popularity in the West of Daoist practices such as *taijiquan* might be attributed to a highly self-regarding interest in health and fitness, in fact, and seems to betray a similar self-centeredness on the part of Daoist adepts. This conclusion is predicated, however, on the large assumption that physical and moral cultivation are strictly autonomous, or even mutually exclusive. Rational traditions that see the body as inimical to the superior functions of the mind may advocate a physical regimen designed to constrict bodily desires and gratification, but certainly not a system of cultivation that seeks to enhance physical energy and longevity. In *neidan* practice, in contrast, union with the *Dao* most immediately meant conforming the body to the larger patterns of the seasons so that physical life was fully enhanced:

> The sages followed the laws [of nature] and therefore their bodies were free from strange diseases; they did not lose anything (which they had received by nature) and their spirit of life was never exhausted. (Veith 1972, 104)

Following the patterns of nature entailed conformity to very specific seasonal rules of living, expressing the belief that the body is essentially parallel to and an extension of the forces and energies found in nature:

> Those who rebel against the basic rules of the universe sever their own roots and ruin their true selves. Yin and Yang, the two principles in nature, and the four seasons are the beginning and the end of everything and they are also the cause of life and death. (Veith 1972, 104)

Chinese correlative thinking is demonstrated in the Daoist conception of the body, with its four main arteries and twelve subsidiary vessels, which correspond with the four seasons and twelve months. The tremendously detailed elaboration of bodily organs, mapped to Yin and Yang energies, forms the basis of seasonal practices, diet, and medicine. Harmonizing one's physical life to the cycling energies of nature brings good health and long life, but, most importantly, it also leads to the moral and spiritual perfection of sages:

> Their spirit followed in harmony and obedience; everything was satisfactory to their wishes and they could achieve whatever they wished. Any kind of food was beautiful [to them]; and any kind of clothing was satisfactory. They felt happy under any condition. To them it did not matter whether a man held a high or a low position in life. These men can be called pure at heart. No kind of desire can tempt the eyes of those pure people and their mind cannot be misled by excessiveness and evil. (Veith 1972, 98)

To cultivate one's physical life, one must ritually integrate oneself with the macrocosmic patterns and movements that are the *Dao*. This discipline naturally results in the regulation of desires and the ability to find satisfaction in all things. Hence, physical, moral, and spiritual health are different facets of the same "way." More specifically, physical self-cultivation precedes mental cultivation in a direct cause and effect relationship. This principle is put into practice across various Asian traditions of spiritual training. The regulation of posture and breath in Indian yoga form the basis of mental cultivation, for example, and the Buddhist use of the arts (including martial arts) in East Asia uses physical discipline in the same way. Hence, in contrast to the assumption that the mind should rule over the body,

> the tradition of Eastern self-cultivation places importance on entering the mind from the body or form. That is, it attempts to train the mind by training the body. Consequently, the mind is not simply consciousness, nor is it constant and unchangeable, but rather it is that which is *transformed* through training the body. (Yuasa 1993, 26)

Hence, the discriminating mind is not the basis of moral knowledge, but rather the obstacle that is overcome by physical training. The Daoist aim of effortless action is a prerogative of those who, after considerable discipline, can throw away the rules because they have gone beyond the need to rely on mental calculation and effort. The fact that these sages can be found among an indiscriminate variety of laborers and the leisured – a cook, a wheelwright, a hunchbacked cicada catcher, a ferryman, a woodworker, a swimmer, an illustrator (*Zhuangzi* chs. 3, 19) – suggests that all common activities, much like all human interactions for Confucius, can be the actual moments of, rather than simply the means to, self-transformation.

Ritual Action and Morality

Chinese traditions move religious ethics significantly beyond the view of ritual as action that is made meaningful only by virtue of an interpretive reading. Confucian and Daoist rituals may be aligned with cosmological maps, to be sure, but their *doing* is an intrinsic value, one which instantiates the *Dao* rather than merely referring to it. In Confucianism, ritual actions are performed within the social body, and morality is expressed in the full attainment of humanness in interaction with others. In Daoism, ritual actions are performed within the physical body, and morality is expressed in the full cultivation of the self that eliminates all injury to self and others. As ritual actions, both paths give priority to the body, and, by extension, to physical performance.

Performances are not just the stuff of formal theater or ceremonial event, but are also the making of meaning and identity in everyday public as well as private life. In this respect, the moral person may also

be seen as a performer, not in the sense of one who "puts on" an act, but of one who attains morality in the moment of action. Action is the primary context in which moral consciousness and experience materialize:

> Cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances. A performance is a dialectic of "flow," that is, spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one, and "reflexivity," in which the central meanings, values, and goals of a culture are seen "in action," as they shape and explain behavior. (Schechner and Appel 1990, 1)

The absence of a direct linguistic equivalent to "morality" in traditional Chinese thought has led us to look at other terms with family resemblances. Confucian *li* and *ren*, and Daoist *neidan* practice, which seek to "nurture life" (*yangsheng*), all point us in the direction of ritual action. Their compatibility with the explanations of performance theory creates a marriage between the Asian tradition and contemporary scholarship, both of which encourage us to push back the boundaries of moral discourse. Specifically, we are encouraged to see the links between morality and aesthetics by paying attention to the phenomenological qualities of the former. Confucian benevolence and Daoist "great knowledge" (*dazhi*) and daimonic skill (*shen*) bear a great resemblance to the "flow," "concentration," and "presence" attained in performance, and inspire us to imagine morality as a similar quality, or aesthetic, of experience.

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CHAPTER 53

Saints and Exemplars

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Saints and moral exemplars are an important subject in religious traditions, for they define and demonstrate the hopes, desires, practices, and moral ideals of their community. The lives of these persons provide inspiration and guidance, typically providing devotees with help on complex moral demands and personal struggles. This entry expounds the subject of saints and exemplars with detailed attention to the Muslim tradition and its encounter with indigenous African ideas. Every tradition, it is true, has its own saints and moral exemplars, but it is hoped that attention here to the particular examples in one tradition may provide more general insight into the importance of saints and moral exemplars in religious ethics broadly conceived. The cases discussed in this entry may be viewed as exemplary of the larger theme.

A substantive distinction is drawn in the Muslim tradition between "saintship" (*wilāya*) and "sainthood" (*walāya*). Saintship concerns the organization and expression of saintly power, while sainthood relates to the personality of the saint and the dynamics of personal saintly power. Saintship is bequeathed and perpetuated in an organized fashion, whereas sainthood is acquired by individuals. Sainthood is personal charisma, while saintship is institutional charisma. Both concepts are related to the idea of *baraka* ("favor," "grace," "virtue").

The common Arabic word for saint is *walī*, strictly speaking a friend or patron. It occurs numerous times in the Qur'an with this meaning, often with God being the friend or patron (Qur'an 2:258; 3:61; 6:51, 69; 17:111; 41:34; 42:7, 27; 45:18; 2:101, 114; 9:75, 117; 13:37; 18:25; 29:21; 32:3; 42:6, 30, 42; 4:77, 122, 173; 6:14; 18:16; 33:17, etc.). The Qur'an's major stress is on God as the only *walī* worthy of trust and dependence (*tawakkul*) (Qur'an 7:2, 11:22, 115; 13:17; 17:99; 18:48, 102; 25:19; 29:49; 39:4; 42:4, 7, 45; 45:9; 60:1). A special place is also reserved for those whom. God regards as his friends (*awliyā'*) (Qur'an 3:27; 4:91, 138, 143; 5:56, 62, 84; 7:28; 9:23; 10:63; 60:9). A further step is taken when a forensic meaning is applied to the term and human patrons are given a status in contract law such that they may act as deputies for their clients (Qur'an 2:282).

There is Qur'anic justification for the claim made by and about many of the saints of Islam that God may enter into a relationship of special intimacy with his creatures, so that they hold the status of "friendship" or "nearness in favor" to God. They are close to him: "near ones" (*al-muqarrabūn*), who will receive the superlative reward of Paradise (Qur'an 61:11; 83:21, 28). The word for "near ones" is from the same root (q.r.b.) that is at the base of the standard terms for a relative or kin (*qurbā*). Making up for the abolition of natural kinship in Islam (Levy 1969, 55–56; Qur'an 49:13; Baydāwī 1848, 276), the Qur'an

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Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

assures believers that God will provide for them a next-of-kin, and the word used is the same as that for nearness (Qur'an 19:5). Perhaps the most striking image of God's closeness to human beings occurs in this trenchant verse:

> We indeed created man, and We know
> what his soul whispers within him,
> and We are nearer to him [*aqrabu ilayhi*] than the
> jugular vein. (Qur'an 50:15; Arberry 1967, 234)

Súfís interpret "nearness to God" as a life marked by prayer and supererogatory devotion. The "saint" is one who leads a life of religious devotion, keeping close to God in prayer, praise, supplication, and attentiveness, and to the people in various acts of guidance, mediation, and intercession. When he or she becomes manifest to people after receiving the inner assurance of divine "friendship," the saint becomes worldly exemplar, although often the public manifestation of sainthood precedes confirmation of inner assurance.

The Holy and the Sacred

A word or two may be in order on general notions of the holy and sacred in African traditional religions. African notions of the holy and sacred are infused by a sense of danger and avoidance. The sacred is contagious, and it renders persons vulnerable to invasion by spirit forces, a contamination that can spread from contact. Muslim notions of the saint and sanctity are influenced by ideas of merit and reward at the hands of the elect. Ordinary people receive protection through the mediation of saints and exemplars. Holy men and holy women, accordingly, have their social function defined for them as brokers of popular religion.

North African Impulses

In contrast to the tradition of Christian saints, saintly virtue in Muslim Africa was typically cultivated with a worldly end in view rather than as solitary retreat. For example, in the military redoubts of Northwest Africa saints emerged committed to defying the world with sacred word and consecrated sword. Ascetic practice (*zuhd*) developed alongside the study of law (*fiqh*), and together they helped sharpen the instruments of armed struggle (*jihād*). The religious recluse occupied their time with studying juridical sources, often with an eye to reforming society and local practice. The exemplary religious life made little distinction between worldly means and spiritual ends. One writer observes that whereas elsewhere in the Muslim world the ascetics (*zuhhād*) who abandoned all worldly contact were pitted against the jurists (*fuqahā'*) who were immersed in worldly affairs, in North Africa they made common cause, and many religious figures combined the two functions.

> In Ifriqiya, *fuqahā'* became *zuhhād* without ceasing the study of *fiqh*, or cutting off relations with the *fuqahā'* who demonstrated no interest in asceticism. As *zuhhād*, however, they did not become detached from the world, and they remained in constant communication with the people. They

> were guardians of the common people's interests, and challenged the rulers to show regard for these considerations. They were admired by the people for their piety, devotion, and independence with respect to rulers. They were not marginal to the mainstream of Islam in Ifriqiya, but rather its core. They were the true leaders of the people (Levtzion 1979, 80)

Through jurisprudence and asceticism the *jihād* tradition was strengthened, and holy personages carried their call into the citadels of power. In the numerous eruptions of reform and renewal the saintly ideal – that is, the exemplary force of the holy and learned figure – was the ideological trigger and guide for action. Struggle against the flesh (*nafs*) was matched by struggle against the unbelieving world (*dunya*), a double role that qualified the saint for political and spiritual leadership at the same time.

An example was 'Abd Allāh ibn Yasīn (d. 1059), who in 1040 CE launched the religious revolution in North Africa that led to the creation of the Almoravid empire. Ibn Yasín was a commanding, ascetic figure. He was rewarded with miracles as God's recognition of his saintly stature. The seal of *baraka*, of efficacious virtue, came to be attached to his person, and after his death he became a transmitter of blessings for people who came to his tomb seeking rescue from various pains and obstacles in ordinary life. The Arab chronicler al-Bakrī, writing in 1068 CE, recounts how a cult grew up around the tomb of Ibn Yasīn:

> On his tomb stands today a mausoleum, which is well frequented, and a hospice [*ribāṭ*] always full of people ... Even now a group of them [the Almoravids] would choose to lead them in prayer only a man who prayed behind 'Abd Allāh, even though a more meritorious and more pious person, who had never prayed under the guidance of 'Abd Allāh, was among them. (Al-Bakrī 1913, 168; Hopkins and Levtzion 1981, 74)

Yet Al-Bakrī was scornful of Ibn Yasīn and his followers, scrutinizing the man's heritage with the unsparing eye of a rigorist. Along with the scholars ('*ulamā*'), al-Bakrī held the saintly heritage (*wilāya*) in Islam, defined as a synthesis of *zuhd* and *fiqh*, of renunciation and the code, to be in excess of accepted guidance. Yet the saints (*awliyā'*) have been the real architects of the changes that the 'ulamā idealized in doctrine; they gave practical expression to the aims of the code.

The successors of the Almoravids failed the challenge of living in the world and against it at the same time. These were the Almohads, whose leader, Ibn Tumart (d. 1130), claimed the title of Mahd¯ı, meaning Messiah, in 1127. Ibn Tumart sought to make a firm distinction between *fiqh* and *zuhd*, between religious legalism and free-wheeling experimentalism – a legalism that stressed the binding authority of received tradition, and an experimentalism that narrowed down to the individual and his cultivated insights, including direct access to truth. In that cleavage he asserted his own towering authority, burdened by few scruples and buoyed by the single idea of a victorious monotheism. For Ibn Tumart, too, worldly reward was a natural appurtenance of religious virtue. (For a brief but authoritative account of Ibn Tumart, see Macdonald 1965.)

The Almoravid movement and its Almohad sequel together combined to transmit an enduring element of devotion to jurisprudential sources (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) into the stream of religious life and practice, with an impact on Muslims of sub-Saharan Africa. By that channel, *fiqh* and *zuhd* arrived in sub-Saharan Africa.

Cenobitic Overtures in West African Islam

The Almohad empire eventually collapsed, in Spain first (1235) and then in North Africa (1269), although Hafsid rule in Tunisia continued the Almohad line. The religiopolitical unity of North Africa virtually ceased after the Almohads; the only carryover was the tradition of saintship, which continued unabated. The Sūfī orders, inspired by Qādirī devotional materials and by interest in *fiqh* and *tafsīr* (exegesis), grew in power and influence. The Qādirī order, founded after the twelfth-century scholar and mystic ʻAbd al Qādir al-Jīlānī, was transmitted widely in many parts of the Muslim world, spawning a number of smaller orders that developed their own autonomous rules. One such order was the Shādilīyah, founded after Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Shā dhilī (1196–1258), although it was his disciple, Ibn Aṭa'Allāh (ca. 1250–ca. 1310), who established and popularized the order in the Maghrib. It had its base in Fez, and in the eighteenth century it was taken from there to sub-Saharan Africa by a returning student.

We only have fragmentary knowledge of the Shā dilīya in West Africa. Bits and pieces of information, picked up from a disparate spread of sources, are strung together in many accounts without a central figure or idea. The man responsible for introducing the Shādilīya to West Africa was ʻAlī al-Sū fī, described in the sources as "the apostle of Shādhilism" in his part of Africa. He received the *wird*, the office of initiation, from a Moroccan spiritual director (*murshid*) in Fez and subsequently brought it in the eighteenth century to the plateau area of Futa Jallon in Guinea. His litanies emphasized attachment to Fez as his spiritual birthplace, and his disciples went on to give it a veneration second in importance only to Mecca and Medina. A disciple of ʻAlī al-Sū fī, Modi Sellu (1760–1813), the political head (*alfa*) of the district of Labé in Futa Jallon, expanded Shādhilism in Labé.

Tcherno Isma'īla, a student of ʻAlī al-Sū fī, made the order a political success. At first he concentrated on broadening and deepening the spiritual resources of the movement, creating a religious center he called Diawia (*zāwiya*). Its focal point was the *missidi*, the word for "mosque" in the Fula language. The *missidi* was then replicated in numerous adjacent communities, resulting in a network of ideologically related centers. At the head of *missidi* was the *walī*, reassuring symbol of virtue and its reward, and under his authority the devotees bound and consecrated themselves in service. The *missidi* was the vanguard of virtue, and the *walī* the unique spiritual commissar who wafted over his motley amalgam of *refuseniks* the breath of felicity. Diawia, in Labé, became the prototype, and from there sympathizers ranged far and wide.

Diawia came under a cloud following the death of Tcherno 'Isma'īla, although Shádhilism continued to expand in other areas. With the accession of Tcherno Mamadou Sharif, the youngest son of Tcherno Isma'īla, however, the center underwent a revival. Shādhilism regained the initiative and the *diaroré* rites, for a while interrupted, were reintroduced on an organized basis. All the Labé country was now engulfed by the rites, and the flame of devotion spread from there to numerous important locations in the Fula country and beyond. One leader, Tcherno Jaw (d. 1865), chief of the district of Ndama in Labé, gave the rites a strong political basis by refashioning his subjects into the butt of military operations against adjacent non-Muslim populations. The attacks combined religious ardor with political boldness. Tcherno Jaw, at the head of such attacks, achieved an elevated status through it and was accordingly ascribed the title "*walī* of Ndama" – another worldly exemplar.

Tcherno Jaw's initiative was inherited by his second son, Tcherno Ibrahima, whose influence extended far beyond Futa Jallon. The French, recognizing that fact, wooed him in a gambit to exploit his influence, but in 1899 the two sides collided over a conflict of interest. French involvement compounded an incendiary urge that Shādhilism had exploited so successfully in an earlier era, and gave local grievances a new external focus.

The man whose career brought matters to a head was Tcherno Aliou (ca. 1828–1912) – frail, lame, and partly blind, but so considerable a force in the area that he was given the title *walī* of Goumba, whose *baraka* transfused the whole region. His retreat center at Goumba, situated on the lower escarpment of the Futa Jallon plateau, was perceived as a challenge to the French, who responded by according him the treasonable status of Mahdī – Messiah. The French soon controlled the area and captured the centers of Shādhilī influence. Shādhilism had reached a watershed in Muslim West Africa, and the saintly virtue that propelled it, for so long a force to be reckoned with in the rarefied political atmosphere of the plateau, was driven to the low ground of accommodation with the French colonial authorities.

The history of Shādhilism shows there were real and enduring links between West African and North African Islam. The synthesis of law and devotion and of involvement and retreat had assumed a firm basis in West Africa as well. In neither area did the *awliyā'* avoid controversy. On the contrary, they often became the public focus of social and political unrest, and, by their own claims, the channels and instruments of divine sanction. They perceived no dichotomy between the word of God and the world of politics, and showed little hesitation in looking to crowds to take command of events. For them, saintly virtue had a robust, worldly face to it; they viewed worldly success as the proof and validation of personal virtue. In their minds, faith and works, form and content, dogma and practice, harmonized naturally.

Virtue and Spells

It is instructive to set this understanding of the saint alongside indigenous African conceptions. Unlike his counterpart in the indigenous culture who specializes in spells, incantations, and other forms of divinatory control, the *walī* is distinguished by *baraka,* understood as social capital rather than as spirit power that one fears and, thus, one has to avoid. *Baraka*, for this reason, can be institutionalized and organized with public following and support, centered in the *walī* and ratified in his devotees. The structural and social dimension of saintly power is integral to the Muslim tradition: sainthood – individual charisma – is buttressed by saintship, a historically transmitted line of personal succession. In traditional divination, *baraka* existed as potent power that could harm the uninitiated. The code regulating it emphasized avoidance and the negative results of breaches. In effect, *baraka* in traditional Africa was a magical force possessed by unusual individuals who developed a specialized art for it. In such circles the magician is answerable primarily to his or her art, not to any public or popular accreditation. Thus, if the evil eye is potent enough to accomplish its objective, then it does its work irrespective of whether or not the harm being inflicted is ethically justified. Magicians are vindicated by the intrinsic potency of their art, not by public social approbation. This tradition is quite different from the Muslim notion of *baraka*, or at least from the Islamic transformation of the notion, which implies both personal virtue (the saint is "the blessed person," *al-mubārak*) and efficacious power. The ultimate source of *baraka* is God, not magical power.

Sainthood and Saint Veneration: The Mourides of Senegal

The founder of the Mouride (Arb. *murīd*, "disciple") brotherhood of Senegal was Shaykh Amadou Bamba (ca. 1852–1927), a man deeply influenced by the interior devotion of the Tijānī order of Sūfīs, although his own roots lay in Qādirī soil (Dumont 1975, 71–72). Over the course of time, his Mouride

brotherhood outpaced its counterparts in vigorously cultivating the unthinking obeisance of rank-and-file neophytes, called by the Mourides themselves *tálibés* (Arb. *ṭullāb*, sing. *ṭālib*). Wrapping themselves in the mantle of *baraka*, the Mouride leaders' claim over the bodies of their disciples came to be complete and total, so much so that, after a point, religious instruction, with its accompanying initiation into grades of spiritual enlightenment, was almost entirely missing in the otherwise close relationship between the postulant and his spiritual axis. Instead, the shaykh mounted the disciples like cavalry, driving them into virgin fields of submission and physical labor on the peanut plantations of the brotherhood, a cash-crop enterprise conducted for the exclusive benefit of the *shuyūkh*. At its extreme form this submission may in fact, if not in theory, substitute for submission to God, with *baraka* investing the *shuyūkh* with a semi-divine status.

The manifestation of this kind of enthusiastic *baraka* over crowds of illiterates brought the Mourides to the hostile attention of the French colonial power. Paul Marty, whose acute analysis of the Mourides remains a classic, describes the extraordinary appeal of Amadou Bamba. Describing what he saw in 1913, Marty wrote:

> The mere sight of Amadou Bamba at prayer or giving his blessing with a stream of saliva on the prostrate faithful plunges some into hysterical outbursts which everyone wants to share. They roll at the feet of the saint, they kiss his sandals and the hem of his robe, they hold out their hands to him. With compunction he lets fall a stream of saliva on the open palms, which close up, clasp together, and spasmodically rub the face and body. Then there are shudderings, fainting fits, epileptic convulsions, followed by contortions and extraordinary leaps, all this accompanied by a horrible yelling. Madness finally takes hold of everyone. (Marty 1913, 52–3; cited in O'Brien 1971, 53)

The French took strong measures to curb Amadou Bamba's power, or what was perceived as his power. He and his followers were harassed. Having first installed themselves at the village of Mbake-Baol in the rural hinterland of Senegal, the shaykh and his followers moved to a new center he built at Touba, also in Senegal, in 1887. Since there was no abatement in the hostility of local commandants, Amadou Bamba and his disciples removed to St. Louis, then the capital of colonial Senegal, in 1891. But proximity to power merely served to inflame official sensibilities further, and the shaykh was apprehended by French troops. He was sentenced to imprisonment and exile in Gabon from 1895 to 1902 on charges of political subversion. His *baraka* guaranteed his popularity with the crowds. In turn, that cast him into a feared political figure in the eyes of the French. Furthermore, Amadou Bamba's association with the *Tijānīyá*, which was regarded in colonial circles as inherently subversive, established his culpability as needing no further proof. Amadou Bamba returned to Senegal in November 1902, but he was arrested again the following year and condemned to a fresh term of exile, this time in Mauritania, from 1903 to 1907.

The tenacity of *baraka* has roots in pre-Muslim society. The spontaneous and overwhelming nature of the response to Amadou Bamba as *séringe* (Wolof for holy man, saint) cannot, therefore, be explained solely on the grounds of strong Islamic influence. Most of his followers were ignorant of even the most basic tenets of the faith. For them, Amadou Bamba cut the figure of the familiar charismatic personality, which in the pre- Islamic era was designated as *borom bayré*, a Wolof phrase meaning the possessor of success and fame. The Muslim saint, when he appeared, was assimilated to this traditional African paradigm as both *borom bayré* and *borom barké*, a man of both worldly and spiritual achievement (Dumont 1975, 21–22).

This double level of understanding allowed Amadou Bamba's influence to grow among his disciples, who transmitted it to surrounding areas. In his own mind Bamba was a devout, humble Muslim, eager to behave and think in strict accordance with orthodox requirements. Indeed, when first approached by an overzealous disciple who saw in him the marks of greatness, Amadou Bamba rebuffed him as unsound, sending him packing with the advice that he put his mind to better and more useful pursuits (O'Brien 1971, 143). Even later in his career he forbade his disciples to render him obeisance that he deemed properly due to God (O'Brien 1971, 54). In his rules for novices he stressed submission to God above all else (Dumont 1975, 85), and in his prolific writings, the theme of obedience to God is persistent and unyielding. He spoke with sincerity about his unworthiness and expressed distress at evidence of his weakness. Praying to God, he said:

> I desire your help in the midst of terror and vengeance. Today my heart is overburdened with sadness. My being is too weak to bear what I face. Forgive. My misfortune is plain, and my heart is anguished. (Dumont 1975, 123)

These words were spoken shortly before his first exile, an exile that was to resonate with the rising chorus of popular adulation.

Whatever his inner feelings of inadequacy, Amadou Bamba responded eagerly to the undeniable strength of his support among the peasant populations, and, reacting to the chaos around him, he tried to form order by moving in the direction of undisputed authority. In one of his devotional manuals he listed four qualities as necessary in the disciple: (1) a sincere and unshakable love for the shaykh, (2) unquestioning obedience to the commands of the shaykh, (3) abandonment of all opposition, including inward resistance, to the shaykh, and (4) the giving up of any preference for the disciple's own private thoughts (Dumont 1975, 88). Elsewhere, he wrote that he who does not have a shaykh for his training will come to grief, "for he who does not have a shaykh for his guide will have Satan for his shaykh" (Dumont 1975, 90). "Truth," he said, "consists in the love for one's shaykh" (Dumont 1975, 90). In another work Amadou Bamba says that the *walí* inherits the power of miracles from the Prophet to whom the *walí* is attached by a mystical chain of initiation (Dumont 1975, 95). "Saints," he wrote, "are the authentic signs of the Prophet's religion, and of his truth ... Saints are preserved from error and invested with honor" (Dumont 1975, 96). This point of devotion to the Prophet is stressed in the numerous details on performing the *dhikr*. At its height, the *dhikr* is nothing but the imitation of the Prophet, the Perfect Man (*insān al-kāmil*) or the true intercessor (*shaft'*, *mushaffa'*) (Dumont 1975, 112).

Recognizing that his disciples needed the iron hand of discipline more than the persuasive pen of the scholar, Amadou Bamba elevated physical labor to the status of a religious obligation. "Work," he contended, "is a part of true religion. The human body, since its creation, exists only to accomplish the work ordered by God" (Dumont 1975, 114). It would be unfair to blame Séringe Bamba entirely for the coarse bearing of his followers, for he was following where they led. Amar Sambe, a local Senegalese scholar, testified to the compelling interior impetus produced in the shaykh by his following when he recalled that in his youth, wandering, drunken *awliyā'* were a familiar sight; yet their followers remained undaunted. He writes:

> When I was a child in Koranic school at Kébémer [Senegal], a marabout passed frequently in front of the school, staggering, held upright by his *tálibés*. The *séringe* always had a foot in the vineyard

> of the Lord. Despite this fact, his followers liked to maintain that their shaykh had so much *baraka* that strong liquor transformed itself into milk when it reached his stomach. (Sambe 1964, 185; cited in O'Brien 1971, 89)

Such marabouts were the early precursors of the confluence of pre-Islamic ideas on *baraka* with their Muslim analogues. Amadou Bamba was not nearly that idiosyncratic, mainly because by the time he arrived on the scene there had occurred a general elevation in the practice and understanding of Islam. However, as it stands, the anecdote suggests the wide margin of credulity available to the local *walī* if he wished to avail himself of it. The central importance of discipleship per se in Mouride practice is dramatized in the nature of its simple initiation ritual, which has supreme value for the Mouride *tálibé*. It is called *njebbel* in Wolof (Arb. *bayʿa*, *talqīn*), meaning personal and physical surrender, and is the crux of Mouride life and philosophy. In the *njebbel* the neophyte declares to his master, "I surrender to you my body and soul. What you forbid, I refrain from, and what you command I obey" (O'Brien 1971, 85). That unadorned formula binds the disciple to the shaykh in a relationship that is, for all practical purposes, indissoluble, though in theory the disciple can repudiate the link in an extreme crisis (O'Brien 1971, 88). The neophyte is told by the shaykh to make unquestioning obedience his watchword. *Del deglu ndiggel*, he says: "You must hear words as commands" (O'Brien 1971, 85). *Baraka* became muscular piety.

Disciple and Exemplar

We need a broader perspective to understand the wider connections of Mouride extremism. Its counterpart in the wide spectrum of Súfí spirituality is the call to physical renunciation, an arming of the soul with the weapons of struggle and vigilance against the lures of the carnal body. This, essentially, is *zuhd*, and it was powerfully preached in the Tijániyá brotherhood, with which the Mourides had some affinity. There the devotee was urged to beat the carnal self

> with the whip of the Book, bind it with the halter of reproach and judgment, set limits upon it with conscientious rebuke and reprimand, and place the saddle of firm intention upon it with the girth of determination. Then mount it with the profession of the holy law [Sharīʿa] and ride it into the fields of Truth [*al-Ḥaqq*, a Ṣūfī term for God]. (Tcherno Bokar Salifu Taal (ca. 1883–1940), as quoted by Brenner 1984, 114)

Even for the seasoned adept the challenges of genuine spirituality demand superhuman resources. The Mouride instinct to have recourse to saintly intercession is fed from this reality. Unaided human effort is too bedeviled by uncertainty to guarantee success. Through the servile channel of farm labor the Mouride masters have taken individual responsibility out of the hands of ignorant crowds and offered instead the duty of collective subservience and the privilege of the blessed assurance they as leaders can give. *Baraka* is in the eye of the beholder, but especially in the face of the beholden one.

The power of the shaykh in the Mouride tradition is a function of the adulation of the disciples. As Mouride theology affirms, the *shuyūkh* occupy the ranks of honor (Arb. *maqām*) to which their followers' faith and enthusiasm carry them. It seems, therefore, that the cultivation of saintly eminence is but a shorthand for the cultivation of society. Today, despite a number of premature jeremiads, the Mourides number well over a million, and at the Grand Maqál, their annual pilgrimage to Touba, up to

half the total membership may attend. One could scarcely ask for a more impressive demonstration of group and religious solidarity, of tangible expression of charisma, of what has been called the "versatility" of charisma. (See, for example, O'Brien 1971, who later revised his own position; see O'Brien 1977.)

Conclusion

"Sainthood" is personal charisma, and represents the social production of *barakah*. "Saintship," on the other hand, is the structural expression of saintly power and influence. The two complement each other as when disciples, infused with the *barakah* of the saint, acknowledge their master as guide and exemplar. It is by virtue of assured popular adulation that the true mettle of *barakah* is proved. The Mouride case is an outstanding example, the extreme, wild point of a broad spectrum that includes at a different point the more sober Shádhilí *awliyā'* and other moral exemplars.

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CHAPTER 54

Cosmogony and Eschatology

Markus Höfner

Introduction: Cosmogonies, Eschatologies, and Ethical Orientations

Ideas about the ultimate beginning of the world (*cosmogonies*) and visions of the ultimate telos and goal of worldly existence (*eschatologies*) shape human self-understandings and ethical orientations deeply. While "cosmogony" and "eschatology" are later (Western) terms, the content they refer to can be found early in human history, especially in religious traditions. Religious cosmogonies are typically universal in scope. They speak about the ultimate beginning of everything, and they frame the whole world, human and non-human life, in light of this origin. Religious eschatologies may also be universal, so envisaging the ultimate telos and goal of the cosmos, but are also focused on human life or a specific human community. Central to religious cosmogonies and eschatologies are questions regarding the relations between – and distinctions between – God or gods, on the one hand, and the created cosmos, on the other; the status and purpose of human life in relation to non-human existence; and the relative continuity or discontinuity between the ultimate origin and the ultimate telos or goal.

Cosmogonic and eschatological perspectives are not first articulated as theories, but presented in various myths, symbolic forms, and narratives, often embedded in rituals and thus related to specific religious communities. While cosmogonic myths and symbolic forms are nearly universal across religious traditions, eschatological imaginaries are especially accentuated by the prophets of early Israel. It is mainly due to the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (the history of reception and influence) of the Jewish prophets and the prophetic texts codified in the Hebrew Bible that the monotheistic world religions Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are all marked by the *connection* of cosmogonic and eschatological thoughts and images. This connection constitutes the most comprehensive framework within which the dynamic relation of God, individual and social human life, and non-human existence can be perceived and articulated. As such, the ultimate beginning and ultimate telos of this world can be – and traditionally are – understood as marking the end points of the linear timespan of world history within which the religiously conceived "salvation history" of God's engagement with this world unfolds.

Though one can have reservations about using cosmogony and eschatology to construct a "story of all stories" (see Ricoeur 1985, 463), the *ethical* import of religious cosmogonies and eschatologies cannot be overstated. For the ethical orientation of human action is intrinsically linked to a *perception* of the nature and the possibilities of the cosmos, as well as of the human life in it. In religious traditions, this perception

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

is thoroughly shaped by cosmogonic and eschatological visions, and the way both are related. Such interconnections can be expressed implicitly in symbols, narratives, or myths, but it is in explicit theological reflections that they are articulated in a way that makes their ethical consequences visible.

A closer look at some exemplary theological positions will illustrate the varieties of interconnections possible and show how specific religious cosmogonies and eschatologies can sustain and motivate an ethics of goods (Augustine of Hippo), an ethics of hope (Jürgen Moltmann), or an ethics of responsibility (Muhammad Iqbal). It will then be shown how analyzing the interconnection between cosmogony and eschatology allows an articulation of the "deep grammar" of religious traditions. Finally, directions for further study will be indicated.

Varieties of Cosmogonies, Eschatologies, and Ethical Orientations

Augustine of Hippo: Creation, Eschatology, and an Ethics of Goods

Cosmogony is a central theme in the work of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), probably the most influential patristic author of Western Christianity. Augustine unfolds his cosmogonic thinking through various interpretations of the biblical creation stories found in the book of Genesis (e.g. Augustine 2012, 12, 2013, 11–14). Augustine thereby underlines the idea that, from a Christian perspective, cosmogony is *creation:* the coming into being of the cosmos through the free and sovereign decision of God – the God that Christians confess as the father of Jesus Christ and as the sole origin of life (*fons vitae;* Augustine 2012, 3, 16).

This account of cosmogony as creation is directed primarily against the dualist Manichaean worldview, with its sharp distinction between the (material) cosmos created by an evil power and (spiritual) redemption effected by a good God. It is against that backdrop that Augustine's Christian cosmogony aims to defend the *goodness* of creation. All that God creates is good, and all good is created by God (Augustine 2005, 36); while all evil is to be understood as (just) a privation of this goodness (*privatio boni*; Augustine 2013, 11, 22). However, the goodness of creation is for Augustine a relative one and depends on God's *ongoing* creative activity. For while God as the supreme being exists in *eternity* – understood as total presence – the cosmos is bound to the form of *time* in which being and nothingness (*nihil*) are intertwined (Augustine 2005, 35, 2012 11). And, it is marked by the destructive effects of human sin following the "fall," the disobedience of Adam and Eve against God resulting in their expulsion from paradise (Augustine 2013, 13f.).

Understanding the cosmos as creation, Augustine holds, is essential for any Christian (and indeed, any human) *ethics*. This is because the cosmos as creation is structured as a hierarchical *order of goods* (or "things," *ordo rerum;* Augustine 2010, 2) which can and should orient human moral action. This order ranges from lower goods (like material things) through medium goods (like reason and will), to the greater goods, namely the virtues like justice. The highest good, however, in Augustine's view is not found within the cosmic order, but only in God (as the *summum bonum;* Augustine 2010, 2). Now for human moral action to occur, this order of goods must, in Augustine's view, not only be recognized by the human intellect, but appropriated by the human *will*: The "objective" order of goods has to be matched by a "subjective" *order of love* (*ordo amoris;* see Augustine 2013, 15, 22).

The dynamics underlying this centerpiece of Augustinian ethics become fully visible only when his cosmogony is combined with *eschatology*. Augustine's ethics of love refers back to the origin of the world and human life as it looks forward to their ultimate goal. And this goal, Augustine holds, is communion with God as the highest good and the everlasting peace and joy this communion grants (Augustine 2013, 19 and 22).

This ultimate telos becomes manifest already in the linear process of *history*, which in Augustine's view is centered in the salvific work of Jesus Christ. Jesus re-opens the possibility of communion with God by overcoming the guilt of human sin (Augustine 2012, 10, 2013, 18f.). Full and unchallenged communion with God, however, remains a strictly *future* reality, only to be expected *after* the end of history. In emphasizing that this eschatological communion with God fulfills the original intention in God's creation of human life, bringing the resurrection of human beings to a new, eschatological corporeality (Augustine 2012, 1, 1, 2013, 13, 23), Augustine highlights the continuity between his cosmogonic and eschatological visions. However, marks of discontinuity pervade his account. Augustine restricts the ultimate goal of communion with God to a distinct number of human beings confessing the Christian faith. The final divine judgment at the end of history will assign all other humans to eternal damnation, while non-human creation in total is set to be annihilated and replaced by another, new world in the eschaton (Augustine 2013, 20f.). Above all, Augustine modulates the eschatological transition as a passage from the flow of *time* – as an intrinsic mark of creation – to the total presence of *eternity* (Augustine 2012, 11, 11). The ultimate goal of this world thus lies *beyond* this world.

It is in this eschatological horizon that Augustine's ethics both highlights and relativizes the created order of goods, and the appropriation of that order in human love. Augustine emphasizes that the morally right order of love is only established when all love of earthly goods is embedded in, and regulated by, human love of God. As the highest good, God alone is to be "enjoyed" (*frui*), namely loved for his own sake, while all created goods are to be "used" (*uti*) as a means toward the ultimate goal of communion with God (Augustine 2013, 19). Thus, the ethical quality of both individual and social human life (e.g. in the state) depends on treating created goods as transitory cf. an eschatological future which leads beyond the conditions of creation.

Jürgen Moltmann: The Eschatological Transformation of the Created Cosmos and an Ethics of Hope

Christian theology in the West has often relegated eschatology to an appendix of Christian doctrine. German Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann (born 1926) is one of the most influential critics of this tendency, which he reverses, putting "last things" first in theological thinking. Eschatology, Moltmann holds, is the very condition of the possibility of Christian theology – and of Christian life (Moltmann 1993a, 15–36).

Moltmann promotes a Christian eschatology centered on the coming of God into this world – a future event, but one already operative in the present. Moltmann emphasizes that this coming of God is not to be thought of as the mere prolongation of present realities into the future (*futurum*), but must be understood as God's creative engagement with this world opening up new possibilities (*adventus*) (Moltmann 2004, 22–28). The history and person of Jesus Christ are at the center of this approach. The cross and resurrection of Christ, in Moltmann's interpretation, constitute a dialectical unity. On the one hand, both events are antagonistic, because the cross of Christ is the revelation and critique of godlessness in this world, of death and destruction; while his resurrection signifies the creative presence of God and the overcoming of death in a new life. Yet, on the other hand, it is the same Jesus Christ who suffers death on the cross and experiences the new life of the resurrection. Thus, in his person there is continuity amidst radical discontinuity. The new life of the resurrected Christ does not entail a replacement, but rather a *transformation* of his earthly existence. Now this transformative dynamic of Christ's resurrection does not only point back to the earthly life of Jesus, but entails the promise of the eschatological transformation of this world by the future coming of God. The resurrection of Christ is a new creation

(*nova creatio*) that inaugurates a process of eschatological transformation leading to full communion of God and creation (Moltmann 1993a, 165–229, 2004, 321–340).

On the basis of the particular history of Jesus Christ, then, Moltmann unfolds a Christian eschatology that is universal in scope. With respect to individual human life, Moltmann stresses that Christian hope is not limited to the immortality of a disembodied human "soul," but rather awaits individual resurrection as a transformative event for the whole of human life (Moltmann 2004, 58–76). As individual human life in Moltmann's view is always embedded in, and affected by, social relations; this individual hope for an "eternal life" in communion with God cannot be separated from the social and historical dimensions of the eschatological future, a future that is symbolized in the biblical notion of the "kingdom of God." While warning against any kind of "historical millenarianism" which identifies this coming kingdom of God with a given historical, political or religious reality (e.g. the Christian Church), Moltmann does promote an "eschatological millenarianism." The eschatological future inaugurated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ is already operative in present social and historical realities, which are thereby disclosed as being in need of (and open to) salvific transformation (Moltmann 2004, 192–194). This salvific transformation is not limited to a group of (Christian) believers, but directed toward the inclusion of *all* human beings into full communion with God and one another (Moltmann 2004, 235–255).

As such, Moltmann's eschatological vision is not only inclusive of all humanity, but encompasses non-human creation as well. This inclusiveness shows how eschatology is interconnected with *cosmogony* in Moltmann's thought. From a Christian perspective, the cosmos is discerned as God's creation in the light of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ (Moltmann 1993b, 53–71). Contrary to anthropocentric concepts of this creation which tend to isolate human life from its non-human context, Moltmann underlines the interrelations between human and non-human creation in a universal "fellowship of creation" (Moltmann 1993b, 186f.). Given the embeddedness of human life in non-human "nature," an eschatological future for human lives in Moltmann's view is unthinkable without the "redemption" of the *whole* cosmos (Moltmann 2004, 257–319). This cosmic dimension of his eschatology highlights that not the substitution, but the salvific transformation of this world, is the ultimate future and goal inaugurated in the history of Jesus Christ.

In its individual, social, and cosmic dimensions, the eschatological process Moltmann envisages depends on *God's* engagement with this world. But, this divine engagement calls for *human action* to witness, and to participate in, the work of God. The eschatological coming of God is thus inseparable from the human hope this future motivates. Consequently, a Christian "ethics of hope" will motivate critique of any given status quo that does not correspond to the coming of God and solidarity with a suffering world (Moltmann 1993a, 272–303). Above all, such an ethics of hope calls for human efforts to *transform* present realities so as to anticipate God's eschatological transformation of this world (Moltmann 2012, 3–41).

Muhammad Iqbal: The Cosmic Process, Personal Immortality, and an Ethics of Responsibility

Cosmogony and eschatology are central themes in the thought of Muslim poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938). Their combination undergirds the ethical vision he seeks to promote in his attempt to reconstruct religious thought in Islam (see Iqbal 2013). Drawing on Islamic traditions, as well as Western philosophy and science alike, Iqbal developed a revisionist interpretation of Islam that seeks to highlight its compatibility with and importance for the modern world. Central to this endeavor is his notion of the Self (*Ego*) which, in his view, allows us to draw together into a comprehensive vision,

God, human beings, and non-human nature. This allows us to imagine how religious traditions – and especially Islam – can fuel and direct human ethical aspirations.

In his cosmogony, Iqbal presents the creation of the cosmos as the outcome of God's "creative will" (Iqbal 2013, 50). This creation, Iqbal holds, is not to be understood as an isolated event in time and space. Rather, the created cosmos is to be understood as a (partial) expression of the inner possibilities of, and *continuous* creative activity, of God as the supreme Ego (Iqbal 2013, 52). As such, the created cosmos itself is to be understood as an ensemble of Selves or Egos which express the creative energy of God to different degrees, ranging from material things, upwards to human beings as the climax of egohood in the cosmos (Iqbal 2013, 57f., 82–85).

This cosmogonic vision in Iqbal's view is consonant with the anti-classical orientation of the Qur'an, as well as with modern physics in overcoming the Aristotelian concept of a fixed and static cosmos (Iqbal 2013, 56, 110–113). Iqbal's vision acknowledges the goodness *and* plasticity of the created world as realm of human ethical action – a point Iqbal emphasizes in contrasting the narrative of the Fall of Man in the book of Genesis with its reformulation in the Qur'an (7th and 30th Sura). The latter, Iqbal holds, does not speak of a divine curse on the cosmos due to human sin, but rather depicts the created world as the positive resource of human life and the supposed fall as an awakening of mankind to self-consciousness and creative power (Iqbal 2013, 65–70).

This ethical orientation of Iqbal's cosmogonic view is complemented by his eschatology. This focuses on the immortality and resurrection of *individual* human beings who, in his view, are marked by the aspiration to develop an ever richer and more distinct personality (Iqbal 2013, 77f., 82f.). While this process of human individualization has a beginning in time, with the individual's birth, it does not end with physical death, but is meant to continue infinitely. As this personal immortality of the human ego is neither a mere postulate of practical reason (as per Kant), nor the immortality of a disembodied "soul" (as per Plato), it presupposes the future *resurrection* of individual human beings (Iqbal 2013, 95–98). It is this focus on the continuing evolution of the human Ego that determines Iqbal's discussion of all contents of the eschatological imagination found in the Qur'an, such as the universal destruction of the created cosmos and a future "second creation." For Iqbal, all these symbolic expressions describe, not so much singular eschatological events, but moments in the evolutionary process of human individualization. This process starts in the here and now, and is directed toward the ultimate goal of full communion with God as the supreme Ego – a communion that does not dissolve, but ennobles human individuality and self-possession (Iqbal 2013, 93–97).

Iqbal is quick to emphasize, however, that not *all* human individuals will experience resurrection and personal immortality. Rather, individual human action and effort will be registered at the eschatological day of judgment. Failing in one's deeds will result in the dissolution of the human Ego with physical death (see Iqbal 2013, 93–95). This is why, according to Iqbal, the idea of redemption is rejected in the Qur'an in favor of individual *responsibility* (Iqbal 2013, 76).

It is this idea of individual ethical responsibility that both Iqbal's cosmogony and his eschatology aim to promote. While it is the goodness and plasticity of the created cosmos, in Iqbal's view, that make ethical action possible and meaningful, his eschatological vision is meant to motivate such action. Confronting pious fatalism and a religious preoccupation with otherworldly realities (Iqbal 2013, 87–90, 132f.), the prospect of personal immortality is meant to motivate ethical action in the here and now – ethical action that must start with individuals, but should aim at establishing a free and egalitarian society (Iqbal 1977).

Restitution, Substitution, and Transformation: Uncovering the "Deep Grammar" of Religious Traditions

Religious cosmogonies and eschatologies come in many different forms and can be connected in many different ways, thus being able to sustain various distinct ethical orientations. As religious visions of the ultimate origin and the ultimate goal of this world offer the widest possible framework for the articulation of a religious faith, connecting these visions touches on many other themes important for the respective religious tradition (such as religious anthropology, concepts of salvation, or a theology of religious community). Analyzing specific connections of religious cosmogony and eschatology thus offers a privileged access to the theological "deep grammar" of a religious tradition and the ethical orientations it promotes. Such an analysis can be facilitated by heuristically differentiating three possible models of such a connection (Thomas 2009, esp. 22–25).

In the *restitution* model, the eschatological future leads back to the cosmogonic origin by restoring and repairing what had been lost or damaged, for example by human sin. The emphasis here is on continuity amidst all discontinuity. In the *substitution* model, the original cosmos or life is eschatologically replaced by a second cosmos or life, thus positing radical discontinuity between cosmogony and eschatology. In the *transformation* model, continuity and discontinuity between ultimate origin and ultimate goal are balanced as the new possibilities of the eschaton come to bear on the original cosmos and life.

One will certainly have to reckon with an overlap of these models when describing concrete examples from religious traditions. Augustine's thoughts on cosmogony and eschatology may be explicated as a combination of restitution (for human beings) and substitution (for the non-human cosmos); while Moltmann's and Iqbal's positions exemplify the transformation model; though, with Iqbal, there are also some motifs of substitution (with respect to the non-human cosmos).

Cosmogonies, Eschatologies, and Religious Ethics: Directions for Further Research

The impact of religious cosmogonies and eschatologies and their ethical implications in a globalizing world continue to be debated within religious traditions and by non-religious publics. Three aspects of this complex field deserve special attention and call for further research:

(1) Under conditions of modernity, religious cosmogonies and eschatologies (and their related theological reflection) have to reckon with insights into the past, present, and future of the cosmos articulated by modern *science*. Positing religious cosmogonies and eschatologies as strict alternatives to scientific accounts is no longer viable for most modern theologies. But, while most modern theologies can agree that religious and scientific perceptions of this world constitute different epistemic perspectives, that insight may lead to so great a separation of religion and science that any dialogue is rendered meaningless. A more promising way forward seems to respect differences of these perspectives, while searching for points of germane dialogue between scientific insights and theological articulations of religious cosmogonies and eschatologies. This affirms that religious traditions aim to speak about the one cosmos shared by all (see Polkinghorne and Welker 2000).

(2) Religious cosmogonies and eschatologies, and especially their connection in theological reflection, much depend on an underlying concept of *time*. Traditional theologies, especially in the Christian tradition, have often presupposed a contrast between the flow of time and a timeless eternity, the latter thought to be a property of God *and* of the eschatological new creation. This strategy, however, threatens

viewing the ultimate goal as an exit from time to eternity, thus calling into question the goodness of the created cosmos. Many modern theologies thus aim to conceptualize "eternity" not as alternative to, but as an ennobling intensification of time (see Fergusson and Sarot 2000). A related challenge arises from the growing awareness that many modern Western Christian eschatologies suppose a unidirectional teleology of history and subscribe to a metanarrative of progress. There is thus a danger not only of overemphasizing human action at the expense of the work of God, but also a danger of losing sight of the (ecological) costs and the (human) victims of modern progressivism. Articulating religious eschatologies (and cosmogonies) and emphasizing their differences to one-sided concepts of inner-worldly progress remains an important task for those engaged in explicating religious traditions (see Tanner 2001, esp. 97–124).

(3) Present theological attempts to relate religious cosmogonies and eschatologies have to reflect on the *inclusivity* of the eschatological vision they promote. One aspect of this inclusivity is the status of the non-human cosmos. While religious eschatologies have often exclusively focused on the future of human lives, growing ecological sensibilities have led many modern approaches (e.g. Moltmann's) to articulate religious eschatologies that encompass non-human life as well (see Thomas 2009). Another aspect of inclusivity concerns human beings outside one's own religious community – their exclusion or inclusion within the frame of eschatological redemption. In both cases, exclusivist religious eschatologies risk promoting problematic ethical attitudes and actions such as ecological brutalism and disregard for (or even violence against) people subscribing to other faith traditions or none. At the same time, inclusivist eschatologies risk compromising human responsibility.

Further research into these – and other – questions from scholars within and outside religious traditions will help to articulate religious cosmogonies and eschatologies as resources for ethical orientation in today's world. Moreover, they may sustain and motivate religious ethics that neither legitimize any given *status quo* nor negate the goodness of life in this world.

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CHAPTER 55

Myth

Brian Collins

In modern parlance, the word "myth" is used to describe something that is commonly believed but not true, as in the sentence, "It is a myth that childhood vaccinations lead to autism." Conversely, others have understood myths as "true lies," stories that, while fictional, nonetheless contain profound truths. Important examples include the psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud (1856–1938) and Carl Jung (1875–1961) who saw myths as representations of personality development. Their perspectives differed in that Freud focused on the Oedipal conflict, while Jung built his theory around mythic archetypes that connect us to a collective unconscious.

The relationship of myth to ethics (religious or otherwise) depends on one's understanding of whether myth itself is ethical. That is to say, does it lie or does it tell the truth? This entry will trace the development of two distinct understandings of the ethical dimension of myths. The first is the positive valuation of myths as truthful insofar as they are narrative representations of human aspirations like generosity and courage, or as revelatory insofar as they express deep human truths that provide a starting point for ethical reasoning. The second is the negative valuation of myths as lies insofar as they function as ideology, papering over a society's arbitrary hierarchical divisions or concealing its foundational violence.

Myth as Truth and Falsehood

Scholars generally agree that the discourse of myth in the West goes back to the ancient Greek distinction between the truth of *logos* and the falsity of *mythos* and Plato's warning in *Republic* that the violent stories of the gods and heroes told by Hesiod and Homer could prove corrosive for impressionable young listeners. In his essay "The Terror of Fables," the Italian thinker Roberto Calasso (b. 1941) writes that, for Plato, "Homer, the enemy, is nothing but the representative of a realm, the realm of metamorphosis, and he is the bearer of the knowledge of metamorphosis. For philosophy, this is the enemy realm, the realm of ungovernable powers, whose witnesses – the poets – should be expelled from the city" (Calasso 2002, 261).

Subsequent turning points in the West include positive (to varying degrees) valuations of myth's power to narrate the absolute. Thinkers who subscribed to some version of this idea include the Renaissance humanist Francis Bacon (1561–1626), the Enlightenment counter-critic Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), the Romantically-minded theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), and the philosophers Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854),

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

who regarded myth as foundational to human thought, language, and culture. We could also mention here the debate in the early 1820s between the neo-Platonist Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1858) and the Pietist Karl Otfried Müller (1797–1840). Both men saw the symbol as central to mythmaking, but Müller emphasized the importance of historical context, while Creuzer focused on what he saw as the purpose of myth, namely, "to transpose what has been thought into what has happened" (Creuzer 1819–1821). For all these thinkers, recognizing the proper place of myth as privileged discourse was essential to maintaining perspective on humanity's place in the world, without which pure instrumental rationality would preclude ethical engagement.

Myth and Modernism

Others carried forward Plato's critique of myth into the modern era, when it became an important topic of conversation as Western hegemony expanded into Asia, Africa, South America, and the Pacific. These thinkers included the anthropologist E. B. Tylor (1832–1917), who reinvigorated the suspicion of myth with his societal understanding of the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin (1809–1882), and the classicist James George Frazer (1854–1941), who collected myths from all over the world with little attention to context but with great artistry and ingenuity in what became his massive 12-volume study *The Golden Bough* (1911–1915). In it, Frazer attempted to use comparative mythology to suggest that all religions developed from the once widespread primitive agricultural fertility cult that worshipped the dying and rising god of vegetation.

While Tylor and Frazer more or less saw myth as attempts to explain natural phenomena in the absence of scientific reason, another early twentieth century trend in comparative mythology called the "myth-ritual school," exemplified by the work of English folklorist Lord Raglan (1885–1964), posited that one specific type of myth (the hero myth) followed a recognizable pattern across cultures and ultimately derived from ritual dramas. This school was short-lived but left its mark because of its influence on *The Waste Land* (1922) of T. S. Eliot (1888–1965), which attempted a mythological bricolage to put back together the Western soul that had been shattered by the dehumanizing experience of World War I.

Another modernist work is *Weltenmantel und Himmelszelt: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Urgeschichte des antiken Weltbildes* (*World Cloak and Sky Canopy: Religious-Historical Investigations on the Prehistory of the Ancient Worldview*, 1910) by the Austrian polymath Robert Eisler (1882–1949). Going beyond Plato (the origin point of the discourse of myth) in search of the conditions of knowledge that gave rise to the earliest Greek philosophy, Eisler identified two distinct and incompatible cosmological systems spread from the Near East into the Hellenic world, one that pictured the vault of heaven held up over the flat earth by a tree or pillar, and another that pictured the cosmos as a spherical shape, like the Hiraṇyagarbha ("Golden Egg") described in the Sanskrit *Matsya Purāṇa*. The first of these systems has been dominant for most of history, but was eventually supplanted by the second, which was more amenable to a scientific picture of the universe. This work is little read today but went on to inspire Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend's controversial but widely published and translated 1969 magnum opus *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay Investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and Its Transmission Through Myth*.

Though he has now faded into obscurity, Eisler went on to publish much more about mythology, art history, Christian origins, economics, and philosophy, and, after spending 15 months in Dachau and Buchenwald, he wrote *Man into Wolf: An Anthropological Interpretation of Sadism, Masochism, and Lycanthropy* (1951), where he made use of myths, rituals, and Jungian archetypes to trace the origins of

the cruelty he witnessed in the camps to a stage in human evolution in which what was originally a group of vegetarian, polyamorous hominids was forced to imitate the hunting practices and hierarchical social structure of the wolf pack to survive the deprivations of the Ice Age in Europe. Because the cruelty and sexual possessiveness of humans are not innate to the species, Eisler argued that by "changing our social organization and our environment" we could "throw off the fatal wolf's mask" (Eisler 1978, 29–30).

Myth and Indo-European Studies

Described in the late eighteenth century by the colonial jurist and orientalist Sir William Jones (1746–1794), the Indo-European language family includes Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, German, Russian, Hittite, and other related languages found from India to Ireland. One of the foremost scholars in Indo-European studies was Georges Dumézil (1898–1986), the son of a classicist and a polyglot from childhood, whose interest in Indo-European myth and language led to him doing research among an isolated group in the Caucasus Mountains called the Ossetes. In Ossetic mythology, he found a legendary people called the Narts who were divided into three great clans: the intelligent Alægatæ, the courageous Æxsærtægkatæ and the wealthy Bor(i)atæ. He identified the clans as counterparts to the ancient Indian *varṇa*s of Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya and to the Roman trinity of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus. From this connection, Dumézil hypothesized that Indo-European society (or at least the Indo-European ideal of society) consisted of three functions: the priestly-sovereign, the warrior, and the producer. Among the groups who spoke a language of the Indo-European family, including the Romans, the Norse, the Indians, and the Iranians, traces still remained in their myths and epics of this trifunctional model. Dumézil's important contribution to the study of myth was his insistence that myth replicated and instilled hierarchical social structures, which goes somewhere toward explaining his role as the mentor of the post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984).

After an early career spent producing myth analyses indebted to the work of Dumézil, Bruce Lincoln (b. 1948) began in the 1990s to expose the political implications of his work and the work of others in the field of Indo-European studies, joining the Italian historians Arnaldo Momigliano (1908–1987) and Carlo Ginzburg (b. 1939) in charging Dumézil's trifunctional model with having fascist overtones. It is undeniable that Dumézil developed his idea of the tripartite structure in 1938–1942, when he was also openly supporting the ultra-right-wing Action Française movement, whose ideal of a social hierarchy closely resembled what is described in his work, but there is disagreement over what to make of this. In reading him, every scholar must decide for herself whether or not Dumézil's politics make his theories unusable.

Another figure of importance in the field of Indo-European studies was the Lithuanian archeologist and anthropologist Marija Gimbutas (1921–1994). In 1956, Gimbutas proposed that the original speakers of *Proto-Indo-European, the hypothetical language from which the entire family developed, were nomadic pastoralists and mound-builders from the Pontic steppe on the northern shores of the Black Sea. She is as well known for her theory of matriarchal prehistory, the idea that Neolithic religion was centered on the worship of fertility goddesses and that it supported a matriarchal society more harmonious and egalitarian than the subsequent patriarchal religions and societies of the Bronze Age. Gimbutas's work has inspired many feminist scholars to attempt to recover the lost voices of ancient women, but one feminist scholar, Cynthia Eller, has critiqued both Gimbutas's methodology and the value of her work for empowering women in *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Will Not Give Women a Future* (2000).

Myth and the History of Religions

The most influential scholar of the "Chicago School" of the History of Religions and one of the most influential in the study of religion in the twentieth century was the Romanian Mircea Eliade (1907–1986). Eliade understood myth as a narrative that serves to anchor primitive or archaic societies in the sacred by allowing them to experience time as cyclical and to participate in the paradigmatic actions of their gods and ancestors. Like Dumézil, Eliade's political affiliations around the time of the Second World War, unknown to most of his colleagues and students until after his death, have led some to cast aspersions on his scholarship. In a series of newspaper articles from 1937 to 1938, Eliade expressed support for an anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and strongly Eastern Orthodox nationalist movement called the Iron Guard. After the war, Eliade remained apolitical in his work and life, and the debate over how scholars' knowledge of Eliade's activities in the late 1930s should affect their treatment of his impressive oeuvre is an ongoing one, culminating in the conference volume *Hermeneutics, Politics, and the History of Religions: The Contested Legacies of Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade* (2010).

Seminal representatives of the "Chicago School" associated with Eliade included the aforementioned Joachim Wach (1898–1955), a German sociologist of religion, and two of his students, the Japanese-American scholar Joseph Kitagawa (1915–1992) and Charles H. Long (b. 1926), an African-American scholar who grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas during the era of Jim Crow. Long's 50-year career is especially noteworthy for his having made significant (and too often overlooked) contributions to the methodology of the field by insisting upon the centrality of colonialism to the study of religion, emphasizing the importance of studying discourses on matter and materiality, and focusing on West African and African-American forms of religion. Combining his critique of Eliade's tendencies toward ahistoricism and the insights of the Pan-African activist and sociologist W. E. B. Dubois (1868–1963), Long has attempted to "come to terms with the reality of black bodies in the Atlantic world not simply as data of the economic sciences but equally as modalities of symbolic clusters for a renewal and reform of discursive meaning of cultural languages through the matrix of the history of religions and its methodological resources" (Long 2018, 6).

A successor of Eliade, who differs from him significantly while still practicing the comparative method, is the Indologist Wendy Doniger (b. 1941). After an early structuralist study of the myths of the god Śiva, she has since expanded her research to include a wider range of shared narratives, focusing on the issues of gender, sexuality, and identity in Hindu and Greek myth, the Hebrew Bible, Shakespeare, and cinema. In her work, Doniger demonstrates the ways in which myths from one group can be used to illuminate myths from another when we pay equal attention to context, difference, and the kinds of human experiences that are shared across cultures.

Myth and the Bible

In his 1941 essay "New Testament and Mythology," theologian Rudolph Bultmann (1884–1976), accepted that the Bible was deeply mythical and incapable of being understood as a true representation of the world in light of modern science, and so began the process of "demythologizing" it. He used this word to distinguish what he was doing from "demythicizing," a practice that is often traced back to Euhemerus (ca. 340–260 BCE), whose own ideas on the subject of myth are traced by Nicholas Roubekas in *An Ancient Theory of Religion: Euhemerism from Antiquity to the Present* (2017). Demythicization (or what has been

called Euhemerism) focused on uncovering the true events that had become "mythologized" over time by repeated exaggerations, such as the skirmish that was remembered as the Trojan War. Bultmann rejected this as a naïve approach while simultaneously rejecting the losing game of Biblical literalism. "Myth," he argued, "should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better still, existentially" (Bultmann 1961, 10). He saw the mythic events of the Gospels as representations of the types of events associated with and problems faced by the developing Church. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ he demythologized quite differently, as an "event" that functioned (and functions) as a call to an authentic form of life.

René Girard (1923–2015) had a different approach to myth's relationship to the Bible. Girard's theory of myth was connected to his own anthropology, in which he proposed that humans possess an imitative (mimetic) instinct that inevitably leads to mimetic rivalry (when we think the same thing, we agree; when we want the same thing, we fight). As this rivalry took hold in early proto-human groups, the multiplying rivals became an undifferentiated crowd turning against one another in a war of all against all. And then, spontaneously, the mob turned its violence on a single victim, experiencing their first taste of unanimity as a result. Afterward, the victim was identified by the now peaceful human community as both the cause (while alive) and cure (by his death) of the preceding violence. Upon this foundational murder, all culture rests, and the first instruments of culture are the ritual repetition of the founding murder with sacrificial substitutes, prohibitions designed to circumvent the mimetic rivalries or vengeful cycles that could bring about another crisis, and a myth that misconstrues the death of the innocent victim. Myth, as Girard explains it, bears the general structure of an initial primal chaos, followed by accusations against the victim, the death of the victim, and the founding of the culture.

Myth, ritual, and prohibition provide the structure of all archaic religion, which is irrevocably destroyed by the singular revelation of Gospels, a text that reveals the scapegoating mechanism of culture by insisting on the innocence, not just of Jesus, but also of all victims of mob persecution and violence. Because of Jesus's death and resurrection, we can no longer be taken in by myth and believe that the victim has done something to deserve their fate or that killing the victim can prevent disaster. Unlike archaic religion with its myths, Christianity and its revelation places all the responsibility on the angry mob and proclaims the innocence of the victim.

Myth and Language

Other Western modes of mythology include the "Solar Myth" theory of philologist Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), who proposed that if mythmakers deceived, it was because they *were* deceived. In Müller's theory, mythic narrative arose from the unavoidable misunderstandings of stories that are committed to memory and passed down through the generations of speakers of a living and therefore changing language. When the vocabulary of the memorized story no longer reflected common speech, speakers forgot that "Dawn was coming over the hill" referred to the sunrise and mistakenly believed that it must refer to someone named Dawn, like the Vedic goddess Uṣas. Thus, all mythology is a side effect of the "Disease of Language." Though this idea is widely dismissed today, Müller is remembered as a cultural hero in India, whose sacred texts he translated into English, guided by his convictions that to know only one religion is to know none and that introducing Hindu myth and philosophy to a Western audience would "open a new history of the human race, of that race to which we all belong, with all the fibres of our flesh, and all the fears and hopes of our soul" (Müller 2013, xxxviii).

In a similarly linguistic vein, Hermann Usener (1834–1905), focusing on the *Götternamen* ("names of the gods"), used "anthropological techniques to connect the primitive premises of myths, rituals, and linguistic forms to more modern religious custom" and argued that "classical tropes presented responses to the primal human experiences of terror and fear" (Levine 2013, 53). The German-Jewish neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) was influenced by Usener's work, in which "analysis and critique of the names of the gods are shown to be an instrument which, if correctly used, can open up an understanding of the process by which religious concepts are formed" leading to "a universal theory of *signification* in which linguistic and mythical elements become inseparable correlates" (Cassirer 1955, 22).

Cassirer himself, who was associated early on with the Hamburg group that included the influential art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929) and the Belgian archeologist and Mithraism specialist Franz Cumont (1868–1947), developed an understanding of myth that placed it alongside language, art, and science as a domain of knowledge, which he understood as a system of symbolic forms that determine a dynamic image-world. After fleeing the Nazis, Cassirer turned his attention to political myths at the end of his career, warning, "We should carefully study the origin, the structure, the methods, and the technique of the political myths. We should see the adversary face to face in order to know how to combat him" (Cassirer 1946, 296).

For Cassirer, understanding myth or any other system of symbolic forms was tantamount to understanding consciousness itself, or at least one particular form of it. An anthropologist by training, the French structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009) developed a similar theory, drawing on the ideas of the Swiss pioneer of semiotics Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and their subsequent development by the Russian-American linguist Roman Jakobson (1896–1982). In Lévi-Strauss's thinking, myth was not merely fanciful but instead employed the sophisticated manipulation of symbols to resolve the binary contradictions of social and biological life, themselves an expression of the binary nature of human consciousness. Seeing the "savage thought" of the indigenous people Lévi-Strauss studied as a science of the concrete (from which we had much to learn) was a departure from earlier colonial notions of "primitive" myth as a less advanced worldview born out of ignorance or, worse, inherent intellectual inferiority.

Myth and Politics

In her essay "The *Iliad* or the Poem of Force," written during the dark years of 1939–1940, the French philosopher and mystic Simone Weil (1909–1943) wrote of the epic's brilliant insight that all victors become vanquished in the end and all are subject to the same suffering in the fullness of time. This understanding is a prerequisite for ethics, she argued, because "[he] who does not realize to what extent shifting fortune and necessity hold in subjection every human spirit, cannot regard as fellow-creatures nor love as he loves himself those whom chance separated from him by an abyss" (Weil 1965, 5). A different example of this kind of thinking can be found against the backdrop of the conflict in Vietnam, when the so-called "Harvard School" of American Virgil scholars, represented by Adam Parry (1928–1971), Wendell Clausen (1923–2006), and Michael Putnam (b. 1933), discredited the triumphalist reading of the *Aeneid* in favor of a pessimistic view colored by the growing protest movement against the war.

It is worth considering why the political critique of myth did not develop in the same way in non-Western cultures. The French sinologist and philosopher François Jullien (b. 1951) has argued that

"[the] Chinese world contains virtually no traces of chaos or cosmogonies. So, given that it never was constituted on a mythical basis, Chinese thought never needed to construct itself philosophically (in the mode of logos)" (Jullien and Lloyd 2002, 806). Critique finally came in the twentieth century with the historian Gu Jiegang (1893–1980) and the Gushibian school, who attacked classical Confucian hermeneutics and modeled their interpretative practices after the Durkheimian folklorist Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957).

In India, the problem faced by Bultmann when reading the Bible was at least partially obviated by the hermeneutics of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā philosophy beginning in the third century BCE. One late exponent of this school, Śālika Nātha Miśra (ca. eighth century CE), argued that because they speak of things that are supranormal and not accessible to men except through revelation, the sacred Vedas have no author whose reliability we need to judge and that their words do not have "meaning" but "purpose," specifically in regard to ritual (Pereira 1976, 98–99). Nevertheless, in India the critique of myth was a central part of critical political discourse in the twentieth century, especially as it challenged the bases of caste and ethnic hierarchies. This is exemplified in the work of the Dalit activist, framer of the Indian constitution, and Buddhist convert Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891–1956), the Marxist historian D. D. Kosambi (1907–1966), and the Tamil separatist E. V. Ramasamy Naicker (1879–1973), who denounced the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* epic as a text of domination legitimizing North Indian cultural hegemony and was arrested by the British for publicly burning a picture of its mythical protagonist, the god-king Rāma.

In the study of religion, myths are generally understood as stories that express meanings, sentiments, and part or all of a worldview shared by the group of people who tell and retell them. Studying myth has always been a comparative enterprise, since the very act of designating a story as "myth" necessarily requires examining it alongside stories already accepted as mythological. But like many terms used in studying and theorizing religion, the meaning of "myth" has been challenged, refined, and debated by successive generations of thinkers, often with ethical commitments. For some, establishing ethical values and imperatives demands that we unmask the structural violence that myths provide with a cloak of authority, while for others, myths are a way to comprehend ourselves and one another and establish the mutual understanding that is necessary for ethical engagement with the other.

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CHAPTER 56

Nature and Human Nature

William D. Hart

Western dualisms (Platonic, Christian, and Cartesian) tempt us to think that our species, *Homo sapiens*, is essentially non-natural; that in addition to natural, non-essential bodies, humans are *nature transcendent* mind, spirit, or idea – a glassy essence. Common sense, scientific, and philosophical views of nature converge and diverge on the question of whether humans are fully natural: whether humans are wholly an *order* of nature or a supernatural, metaphysically unique species, bearing a non-natural essence, a divine spark. In addition to the nature/human dualism, there are divergent perspectives on the nature/non-nature dualism, the naturalness of ethics, and nature as an object of religious devotion. The concept of nature is multifarious, contested, and unstable: a subject of ambiguity, an object of ambivalence.

Three Views of Nature

Reference to "the" common sense, philosophical, and scientific views of nature should not be taken to mean that there is uniformity within these forms of knowledge. Despite considerable internal diversity, this entry can only address ideal types. The common sense view of nature refers to a broad repertory of non-expert ideas. These ideas are not insular and may be influenced by or converge with expert knowledges on some points. In the first instance, nature refers to anything that is non-human. Humans are non-natural. They stand out and over against nature. In the second instance, humans are viewed as continuous with nature insofar as they are bodily beings. Their bodies connect them with other animate beings; bodies represent their animality, what they have in common with non-humans. On this common sense view, however, humans are more than their bodies and emergent bodily capacities. Humans are body-transcendent spirits. Humans are *both* natural and nature-transcendent. The essence of human nature resides not in its bodily nature but in those body-transcendent capacities that make humans other than animals. This common sense notion that humans are a duality of body and spirit – where the latter is the essential, axiological component – is ancient and widespread across cultures. This perspective, then, reveals a third common sense view: nature as a "regional," limited reality in contrast with supernature. Supernature or the supernatural is associated with what is really real, what is most valuable and divine. The transcendent part of human nature, that is, spirit/mind is construed as the presence of supernature in nature: the image of God, the divine spark, the oneness of Atman and Brahman are examples.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Philosophy and science reflect critically on common sense. But there are no absolute distinctions among these ways of constructing nature. Philosophical and scientific views both converge and diverge from common sense. As critical dialogues with common sense, philosophy and science have both entrenched and cast skeptical eyes on non-expert views of nature. Considering the three views of nature, science has contributed most to an empirical understanding. Science commits to providing a purely physical and thus non-metaphysical account of ostensibly non-physical phenomena such as mind, consciousness, and normativity. The scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries undermined the influence of Aristotle's metaphysical (teleological, purpose-driven) biology. Observable and testable forms of inquiry revolutionized our knowledge of nature and humanity's place within it. This empirically-based knowledge includes: the circulation of blood, evolution as descent with modification, the genetic basis of inheritance, the microbiological world, the quantum universe, the 4.5 billion year age of the earth, and the immensity of stellar space, all of which was preceded by Copernicus's heliocentric theory of the known cosmos. In contrast to the fundamental sciences of physics and chemistry or the various earth sciences such as geology, meteorology, and oceanography, the biological sciences are especially identified with the scientific view of nature. This owes no doubt to its subject: the innumerable varieties of life. The nature of human life and its relations with other forms of life is paramount. The biocentric conceptualizing of nature was marked by the revolutionary success of Darwinian-inspired evolutionary thinking. It is within this context that the question of nature and human nature is presented in its starkest form (Wilson 1975, 1978). On one version of this view, humans are *naked apes*. The transformation of humans across historical time and through cultural innovations has left their fundamental nature unchanged. These transformations are epiphenomenal to their perdurant bio-evolutionary nature. The inner ape is always there, peering out like the Wizard of Oz from the curtains of history and culture (Morris 1967).

Three Dualisms

The *body/mind (or spirit) dualism* is metamorphic and mobile. Initially, this metaphysical dualism served as a rampart against racial essentialism rooted in bodily differences which underwrote a rank-ordering of races. (Rooted in a biological error, race is a social reality whose *parent*, racist ideology, was instrumental to capital accumulation in the form of enslaved Africans and dispossessed Indian land.) Under the conditions of imperial/colonial modernity – the triangulation of India, Africa, and America in the European imagination, the conquest of America, and the trans-Atlantic enslavement of African people – the body/spirit dualism manifests as a racial distinction, especially between black and white, with black people as body and white people as mind. In a similar manner, the body/mind distinction is gendered: body is female and mind is male. This mapping occurred in tandem with the emergence of a naturalistic view of human nature. That naturalization should have this consequence appears to be contingent rather than necessary. This hierarchical and invidious construction of naturalism occurred against the backdrop of a new, capitalist-inflected mode of male supremacy and the very colonialism, trans-Atlantic slavery, and racial ideology that constituted European modernity. To put these points in stronger terms, the concept of nature is irreducibly political. Among the founding gestures in modern political thought is the distinction between the state of nature and the political state. Nature is construed as perilous, nasty, and brutal: the uncivilized other, the alterity of politics. Some critics of the

scientific view argue that the dominant modes of conceptualizing scientific practice and the metaphors scientists employ represent a bias against democratic forms of social life. Furthermore, these scientific constructions of nature and human nature reveal a preference for capitalist modes of economic production with their Malthusian notions of scarcity and competition and patriarchal ideas of dominance and combat. These modalities incorporate and reinforce common sense, socially constructed, and hierarchical notions of gender and race. These racial and gendered correlations are hardly innocent (Haraway 1991).

The *nature/human nature distinction* is a piece of common sense that philosophers and scientists inherited and that some have struggled to evade. This distinction is also the subject/object distinction that René Descartes bequeathed to modern philosophy. As minds, humans stand over against matter, that is, everything else. The scientific construction of nature recapitulates the Cartesian subject/object distinction. However, against common sense and philosophical views that construe humans as a body/spirit duality, scientific materialism holds that the mental/spiritual dimension of human nature is an epiphenomenon of matter. Humans are biological, evolutionary matter with brains: that is, a specialized piece of matter that made minds, spirit, hopes, dreams, and the whole range of axiological concerns possible. Science inverts the body/spirit dualism with the body as primary and mind/spirit as secondary. This inversion ramifies as it is mapped onto, if not rearticulated as, a *nature/culture dualism* with culture as a secondary elaboration of a deeper, underlying nature, usually construed in a *geno*centric manner. There are genes and there is everything else. Genes are the prime movers, the subjectless agents of evolutionary change, which is construed as isomorphic with nature. In contrast, "developmental systems theory," which is a dissident perspective within biology, psychology, and evolutionary theory holds that human nature is not an immanent and unfolding code resident in genes. Rather, human nature is produced by multilevel interactions throughout the life-cycle of organisms. This conceptual frame nullifies the nature/nurture distinction. As multileveled and multi-scaled activity, nurture produces and continuously remakes nature. Thus, developmental system theory argues for a non-dualistic and more capacious view of nature and evolution (Oyama 2000).

Even sophisticated and sensitive thinkers who argue for a capacious understanding of nature often presuppose a human/nature distinction. If we reject the distinction, the fact remains that only humans, as far as we know, can draw such a distinction. Humans are nature fully conscious of its naturalness. This knowledge represents a kind of transcendence within immanence. As *paradoxical animals*, humans know that they are natural and conspicuous. Though produced by evolution and larger cosmic processes, humans stick out of nature like a sore thumb – and a Band-Aid. On the one hand, humans are a "bad fit" within natural processes. Humans destroy habitats, undermine ecologies, and drive forms of climate change that endanger the world system on which all life depends. Through the introduction of carbon and industrial pollutants into the atmosphere, soil, and oceans, humans have become a *geological force* that threatens to change the way the earth as a system of physical processes works. These harmful changes may be irreversible. On the other hand, humans have developed modes of acting and believing that enable them to take responsibility for what they do. This paradoxical, two-sided capacity of humans to destroy if not create on a world system level, is evident in their solicitude for the well-being of non-human species. Insofar as humans imagine themselves as having obligations toward others, human and non-human, including the inorganic elements of water, soil, and atmosphere, we might call it ethics.

Thinking with and against common sense views, philosophers and scientists are in dialogue regarding the nature of nature. Usually, contemporary philosophers concede the greater reliability and authority of scientific accounts of physical nature. The dialogue is better characterized as a scientific monologue with philosophers working at the margins, enhancing the conceptual clarity of scientific claims and questioning problematic metaphors such as "selfish genes." But insofar as there are forms of nature that are not physical and that cannot be reduced to the elementary features of matter, disagreement if not dialogue persists. Sociobiology and its offspring evolutionary psychology are influential paradigms for thinking about nature in the evolutionary sciences. Though these approaches are *not* strictly deterministic, each reduces human behavior, psychology, and value-making to natural selection and its by-products (Wilson 1975, 1978). Against this scientific reduction to *causes* of what Wilfred Sellars calls the *space of reasons* (consciousness, cognition, and norm-making), the philosophical view holds that biological nature is irreducible to materialist Neo-Darwinism. On that account, physics, chemistry, natural selection, sexual selection, and time tell us pretty much all there is to know about life. The philosophical critic holds that this materialist view is too restrictive and does not tell us all that we need to know to properly account for biological nature. We need some notion of purpose; not the purposes of an intentional agent such as God but a non-intentional teleology, inherent in biological processes, something akin to Aristotle's notion of metaphysical biology (Nagel 2012).

The philosophical critic of the Cartesian legacy holds that personhood is constitutive of human nature. Humans have a historically mediated personality, an *autobios*. Without denying rule confirming anomalies and hard cases, humans are living persons. Humans are not the union of mind and body; nor can they be understood in a reductive, one-sided way as mind, or as body, or as that part of the body called the brain. Reducing subjectivity to matter and reasons to causes, provides an example of the afterlife of one-sided body/mind dualism in dominant forms of scientific thinking about human nature. Rather than embracing Cartesian dualism or one side, this philosophical view holds that human nature expresses a holistic entity (Hacker 2007). This holism includes a distinctive capacity for symbolic language, counterfactual thinking, and self-assessment, which makes moral subjectivity – the ability to make promises and be held accountable – possible. As Akeel Bilgrami argues, value, aesthetic evaluation, and ethical judgment, though "unscientific" and non-natural in the narrow, constipated sense of those terms, are inherent features of the world (Bilgrami 2010).

Ethics as Natural Phenomenon

Representatives of the scientific view sometimes conflate what is with what ought to be. They make the normative – the good, the right, the *moral ought* – a function of the empirical norm. Or, conversely, they claim that normativity is merely emotive, an expression of genetic programming, and thus illusory. One consequence of the scientific inversion of the spirit/body and subject/object distinctions is that the whole axiological realm – aesthetics and ethics, all forms of value-making – is construed as epiphenomenal, the product of deeper forces, the subjectless agency of genes expressed through an organism's urge to survive and procreate. In crude versions of this view (and some sophisticated ones also where the authors lose control of their metaphors), the ostensibly subjectless, material, and mechanical forces of nature and evolution are construed narratively as homunculi, "little men," executives, intentional agents inside otherwise mindless genes.

The question of whether ethical judgments are natural is controversial. The character of nature and ethics, respectively, are controversial in their own right and the nexus of the two is even more so. Traditionally, ethics has centered on questions of good and bad, right and wrong, virtue and vice; on questions of character, consequences, and motivation, on freedom of will and determinism. Humans have the ability to make promises and be held accountable. Humans also have the counterfactual ability to imagine how things ought to be – in a moral and not merely a predictive sense. This normative capacity is widely viewed as distinctively human. Hardly anyone would likely argue that ethics are not natural in the sense that they manifest human nature but they might deny the claim that evolutionary theory, an account of what humans share with other forms of life, from amoeba to blue whales, can explain the normative capabilities of humans. They might argue that ethical judgments imply a transcendence of animality, that the ability to make normative judgments though rooted in evolution is a consequence of abstract, symbolic culture, which progressively liberates humans from the reach of natural selection. Humans are products of evolution by natural selection but also of revolution through culture.

Some experts, often philosophers who have adopted a broadly Darwinian perspective, argue that normative thinking in general and ethical judgment in particular, is a thoroughly natural phenomenon in the sense that its foundational features, its enabling capacities are either a direct product or a by-product of natural selection. A prominent theme in this strain of thought holds that inclusive fitness, especially parental investment and kinship reciprocity, provides the natural, biogenetic basis of prosocial behaviors. In turn, prosocial behaviors are the matrix within which higher-level normativity emerges, including distinctively ethical judgments. Like other species, humans engage in behaviors that are helpful to members of their family, kinship group, species, or others. These prosocial behaviors are based on biogenetic propinquity. The closer the genetic connection, the more intense prosocial motivations are likely to be. Most people are more solicitous of offspring than of third cousins. When prosocial behaviors are reciprocated, social bonds are strengthened and resources are efficiently distributed, which increases the likelihood that more individuals will survive and reproduce. Under these favorable circumstances, individuals are more likely to reciprocate. Invariably, some individuals will exploit the *emerging norm* of reciprocity by cheating: that is, receive benefits without giving any. Through repetitive interactions with others, individuals in social groups learn to distinguish between those who reliably reciprocate and those who do not. From these experiences, norms emerge: "we will scratch their backs because we have experience and can reliably expect them to scratch ours." This process does not need to be conscious and is unlikely to be so. Rather, easily discerned patterns of reciprocation and failure to reciprocate lead, *habitually*, to norm-governed behavior (Joyce 2006).

Within this matrix of norm-governed reciprocity, distinctively ethical judgments emerge and get a toe hold. Where lower-level, reciprocity-based norms provide reasons for saying "Yes" to this and "No" to that, for desiring some outcomes and fearing others, it does not provide distinctively moral reasons for doing so. The term, *distinctively moral reasons*, refers to judgments about what ought to be, to what is praise or blameworthy, and not merely to what is praised or blamed because someone finds it useful or pleasing to do so. On the contrary, moral reasons are often preference-overriding judgments about what is good, right, and virtuous. Such reasons strike the subject as categorical and unavoidable and, as such, are ends in themselves and not merely instrumental to non-moral ends. A competing view holds that there is no compelling evolutionary account of distinctively moral reasons. To the contrary, evolution by natural selection provides strong evidence against a naturalistic account of moral reasons. While natural

selection may have produced normative beliefs that were instrumentally useful for our ancestors, there is no reason to think that beliefs selected because they were conducive to evolutionary fitness are true (Joyce 2006). The more capacious, metaphysical concept of nature as everything that is, including product and cause, both ontology and cosmology, evades the reach of this argument against the naturalness of ethics. This is not an evasion of the question of distinctively moral reasons. Nor does it change the subject. But it does expand and redefine what it means to claim that ethics are natural.

Nature as Object of Religious Devotion

Some regard nature as sacred. They regard nature as an object of reverence and religious devotion. This is true whether nature is viewed as divine or not and whether divinity is understood in personal or impersonal terms. Even if nature is not an object of worship, it is sacred. Pantheism represents nature deified. Every aspect of nature, every particle and wave, manifests God. God pervades all. Panentheism describes a similar but competing view: more capacious than nature, God encompasses all. Strictly speaking, panentheism is not a naturalistic view insofar as it posits a reality, God, which is more than nature. Panentheism represents a highly sophisticated version of the *nature/supernature distinction* where God is both in and beyond nature, both encompasses and shoots through nature – both immanent and transcendent. In contrast, the classic exposition of pantheism holds that God and nature are the same. Nature is cause and effect, process and product: nature naturing and nature natured, the whence and wherefore of everything.

A radical version of pantheism, which seems to displace the very concept, holds that God is neither the same nor greater than nature. Rather, god (lower case "g") is one of innumerable orders within nature. God is an *order* of nature not the *Orderer* of nature. Otherwise put, god is a sacred fold within nature. God is no less a creature of nature than humans or any other natural order. God is no more or less real than humans or rocks. Rather, god is one order of reality among countless orders. Like traditional pantheists, the radicals use the language of "god." But they radically reconstruct the very idea. God has none of the attributes of a person. Rather, god is a placeholder for the various potencies within nature, the depth dimensions, the wild, and the opaque – nature in its self-surpassing and ecstatic capacities. These potencies are neither conscious nor intentional. If we use psychoanalytic language, then we might say that god is the latent rather than the manifest dimensions of nature, that is, god is the unconscious of nature. Though god is an expression, a modality of nature, nature as such is not deified in the manner of traditional pantheists. Rather, god is a creature of the fundamental fissure between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans:* between nature naturing and nature natured, nature creating and nature created (Corrington 2016).

Some who regard nature as an object of religious reverence see no reason to deify it. Nature is not God. To call nature God is not a compliment. On the contrary, nature is that fundamental and all-encompassing reality within which the very concept of God, *a mere concept*, emerged. Nature is what nature does: both its own cause and product. The gratuitous fecundity of nature inspires awe and reverence in the religious naturalist. Its mind boggling cosmic dimensions, and the intricacy and depths of its seemingly infinite forms, inspires wonder. While recognizing that nature is brimming with mysteries, some that may forever evade understanding, the religious naturalist regards this fact as an invitation to explore and discover. Thus a dual impulse: to celebrate and investigate mystery, to acknowledge

the unknown without consecrating it; to refuse the temptation to exempt mystery from critical scrutiny, or construe the unknown as a taboo object, the investigation of which is an irreligious act, a sacrilege, an impious, irreverent, or arrogant attempt to know what humans should not know. Here, there is no divine monopoly on knowledge or injunction against its vigorous pursuit as there is in the foundational stories of some religious traditions. Knowledge does not disenchant or flatten the cosmos, it enhances wonder. To know and to acknowledge the unknowable: this dual impulse characterizes religious naturalism.

Most forms of religious naturalism are indebted to Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory. The famous last paragraph of *Origin of Species* captures a foundational aspect of the religious naturalist sensibility quite well. After noting the "laws" of geometric reproduction, competition within and among species, natural selection, and the captivating variety that have resulted from these non-intentional processes, Darwin remarks:

> Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.
>
> (Darwin 1999, 478)

Darwin speaks of grandeur, beauty, wonder, and finitude, which are key elements of various forms of religious naturalism. Though Darwin does not explicitly mention *H. sapiens* as he did in 1871, *Origins* is about nature and human nature: their identity and difference. As many religious naturalists affirm, nature is wilder, weirder, deeper, and the source of greater ecstasies than Darwin ever knew. More capacious than Darwin imagined, nature as its own cause and product is physically and metaphysically ultimate. As such, it is the proper object of religious reverence. Thus nature (of which human nature is a part) comprises nested relations among ontology and cosmology, matter, energy, and space–time, empirical and speculative, earth and sky, biological organisms and inorganic stuff, material and mental; relations among animality, humanity, divinity, and emergent forms of value – what is, what ought to be, and the whence of it all. Folding, enfolding, and unfolding, nature is its own self-sufficient cause and effect.

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CHAPTER 57

Soteriology and Enlightenment

Rick Elgendy

"Soteriology" is the study of or a particular account of salvation, a solution to the problem(s) attending human life, while "enlightenment" expresses a conviction that the central challenge or task of human life is the transformation of one's consciousness in order to better reflect humanity's true form. "Salvation" may be thought broadly, though with notable exceptions, to reflect theological paradigms of Western religious traditions, while versions of "enlightenment" are more prominent in philosophical and Eastern religious traditions. Both, however, tend to presume a distance between human life as it is typically encountered and as it should be normatively lived, connecting soteriology and enlightenment closely to beliefs about the purpose of creation, the use and abuse of freedom and moral agency, hamartiology (the study of or an account of sin), and eschatology.

Ancient Origins

Soteriology in the Hebrew Bible reflects the wide range of circumstances and perspectives chronicled in its texts. There is abundant emphasis in popular discourse on the "fall" of Adam and Eve, their punishment, and the resulting (or symbolized) predicament for all humanity, from which deliverance is required (Gen. 3:1–24). However, other crucially important themes recur in the thinking of the authors and editors of the Hebrew Bible. In one of the founding events of the Hebrew people, God liberates the enslaved from political domination in the exodus from Egypt. This is often figured and remembered as a redemption accomplished by divine agency (see e.g. Exodus 6:6). During the time of Israel's establishment as a kingdom, soteriology takes on the tone of political maintenance and moral purification of the Israelites, especially in the midst of ethnic and national tensions in the ancient Near East. Salvation is imagined as the preservation and rescue of the community in the literature produced during and after exile from and occupation of the territories of Israel; here, salvation consists in faithfully singing the "songs of Zion in a foreign land" in hope of a return to their promised land (Psalm 137:4). The wisdom literature – including the Psalms and Proverbs – invoke themes neighboring enlightenment as well, celebrating "wisdom" through personification, which celebration is meant to inspire and cultivate practical reason (Proverbs 8).

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Some of the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers also offer accounts of how human life calls for transformation, often focusing on philosophy itself – understood as a falling in love with wisdom and learning how to die well, often through detachment to bodily or sensuous desire – as the paradigm for the enlightenment available to human persons. Plato makes a literary figure of his teacher, Socrates, to provoke a dissatisfaction with everyday life and encourage an ascent of mind and spirit toward the truth. The allegory of the cave from his *Republic* implies the salvation of the human mind achieved in turning from the "shadows" of common (mis)perceptions toward the "form of the good," that radiant beauty and goodness grounding all things; such is the liberation from the murk of everyday-ness achieved by enlightenment. Stoics such as Zeno of Citium, Seneca the Younger, and Marcus Aurelius located salvation in a unity with nature and necessity: to be enlightened, for them, is to be free from the disturbance of malformed desires as a result of the cultivation of virtue. As a result, Stoicism tends to figure ethics, and especially the development of the person's conscience in practical wisdom, as the domain of salvation.

In this milieu, the New Testament chronicles the emergence from their Jewish roots of Christian traditions steeped in various soteriologies. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth gives orientation to the early Christians' message about God's redemptive activity in the world, but the meanings and implications of that activity are richly varied. In some moments, early Christians perceive Jesus's moral exemplarity and teaching, in conversation with the Mosaic Law, as providing an avenue for differentiated living compared to the state of the world (see e.g. Matthew 5–7; John 13:31–35). Other texts emphasize the unmerited grace offered in Christ's dying on humanity's behalf to satisfy, on various metaphorical castings, a debt, a legal sentence, or a need for renewal that cannot originate from within humanity unaided by the divine life (Romans 5:1–11; Hebrews 9:23–10:18). Still others depict salvation as the result of a cosmic struggle between the power of God in Christ and the demonic forces – "principalities and powers" – that structure the current age (Colossians 1:15–20; Ephesians 6:12–13). In all of these modes of expression, the New Testament claims that the work of God through Christ achieves, if only partially in this era, a new creation, bringing human life and perhaps all of the cosmos in line with God's creative intentions and into deeper intimacy with the divine.

Islamic traditions, centered on interpretation and recitation of the Qur'an, appropriate many Jewish and Christian legacies – prominently, narratives about Abraham, Mary, and Jesus – into a vision of salvation based on divine judgment of the person's submission to God. The law of God is an expression of the cosmic order flowing from God, and one's moral performance is to be brought in line with the dimensions of that order that pertain to human agency. This is expressed in the "five pillars" – the confession of faith, prayer, alms-giving, observance of the holy month of Ramadan, and making a Hajj to Mecca, as one is able – as well as in general observance of sharia, the divine law. Islamic soteriological traditions also feature ample expressions of divine forgiveness and mercy, however, and manifest in a rich array of mystical, spiritual, and political forms.

Though they situate and characterize salvation differently than the Abrahamic traditions, forms of Hinduism and Buddhism also render human transformation in conversation with themes of agency, illumination, and reorientation. Though it is acutely difficult to generalize about Hindu belief, the Upanishadic period develops and extends from the earlier Vedas the theme of reunification between the individual soul, Atman, with the universal principle or cosmic spirit, Brahman. In some early Upanishads, the task of the soul is to escape the cycle of death and rebirth, often through forms of self-knowledge and purification that will yield spiritual progress toward Moksha, or liberation. This self-knowledge is often figured as a deep sense of the unity of Atman with Brahman itself, which also

constitutes the fundamental oneness of all things. The *Bhagavad Gita* offers three paths, or "yogas," toward this liberation: the bhakti-yoga, or path of persistent devotion; the karma-yoga, or path of action oriented disinterestedly toward the good; and the jnana-yoga, or path of knowledge and wisdom, particularly of the self in relation to Brahman. To these a fourth path is often added, raja-yoga, or the path of meditation disciplined toward attention to the ultimate. All paths, however, lead to the reunification with Brahman, when diligently, and perhaps over many lifetimes, pursued.

Buddhist traditions often figure salvation and enlightenment as nirvana, a release from the suffering that accompanies the common life. His followers record that Siddhartha Gautama taught four noble truths. First, that life, especially the unceasing restlessness of mundane life, is characterized by suffering, or dukkha. Second, that the origin of this suffering is the grasping at and craving for the fleeting things of this world. Third, that the cessation of suffering comes through disidentification with and relinquishing these forms of desire. Finally, that the path of liberation is eight-fold: right views, right intention, right speech, right effort, right action, right livelihood, right mindedness, and right contemplation. As in many forms of Hinduism, Buddhists often imagine this process as a way out of the karmic cycle of death and rebirth into this world. Most varieties of Buddhism, however, cast this enlightenment as a realization of the impermanence and ultimate unreality of the self: the anatta, or non-self, expresses disbelief in an eternal, individuated soul, seeing the self instead as a cluster of temporary sensations, energies, feelings, dispositions, and like phenomena. Liberation from the illusion of the stable permanence of the self, therefore, is also conversion toward the real, objective reality of which one is a part.

Some Christian Doctrinal Developments

Insofar as Christian traditions have arguably shown the most preoccupation with soteriology, some account of their historical doctrinal development is called for. Though these theological and ethical disputes have used the evidence of the past mediated by Christian scriptures and tradition, they also feature new organizations of the ancient concepts and, perhaps, new concepts going by familiar names.

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) highlights the internal conflict of the will, which leads him to construe salvation as a repose of the restless heart in God enabled by grace. In books seven and eight of his *Confessions*, Augustine recounts his reluctance, driven by a tangle of desires and habits, to commit to the life to which he sensed an intellectual and spiritual vocation. His well-known dictum – "Grant me chastity and continence, but, please, not yet" (Augustine 1991, 145) – suggests his felt duplicity and inner turmoil, which led to a generative wrestling with the motivations of the human heart. While some of his ideological opponents – the "Pelagians," who followed his contemporary Pelagius – maintain that the grace of God is sufficiently accounted for in creation, publication of the law, and forgiveness, Augustine asserts that these remedies fail to redeem a human heart apart from the work of the Holy Spirit to transform one's loves and desires. For Augustine and his influential legacy, therefore, salvation is a work of God through and through, even when it is accomplished in and through human agency.

Gregory of Nyssa (335–ca. 395), a theologian and bishop in Cappadocia, articulates a soteriology, influential in the Christian Byzantium and elsewhere, that addresses a distinct set of concerns. Gregory inherits the Alexandrian tradition, constituted by theological polemics engaged in by Cyril and Athanasius, whose slogan was "what has not been assumed has not been redeemed" – that only by bringing humanity into the closest possible intimacy with God, particularly in the divine and human meeting

in Christ, could the human condition be healed of decay and death. His *Address on Religious Instruction* (sometimes also called *The Great Catechism*) casts the remaking of nature that begins in the incarnation as a process finally culminating in *apokatastasis*, the restoration of all things worked by the refining of each through the divine energies, including their separation from all remnants of corruption through death and resurrection. Thus, the new creation is freed to *epectasis*, a constant stretching out or expanding of the soul (in rational beings) in capacity for receiving the presence of God's own life.

Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274), a Dominican Roman Catholic theologian situated in the emerging European universities, represents one of the high points of medieval synthetic achievement. Though he borrows in large measure from sources such as Augustine and Gregory (and, notably, Aristotle, whom he calls "the philosopher," as well as Jewish and Islamic thinkers and contemporaries of his own), Thomas recenters soteriology on the reception of the beatific vision: perceiving the face of God by the redeemed. Thomas is well-known for advancing the idea that faith is compatible with reason; even if some of what faith perceives cannot be independently reached by unaided reason, it is coherent, intellectually defensible, and never irrational. Yet, for Thomas, this beatific vision requires something even beyond the cooperation of faith and reason: union with God, accomplished by the agency of God. Salvation is, then, enlightenment of a certain kind for Thomas, but an enlightenment beyond knowledge that exists in the immediacy of a face-to-face "seeing."

As the late medieval period begins to give way to the European Renaissance, Martin Luther – himself an Augustinian monk at first, and enthusiastic about Augustine's theological legacy – challenges the theological inheritance of the church on the basis of soteriology. While his criticisms of church corruption, epitomized in the sale of indulgences, put him at odds with ecclesial authority, his revisions in soteriology make his theology more than a call for return to familiar apostolic ideals. Luther, reading Paul's claim that "the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith," comes to believe that one is justified – reckoned righteous and acceptable before God – in the moment of receiving faith and apart from any works one has accomplished that may contribute merit to one's case (Romans 1:17). Where the Catholicism that he inherits teaches that saving faith must be formed by love and embodied in appropriate works, Luther argues that faith is a sheer gift of God, given without respect to one's preparation or intentions, which only after it has justified the person entirely will begin to sanctify them, causing them to grow in love. Where the popular beliefs of his day held that one could only hope to be justified by God when one was, in fact, justifiable, Luther reveled in his conviction that he was accepted despite his unacceptability. Though social and political factors play a clear, necessary role in the success and preservation of the Protestant Reformation, the soteriological revisions introduced by Luther name its most central theological stakes and content.

Though early generations of Protestants disagree with Luther and among themselves on a range of issues, often in deadly disputes, this soteriological starting point becomes a defining mark of the Protestant-Catholic divide – frequently crossed by the hurling of polemics – for centuries to come. Reformers such as John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli maintain that justification comes through faith apart from works, even if they more carefully guard a place for growth in sanctity in Christian life. On the other hand, the Council of Trent, as an institutional expression of the Catholic Reformation, reasserts, if it also clarifies, belief in the necessity of faith and love in mutually expressive works, citing both longstanding tradition in the church and scriptural precedents (cf. James 2:14–26). These positions, often caricatured by the other side, endure to a degree in the official teaching of church institutions and theological bodies today, though there have been attempts to take a more charitable posture toward an

inventory of the actual differences and stakes. Chief among these efforts is the 1999 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification issued by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, suggesting that there exists a consensus understanding of the main features of justification amenable to both sides, despite persistent differences in vocabulary and related issues.

As the Christian West has struggled with the question of God's forgiveness of individual guilt and transmission of saving grace to the believer, the Christian East, in line with Gregory and those like him, has developed soteriologies based on *theosis*, the process of making God's own life the animating force of human life. Though concerned with the remission of sin and moral transformation, this impulse characteristic of Orthodox theologians also addresses more explicitly the renewal of life as such, including the retrieval and remaking of a physical body in and through physical death and resurrection. While *theosis* preserves the difference between God and creation, it asserts that creation in general and humans in particular are incomplete considered in themselves because they are meant to be illumined and enlivened by the presence of the Trinity. A new kind of life, therefore, is available to humanity thanks to the creative and re-creative work of God; one living that kind of life will find the whole sweep of desires, habits, practices, and dispositions transfigured, along with one's very self.

The European Enlightenment

Though not often prominently in conversation with Eastern religious traditions on the concept of enlightenment, many European philosophers of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries imagine themselves as emerging from an era in which human inquiry was constrained by dogma and prejudice, and therefore working toward an expansion of human knowledge and consciousness. These "Enlightenment" thinkers often devoted serious attention to soteriology in ways that rearranged topics from the theological traditions they both inherit and protest against; three prominent such thinkers, selected from among many, are worth explicating.

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), a Dutch philosopher from a Portuguese Jewish family, imbued his master work *Ethics* with a deeply theological rationalism. For Spinoza, God is supremely real and identified with being as such; because God's infinitude includes all possible "attributes," there can be nothing that exists outside God. This means that humanity, and all that is, exists within God as modes of God's being. Because God is a necessary being, the order of all things existing in God flows necessarily, showing the commonplace belief in sheerly spontaneous free will to be false in favor of a certain kind of determinism that works according to natural laws. Spinoza does envision a freedom allotted to humans, however: the use of *conatus*, the impulse toward the preservation of one's own being, toward a detachment from the passions that might rage against one's life, in which quiet one may affirm, according to reason, the being that one is as an expression of God. Salvation, therefore, consists for Spinoza in the ability to say a "yes" to one's own existence.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), a Prussian philosopher and author of a famous "critical philosophy," pushes for a God whose reality, insofar as we can postulate it, lies outside the universe. For Kant, the basic problem is the tragic disjunction between human moral obligation and the pursuit of our happiness: we must always act in accordance with the moral law, but this does not guarantee the achievement of our desires in this lifetime. In his *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason*, Kant outlines an argument for belief in God and the immortality of the soul as an implication of

the moral life: if our experience of obligation to work in freedom toward the good is to be intelligible, we must assume the possibility of endless progress, which requires an immortal soul, as well as the coincidence of the good and happiness beyond this world, which requires a transcendent God. It is therefore reasonable to hope in a moral salvation: the human must be regenerated, perhaps by the example of one who incarnates the "Word," but ultimately because of a conversion toward the moral law itself, in hopes of being worthy of ultimate happiness.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) makes an ambitious attempt to explain the progressive features of world history by means of the development of *Geist*, spirit or mind. For Hegel, history is the gradual unfolding of spirit through human intellect, culture, politics, and society, realizing itself in progressing depth of expressions. What is "in-itself" from the beginning in potential moves through stages toward being "in-and-for-itself," having realized its potential by becoming conscious of itself with a consciousness that can hold its full being. Hegel's "enlightenment," as a result, is coming to see oneself and one's world as manifestations of a larger whole that is working its power within oneself. In theological terms, the whole story of nature and history is a story of God's creation of a perfect reflection of Godself, meant to carry the full potential of divinity as a living expression of and destination of rest for an eternal consciousness, as the acorn grows into an oak tree.

Salvation and Enlightenment in Recent and Contemporary Ethics

Soteriology is a rich avenue for reflection in recent and contemporary religious ethics. Such developments are organized here thematically, since these motifs recur across contexts and perspectives.

Salvation as Liberation

Liberation theologies of various kinds emerge in the twentieth century, many of which feature soteriology prominently as a way of construing the process of "becoming free" theologically. Latin American Liberation Theology, inaugurated by the 1968 Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Columbia, refocuses Christian life and thought around the needs of the oppressed using a class-based analysis. In the midst of massive disparities of wealth, these theologians and ethicists call for acts of solidarity with the poor and occasionally voluntary poverty as well. Figures such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Leonardo Boff, and many others working from Latin America and the US show the implications for economic and religious life of globalization, consumer culture, resource allocation, and the anonymity of the poor to wealthier global citizens. Salvation consists not only in the amelioration of the poverty of the oppressed, but also for the wealthy in their relocation to the social margins in solidarity.

Black liberation theologies work analogously, largely though not exclusively in the United States, to give a theological account of the struggle for black power and equality in a world imbued with whiteness. James Cone offers a systematic depiction of the theological and ethical implications of God's liberation from the power of white supremacy into a freedom and affirmation of blackness, in which any who side existentially with the oppressed may participate. This entails that moral judgments about the means of liberation, such as rebellions in cities in the 1960s, ought to be referred to the fundamental purpose of God in the world: the liberation of the oppressed. To be saved from white supremacy is not only an urgent ethical task, but the work of God, which cannot be limited by civil law.

These liberation theologies – and allied feminist and postcolonial theologies – seek to situate the human person, long the primary subject of soteriology, back within her social and political context. The primary site of God's salvific work is the political and social realm, where God is transforming the structures of common life to reflect – perhaps ultimately to instantiate – God's coming reign of justice and peace. Salvation for the individual can be neither understood nor achieved apart from participation in shared forms of life, revealing all salvation to be situated in contexts.

Body and Spirit

Modern soteriologies have seen in their traditional inheritance a persistent split between body and spirit, and a preference for the latter. As a result of increasing interest in the dynamic interplay between, for example, human neurochemistry and personality, many theorists engaged in soteriology have felt a need to understand salvation as transformation of both spirit and body, often itself achieved as a reintegration of what traditional thought and modern life have torn asunder.

Womanist theologians and ethicists, arguing for an intersectional analysis of the multiple forms of social identity all persons inhabit simultaneously, seek to name and resist multidimensional oppressions based on race, class, gender, and other social categories. Emilie Townes, Katie Geneva Cannon, Angela Sims, and others have argued for understanding salvation as wholeness for the abjected. Soteriologies based on the flight of the soul to another world abandon the oppressed to, and therefore at least tacitly authorize, a world of unjust social arrangements; true salvation for those facing simultaneous oppressions must liberate the body from the imposition of unjust labor, characterization by inaccurate stereotypes, judgment according to violent aesthetic norms, and subjection to violence and the threat of violence, among other obstacles for thriving embodied life. Thus, wholeness involves the living presence of God animating the entire person, body and soul, which implicates not only the spiritual but also the social dimensions of human life.

Many have argued in biblical and historical studies – including N. T. Wright, biblical scholar and Anglican bishop – for the clarification among Christian confessions that the resurrection of the body is not identical with the immortality of the soul. Working to loosen the grip of Platonic philosophy of Christian soteriology, these researchers assert a distortion among popularly-held soteriologies that denigrates the body and renders traditional forms of Christian belief, dependent as they are on the unity of body and soul, unintelligible. Soteriologies that fail to appreciate the distinction between the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul may reinforce ethical theories and practices of, for example, environmental neglect, since the natural world is not believed to be integrally-related to the destiny of the soul. On the other hand, if a soteriology is formulated in which the whole human person is redeemed and destined to be present for the renewal of the whole world, an impulse emerges that would endow environmental ethics with the full weight of future glory.

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Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics

Editor-in-Chief: William Schweiker

Volume Two: Moral Traditions

Volume Editor: David A. Clairmont

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2022

Registered Offices
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Office
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data applied for
Hardback ISBN: 9781118471982

Cover Design: Wiley
Cover Image: © Shelby McQuilkin

Set in 9.5/12.5pt STIXTwoText by Straive, Pondicherry, India

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Preface to Volume II – Moral Traditions

David A. Clairmont

The *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics* introduces readers to basic issues in moral inquiry, a selection of moral traditions, and surveys a range of moral issues. Each of the three volumes covers one of these three elements of religious ethics, and this present Volume II focuses on moral traditions.

What distinguishes "religious" ethics from other approaches to ethics is, first and foremost, its connection to the religions. While there is much debate in modern scholarship about the precise meaning of the term "religion" there is at least a widely shared conviction that there are such things as religions, by which is meant social groups and traditions of thought and practice that are in one way or another about the deepest human questions and the ultimate goal(s) of human life, including but not limited to reverence for divine being or beings. Thought about or practice in relation to what is held to be ultimately real and important seems to be a longstanding feature of human life across historical periods, geography, and cultural traditions.

This volume is organized around a series of what we describe as "moral traditions" by which we mean longstanding historical traditions, some defined geographically and others in terms of shared beliefs and practices. These are, in the order presented in the volume: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Indian Religions, Chinese Religions, African Religions, and Religions of the Americas. The volume is divided into two parts: (1) Historical and Theoretical Perspectives and (2) Contemporary and Cultural Perspectives. In Part 1, for each moral tradition, the reader will find a series of four entries. The first entry for each tradition considers the terminology of ethics and whether or not it is appropriate to that tradition, considering the various ways that the tradition speaks about values, rules, and what a good and fulfilling human life looks like in that community. The second entry considers the origins of ethics in that tradition, both its earliest forms of moral thinking and acting but also, building on the first entry, how that tradition understood its own early history of thinking about the good and the right in light of later developments. The third entry most often considers differentiations in approaches to ethics in each tradition, highlighting the internal diversity within communities whose members nevertheless share much in common. The fourth entry usually considers trajectories of ethics, examining how current ethical reflection in the traditions links longstanding themes to new forms of engagement with emerging problems.

In Part 2 the reader will find entries, grounded in the traditions covered in Part 1 (although not covering all of them) and grouped around three related topics: (1) Practices and Communities, (2) Modes of Interpretation, and (3) Global Interactions. As an exploration of "Contemporary and Cultural Perspectives" these entries reflect recent developments in the ethical life of the religions but also new

approaches to the study of religious ethics over the past thirty years. For example, the entries on *Practices and Communities* seek to introduce readers to the range of practices in current religious communities that address the various dimensions of the moral life. Our contributors discuss the shape of individual and group practices, how practices developed in response to new moral problems, and also the ways that older community practices have been refocused and in some cases reformulated in light of the challenges these communities face today. In the entries on *Modes of Interpretation*, our contributors consider how the religions interpret oral traditions, texts, and practices from the past but also how individual and community experiences frame questions that are posed to these depositories of community wisdom. In some cases, as our contributors show, new interpretation is occasioned by contact with those outside the community, such as other political, cultural, and religious groups or even the systems of knowledge construction and intellectual persuasion that arose at certain times, such as the programs of European colonialism. At other times, new interpretation results from experiences within the community as it continues a centuries old engagement with the meaning of its foundational stories and inherited ways of life. In the entries on *Global Interactions*, our contributors discuss the history and present situation of global inter-traditional contact and exchange. In some cases, our contributors examine historical global interactions in an attempt to discern the effect of past encounters on current practice. In other instances, they review new global encounters that have been occasions for both inter-traditional cooperation but also contestation and even conflict. The contributors to this volume also demonstrate a commitment to exploring new areas of scholarship, approaches to the study of religion and ethics, and an awareness of the current global social, political, and economic situations affecting people around the world.

Reading the entries in Part 2 together, we encourage readers to look for the similarities and differences between religions in how these traditions understand their own practices and communities, their modes of interpretation, and their historical and contemporary global interactions. No attempt has been made to impose on our contributors a single view of the topics on which they were invited to contribute entries, and thus the reader will find some entries that support and other entries that critique the very structure of how moral traditions are explored here. We judge this spirited conversation to be an important (albeit probably inevitable) and beneficial feature of religious ethics as a field. It is our hope in the future, in possible later editions of the *Encyclopedia*, to expand coverage of the traditions examined in Part 2 and also to further refine and differentiate those explored in Part 1.

In his entry "On Religious Ethics" that introduces each volume of the *Encyclopedia*, William Schweiker speaks of religious ethics as a field of study that undertakes three interrelated tasks – critical, comparative, and constructive – from what he describes as a hermeneutical standpoint. Schweiker argues that "precisely as hermeneutical in character, religious ethics labors between and among traditions rather than [focusing] on the incommensurability of language-games, distinct action guides, or even moral world-views". That "labor among traditions," rather than focusing on a single tradition, highlights the importance of what Schweiker further along in this entry describes as a multidimensional approach to religious ethics. The interlocking *dimensions* of reflection – descriptive, normative, practical, fundamental, and metaethical – arise from the persistent questions that surround human existence and that "demarcate a space of human existence determined by the problem of how one ought to live religiously." The *Encyclopedia* as a whole enacts this multidimensional approach insofar as the three volumes present for scholarly reflection "the space or network of questions within which human life transpires and the answers a community gives to those questions in order to shape character and guide

conduct". As such the complexity of ethics, no less than the complexity of the religions themselves, supports an approach to ethical study that matches the complexity of the subject under investigation.

While the editors of the three volumes of the *Encyclopedia* support, to varying degrees, a hermeneutical approach to religious ethics, to view the field of religious ethics as presented in these volumes as proceeding from a hermeneutical standpoint is less a prescriptive than a descriptive statement – and even an invitation. Readers are invited to engage in the critical, constructive, and comparative tasks themselves as they consider the entries in each volume of the *Encyclopedia*. The entries in this volume on moral traditions allow readers to begin the project of thinking with the religions, considering the insights that they provide both for moral theory in the study of ethics and for the perennial human questions and practical concerns about how to live well in right relation to one's neighbors.

INTRODUCTION

On Religious Ethics

William Schweiker

The publication of the *Blackwell Companion of Religious Ethics* in 2005 represented a defining moment for religious ethics. Happily, this new *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*, incorporating and updating the entirety of the *Companion* and published fifteen years later, continues the work of defining the meaning, task, and forms of religious ethics. Ethicists, historians of religion, theologians, philosophers, political theorists, and other experts have explored the moral outlooks and practices of the world's religions. Drawing on and revising religious resources, basic themes in Moral Theory as well as a host of contemporary moral and political problems are treated. The *Encyclopedia*'s three volumes mirror the structure of the *Companion* but now greatly expanded: Volume I on issues in Moral Theory; Volume II on Moral Traditions; Volume III on Moral Problems. Throughout the volumes, topics will be explored in depth and in most cases comparatively even as the individual authors express their reasons and judgments on the topics.

Given the comprehensive nature of this work, the purpose of the present entry is not to provide a detailed "introduction" to the volumes. Such an introduction is not possible given the sheer size of these volumes and insofar as this is a collective work rather than a single line of argument. This entry is meant to provide orientation to the range of questions and kinds of thinking found in the various parts of *The Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*.

Religious Ethics?

Anyone who works in religious ethics confronts an immediate and obvious problem. "Ethics" or "moral philosophy" is not indigenous to the world's religions. Inspired by Socrates and other sages, Greek and Roman thinkers engaged in the rational analysis and justification of norms, practices, forms of character, and ways of life believed to secure human happiness or well-being (*eudaimonia*). The inspiration of Socrates, and the memory of his conviction and execution on the charge of impiety, meant that ethics was also a challenge to the authority of religious and traditional moral beliefs. What is more, the conception of a good human life advocated by Hellenistic philosophers is foreign to the religions. Religious traditions obviously sustain reflection on human well-being, happiness. However, these accounts are set within an order defined by beings, realms, ideals, purposes, and practices not limited to human life and flourishing.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

The scope of concern found in the world's religions is thereby wider than the discourse of ethics and Hellenistic ideas about human well-being. It is quite unremarkable, then, that the world's religions have generally not used the idea of ethics to specify the character of their outlooks on what defines a good life, right conduct, noble character, and proper social relations. For scholarly purposes, *ethics*, as used in this *Encyclopedia*, is the term for a discipline of thought that interprets, critically assesses, and, often, applies the *morality* of a religious community or tradition. *Morality*, accordingly, is the actual rules, duties, goods, rituals, practices, and values of a community used to orient life.

Similar problems surround the idea of "religion." None of the historical legacies explored in this *Encyclopedia* initially defined themselves as a religion. The term seems to have arisen from the Latin *religare*, meaning to tie or to bind. Religion specified how one was bound to the origins of the city of Rome as itself a sacred reality. Other ideas of religion developed, especially during the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, in order to facilitate the study of the beliefs, practices, values, and histories of human communities. As explored in the following volumes, definitions range from religion as belief in gods or one God, claims about sacred power, ultimate concern, to the charge that religion is about concealed mechanisms of domination.

Most contemporary scholars agree that a religion includes several features: convictions about what is most important in life (experiences like birth and death, sex and sorrow) in relation to what is believed to be ultimate, sacred, holy, or divine, ritual actions, beliefs about the whence and whither of existence, codes of conduct, communal life and its structures, and also experiences of transcendence (e.g. enlightenment, redemption, mystical insight), religious leaders. However, these features of religion are disputed and bear different meanings in diverse cultures and traditions. Again, for scholarly purposes, this *Encyclopedia* holds that the distinctive feature of *religions* from other human sociocultural forms is that they are about what is ultimately important and real for some community of people. That is to say, the referent or object of religious devotion and/or practice is not just what is important or valuable to people, but it must also, in some way, be real, defined in many ways. Likewise, what is real (however defined) is not the referent or object of religion if it is not ultimately important to some human community. While variously conceived, some social and cultural form or practice is not *religious* if it does not bind together importance with something, someone, or some condition that is held to be real.

The idea of "religion," just like "ethics," is a scholarly invention. As rightly noted in the various parts of this *Encyclopedia*, these ideas are not native to traditions, much less necessary categories of the human mind. They are tools for inquiry and reflection. What is more, one must keep distinct, if sometimes related, the morality or ethics of a religion (the actual ways of life, beliefs, values, norms, and outlooks of a people) from the intellectual labor of scholars and thinkers called "ethics" and/or "religious ethics." What is sought in these volumes and this entry is an account of the intellectual enterprise of religious ethics ever mindful of complex connections to ways of religious and moral living.

Given the conceptual problems surrounding religion and ethics, it is not surprising that one finds different options in the intellectual pursuit of religious ethics. Some distinct approaches have typified the field, although there are manifold subtypes and variations (Schweiker 1998; Twiss and Grelle 1998, 11–33). First, some religious ethicists have sought to specify a unique concept, phenomenon, rational structure, or set of practices called religion more or less manifest in what are conventionally seen as the "religions." Often called the *formalist* approach to religious ethics, the task is to show the place and import of religion for the moral life (see Green 1978; Gamwell 1990). Others adopt, second, a *sociolinguistic* approach. These thinkers explore specific action guides recommended by communities and/or

how communities specify through ritual, myth, discourse, and belief often incommensurable ways of life (see Little and Twiss 1978; Stout 1988). Third, there are scholars who develop versions of *ethical naturalism*. This approach is concerned with the particularity of moral outlooks, but also "treats a system of beliefs as a whole and refuses to isolate moral propositions for analysis from propositions about how things are in the world and how they come to be that way" (Lovin and Reynolds 1985, 3). More recently, a group of scholars, headed by Elizabeth Bucar and Aaron Stalnaker, have written about a third wave of work in comparative ethics focused especially on cultural and moral diversity (Bucar and Stalnaker 2012). This has opened the field to cultural and ethnographic studies without loss of a normative purpose. Each of these approaches in religious ethics, as well as various permutations on them, can be found in this book. No attempt, thankfully, has been made to demand agreement among them.

Another way of conceiving religious ethics is now in view and it finds expression throughout this *Encyclopedia* and other works (see Schweiker and Clairmont 2020). The remainder of this entry gives an account of this *hermeneutical* and *multidimensional* option alongside other approaches to the field. Like formalists, a multidimensional approach specifies a structure for ethical thinking necessary to examine specific traditions, but is not reducible to their distinctive languages and practices. Yet, as shown below, it moves beyond most formalist proposals in terms of how knowledge and disciplines are conceived. With the sociolinguistic and naturalistic options, a hermeneutical approach to religious ethics examines the distinctive outlooks of traditions. However, precisely as hermeneutical in character, religious ethics labors between and among traditions rather than focusing on the incommensurability of language-games, distinct action guides, or even moral worldviews. And with more recent accounts of Comparative Ethics, a hermeneutical approach insists on understanding the cultural and social location of the religions even as it seeks to draw on them as resources for constructive and religious ethics. "Religious ethics," on this account, is defined in terms of critical, comparative, and constructive *tasks* of moral inquiry into religious resources undertaken from a hermeneutical *standpoint* and with respect to interlocking *dimensions* of reflection. My contention is that this account captures something of the scope and spirit of this *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*.

Of course, it must be stressed that what follows is a proposal for religious ethics, developed in view of this work. There is no assumption that every author or editor will agree or even ought to agree with this depiction or, for that matter, any other depiction of religious ethics. As a field of inquiry, part of the vitality of religious ethics is precisely that it must constantly engage in appraisals of its purposes, methods, and criteria of adequacy. In fact, this *Encyclopedia* must partly be seen as engaged in that kind of appraisal.

We turn next to the question of how to characterize the *tasks* and *dimensions* of religious ethics in order that the full import of these volumes can be grasped.

Tasks and Multidimensional Inquiry

There are many ways to define ethics and also many ways to carry out ethical reflection. Contemporary scholarship in *religious ethics* undertakes to a greater or lesser extent several related *tasks*.

Religious ethics entails the *critical* inquiry into complex ways of religious and moral life, but often also indicates the *constructive* use of religious sources in meeting current problems. Each of those tasks, the critical and constructive, is often bound to the work of *comparison*. As found in Volume II, a scholar

critically explores a tradition by comparing its expressions through time and/or seeing it in relation to other cultural and social dynamics, including other religions. Constructive work, like that undertaken in Volume III, compares accounts of how to live with other proposals in order to assess duties and values binding on people. The question – explored in Volume I of this *Encyclopedia* – becomes: how ought we to define religious ethics as a discipline, an intellectual practice?

With the rise of the modern Western world there were extensive debates about what constituted a discipline of thought. There emerged the conviction that any genuine discipline must have a distinct, or unique, subject matter, even as there was the need to define a "system of the sciences" around a fundamental principle or scientific method in order to ensure the coherence of knowledge. The core of the modern project was to understand the world and free human beings from ignorance and illusion. One did so by specifying the method, purpose, and criteria of various disciplines in such a way that each was *autonomous* and yet consistent with all others because they shared a *rational* structure. As Stephen Toulmin has noted: "In the underlying European worldview, then, the value of a single all-embracing system of theories, into which phenomena of all kinds could eventually be fitted, was taken for granted right up until the twentieth century" (Toulmin 2001, 87). Ethics, for instance, had to be about a distinctive domain of human conduct, say, about obligation or utility, which was different than other sciences, and yet founded rationally or empirically in the same way as other sciences. This led to the radical distinction between ethics as a *normative* discipline and other *descriptive* approaches to human behavior even if they shared similar cognitive commitments. One finds, interestingly enough, residues of this modern outlook in formalistic approaches to religious ethics. Even those who reject the modern enterprise, from the Romantics to some sociolinguistic thinkers and ethical naturalists and the cultural turn in ethics, assume that definition of a discipline only to deny it. They often contest the modern account through ad hoc or unsystematic approaches to inquiry.

This *Encyclopedia* aptly shows that the aspiration to isolate one formal structure of reason built on a single principle or to specify one scientific method as alone adequate for research is insufficient given genuine moral, religious, and cognitive diversity. Still, as formalists have long seen, there is also the need to define and characterize the discipline of religious ethics as an intellectual pursuit. Further, the modernist desire to establish the autonomy of ethics around some *sui generis* dimension at action (e.g. the moral "ought" or obligation or virtue) fails to indicate how moral reflection can and must interact with other intellectual practices in order to address exceedingly complex problems and phenomena. A crucial aspiration of much contemporary discourse is to move beyond the formal rationalism of the modern project as well as its denial by Romantics and others. It is to grasp a more humane, practical form of reasonableness. Yet in order to be apt for religious ethics, this construal of ethics must also, as naturalists, sociolinguistic, and cultural/ethnographic approaches show, explore the connections among "moral" beliefs and actions and other convictions and practices of actual living communities.

There is an important turn of late in providing an account of knowledge that bears promise for religious ethics. This is what can be called *multidimensional* thinking. What is rejected by a range of thinkers in various fields is a depiction of knowledge gained and justified through autonomous disciplines tenuously held together by *one* formal rational structure or method of inquiry. As the moral philosopher Mary Midgley has astutely noted:

> We exist, in fact, as interdependent parts of a complex network, not as isolated items that must be supported in a void. As for our knowledge, it too is a network

> involving all kinds of lateral links, a system in which the most varied kinds of connection may be relevant for helping us to meet various kinds of questions.
>
> (Midgley 2003, 25)

In this light, the burden placed on any intellectual practice aimed at knowledge is to specify those points at which it is linked to other disciplines given shared interests, norms, and even values. Knowledge is a complex, reflexive network; it is a space of warranted intelligibility or reasonability.

This depiction of knowledge is important not just for addressing shared interests. It is basic to the determination of the cogency, scope, and integrity of a discipline. Rather than focusing on the *autonomy* of a "discipline," one will be interested in the *lateral links* wherein reflection and information move in and out of an intellectual practice (see Gustafson 2004). *Scope*, rather than *autonomy*, will be essential in deciding the validity, the truth, of claims. Accordingly, a discipline is best defined in terms of the basic questions it seeks to answer. When carefully examined these basic questions naturally pose other questions that, if answered, implicate a form of reflection in other modes of inquiry pursuing their own questions. A method must be devised not on one formal model of rationality but in order to match the problems and questions that need answering.

A multidimensional account of rational inquiry seems particularly apt for religious ethics. In very different ways, what scholars call the *religions* provide guidance for human living through rituals, myths, exemplars, doctrines, and teachings that answer a range of questions surrounding human existence. These questions demarcate a space of human existence determined by the problem of how one ought to live religiously – say, live as a Protestant Christian, a Shīʿite Muslim, or a Tibetan Buddhist. *Morality*, the religious ethicist can insist, is a term for the space or network of questions within which human life transpires and the answers a community gives to those questions in order to shape character and guide conduct. From the perspective of actual traditions, religious ethics must be conceived as examining various features of how the moral space of life, as we can call it, is conceived and enacted in life. Viewed as a whole, this *Encyclopedia* can be seen to enact just this kind of examination of religious moralities.

If one takes seriously recurring questions found in the legacies of religions and formulates them at an appropriate level of generality, it is possible to adduce the multidimensional shape of religious ethics (see Schweiker 1995; Schweiker and Clairmont 2020). At least five deeply interrelated questions ground the dimensions of inquiry used to engage in its comparative, critical, and constructive tasks. What is more, each of these dimensions of ethics probe various tensions, or *aporia*, in order to isolate analogues among religious outlooks. The questions that found the dimensions of ethics are not related in a sequential or deductive manner; they are not a checklist to be applied to thinkers, texts, or practices. They arise out of tensions in human life and constitute the interacting "dimensions" of ethics that aim to explicate a religion's account of and directions for orienting existence and conduct in the moral space of life. And insofar as religions use stories, rituals, and exemplary characters in order to guide life, these dimensions explicate and analyze the moral meaning of these phenomena. Further, the dimensions are important for the reader of this work in order to understand what specific questions a scholar is answering, even as the religious ethicist is held accountable for questions not answered but which are in the background of a religious outlook.

This account of moral inquiry articulates an approach for religious ethics that labors alongside *formalists* and those working *sociolinguistically*, *naturalistically*, and *cultural/ethnographic* approaches to reli-

gious traditions and communities. The account admits with formalists that a construal of ethics is an intellectual construct, but it denies that one dimension alone defines ethics and it specifies, like the other approaches, questions and answers of ethics from within the resources of real traditions. In this way religious ethics escapes the modernist reduction of a discipline to one rational principle or method, while also avoiding relativistic forms of postmodernism. What, then, are the multiple and interacting dimensions of ethical inquiry that represent a distinctive option for religious ethics and can provide orientation for reading these volumes? Recall, these are not ordered in any hierarchical way; they are mutually interactive and informative.

Dimensions of Ethics

The Descriptive Dimension

Human beings live and act in specific places, times, and sets of relations. How a situation is described, defined, and interpreted has implications for the possibilities and limits on actions and relations. In its widest compass, some construal is given of the moral context of the entirety of human life, often enough through myths, ideologies, or a moral worldview. Specific moral situations will be described, defined, and interpreted with reference to the wider outlook.

So when, for example, a Buddhist practitioner must decide in a situation what to do, there is the need to answer a basic question, "what is going on?" This is a difficult question not only because of the complexity of any situation, its openness to multiple interpretations, and the limitations of human perception and attention. The question is rendered all the more difficult because someone (authority figure, practitioner) must sort out what reality or perspective on reality is at issue, one marked by conventional truth or one rooted in *Dharma*. A devout Muslim too must determine "what is going on" in a specific situation. This requires not only a description of that case, but also knowledge of how Allāh is acting, the import of *Sharīʿa* on a case, and also specific reasoning skills. Behind these religious teachings is a basic human perplexity: how is genuine insight into a situation related to and blocked by human "blindness" to what is the case? Importantly enough, the religious often explore the dialectic of blindness and insight.

While each tradition provides answers to the question "what is going on?" they do so in wildly complex and different ways. Ethics has a *descriptive* dimension that is linked to other interpretive or hermeneutical disciplines, aimed at genuine insight, ranging from studies of myth to specific analyses of events and situations that provide ways to construe and understand moral situations. Religious ethics draws on a range of resources, experiences, types of discernment, and even beliefs about reality. These resources provide the means to describe and analyze a situation in terms of its moral meaning.

The Normative Dimension

Deciding "what is going on" in any concrete situation is never a disinterested activity. The descriptive dimension of ethics is necessarily related to some norms and values that orient thinking and action. These norms and values allow some realities to appear within moral perception; they also can conceal realities, and hence the tension of blindness and insight. Christian ideas about neighbor love, for instance, might allow a perception of human worth and vulnerability even for those deemed enemies. This

depends, of course, on how neighbor and love are normatively understood. "What norms and values ought to guide human life?" That too seems to be a basic question asked repeatedly in the legacies of religious traditions. A religious ethics has a *normative* dimension.

A bewildering diversity is found among the religions on the normative question. In many traditions there are distinct and sometimes conflicting *sources* for defining what norms and values ought to guide life. One source is the native intelligence of human beings struggling to live together; it is reason and intelligence. Another source is the ultimate binding claims and teachings, the revelation, of the community. Consider aspects of Jewish thought. Rooted in the so-called Noahide covenant, Jewish thinkers have long insisted that every person can at some level grasp moral principles. Yet, for the Jewish community, this knowledge is rudimentary in light of the revelation of the divine will in Torah. Not surprisingly, there are debates within religious traditions about the relative authority of the various *sources* of norms and values and how these ought to relate in living religiously. The sources drawn upon in moral thinking also link to other intellectual practices, especially ones interested in human valuing, social norms and goods, and debates about moral intelligence.

Disputes about the sources of moral norms and values also turn on the *content* of and *relations* among norms and values. Generally speaking, religious traditions acknowledge and seek to sustain a range of goods, like bodily integrity, family, education, art, and, at the highest level, moral excellence and righteousness (see Finnis 1983; Nussbaum 2000). How these goods are understood differs between traditions and even within a tradition; they constitute another link to disciplines, from economics to anthropology, which explore basic goods. Classical Hindu accounts of caste show, for example, that the meaning of bodily integrity shifts between the warrior caste (Kṣatriyas) and the priestly caste (Brahmans). Nevertheless, some domain of goods or values is protected and promoted by living morally. There are also debates about the norms for deciding how to respect and enhance goods. African beliefs about what is owed ancestors as the norm for human choice are decidedly different than, say, the Ten Commandments in the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. In each case, norms protect and promote goods within religious living.

However, matters are more complex. Just as the descriptive dimension of religious ethics probed the tensions between blindness and insight in human moral thinking, normative reflection has to address the question of whether or not the divine, sacred, or ultimate is beyond our conventional distinctions or good and evil or not. In fact, most religious traditions, despite their profound differences, hold that the sacred, ultimate, or divine somehow transcends or exceeds the common sensical distinctions of good and evil or not. And if that is so, then, normative and descriptive dimensions of inquiry are reflexively related at the level of perception and decision-making. They link ethics to other ways of articulating, describing, and valuing human actions and relations. Adducing these dimensions from widespread questions in no way shields us from the stark differences between and within traditions. Attention to these dimensions facilitates critical, comparative, and constructive work.

The Practical Dimension

When people ask about what is going on and what are the norms and values that ought to orient their living, they do so for practical rather than merely theoretical reasons. Whatever else we want and must say about the religions, they are first and foremost ways of orienting human life. They are ways of addressing the tensions, the *aproia*, of perplexity and wisdom in human life, fighting perplexity in the

name of wisdom. While the ethicist or religious thinker will develop complex epistemological theories or debate the nature of value and the validity of some conception of a norm, this is not the concern of most people. For example, as the Bhagavad Gītā opens, Arjuna, standing beside Kṛṣṇa, watches a bloody battle unfold between members of his family. Should he join the battle? In the struggle of decision, a host of forces might be active, the advice of a god (Kṛṣṇa), duties bound to class or social role, bonds of love. Here too is a basic question: "what ought I or we to do?" Where is wisdom to be found?

Religious ethics has a decidedly *practical* dimension, no matter how theoretical and speculative moral inquiry becomes. It is related to other disciplines that focus on decision-making and judgment. Little wonder that so many religions link their ethics to law as well as the demand to imitate moral saints or to participate in practices of divination or study and commentary. Traditions develop complex and subtle patterns of moral reasoning in order to answer the practical questions of life. Confucian teachings about how to live the scholarly life are decidedly different than Jewish patterns of *Halakhic* reasoning. Each is, nevertheless, a response to the practical question "what ought I or we to do?" Of course, it might be illuminating to explore how *Halakhah* throws light on Confucian practices of moral reasoning and vice versa. Comparison is always possible in religious ethics.

It is also clear that this "I" or "we" is never some kind of isolated and ghostly being, but someone in relation to others. What I ought to do is related to what we ought to do. Who we are is related to other communities, who speak of "we." While certain traditions have emphasized a radical individualism in moral action, by and large there is profound awareness that moral quandaries find people amid others. Therewith develop patterns of communal reasoning and judgment; that is, the formation of a political ethics. The point is that some form of practical reasoning and judgment will be found. The work of scholars in other fields (law, social analysis, rhetoric) can aid the religious ethicist. Noting the practical dimension of ethics facilitates, rather than delimits, critical, comparative, and constructive thinking.

The Fundamental Dimension

Insofar as individuals and communities confront questions about how to orient life, something is asserted about the moral structure of reality and human beings as creatures with the power to act and choose in concert with others and thereby influence reality, themselves, and others. That is, ethics is about the proper conduct of agents, human and otherwise. Human beings can be and ought to be aware of themselves in relation to others, the context of life, and with respect to norms and values about how rightly to live. But, ironically, human beings confront here too a tension, the one between freedom and bondage. We are – to some extent – freely acting beings but in a world and universe that constrains our freedom even as we can be (and usually are) in bondage to powers beyond ourselves, say, addictions, or political forces, genetic makeup, family structures, or economic necessity. Any ethics aims, thereby, to answer a question seemingly presupposed in other moral questions: "what does it mean to be a moral agent within the wider compass of reality?" From philosophy to neuroscience, religious ethics is linked with other fields of inquiry into human being and doing and the nature of reality itself.

Religions present fantastically complex accounts of agency and the moral context of life. This is what is meant by the subject matter of the *fundamental* dimension of ethics. A good deal of modern Western ethics defined an "agent" as a being with reason and will, who can act intentionally, bring about changes in reality, others, and the agent's self, and have accountability for actions imputed and/or ascribed to him or her (see Gewirth 1978). The scope of the moral world is determined by the interactions, cooperatively

or not, among these agents. Each of the defining attributes of agency has of course been hotly debated. What do we mean by reason or will or intentionality or accountability or moral ascription? How do we best understand the formation of moral character, say through the virtues? There has been reflection on the limitations of agency, the nature of corporate agency, and questions about moral self-understanding.

Work in religious ethics is challenging and amending modern Western conceptions of agency by attending to non-human agencies and also the wider realms of reality. Human beings can be – and often are – in bondage to powers beyond themselves even as they also retain a measure of freedom. In the Christian tradition, what it means to be an agent is defined not only in terms of the power to act and to be held accountable. It is also defined by patterns of relation in which the self exists in God and in others through faith and love before God's kingdom. Further, faith and love are understood with reference to the divine activity, and this means, paradoxically, that at least two agents, the human and the divine, act in any genuinely good action. Sin, or a broken relation to God and others, is marked not just by wrong acts, but, more profoundly, by an estrangement in which one must act alone and for one's own purposes and good. God's judgment on sin is really the withdrawal of the divine presence such that the agent is left to his or her own devices. In traditional African ethics what it means to be an agent is rendered complex by the fact that the ancestors are operative agencies in the world. This is also why, as noted above, practical and normative issues in Buddhism hinge in part on the distinction between conventional and Dharmic truth and so on a distinction between "self " and "person." Insofar as the root problem is craving that gives rise to suffering, one can only speak of an agent or person through conventional terms. In the light of the teachings of the Buddha, ultimately, there is no-self.

In the religions, forces other than self, insofar as we can speak of a self, are at work in the world and in the individual. Each of the religious traditions, furthermore, examines complex psychological and sociological mechanisms that lead to moral failure, delusion, and conflict – mechanisms like inordinate craving (Buddhism), distorted loves (Christianity), ritual impurity (Hinduism), violation of ancestral bonds (African and Native-American ethics), and systemic, social distortion. An agent is set amid forces that must be considered in attaining valid understanding. Inquiry into what it means to be an agent within these rich accounts of moral reality is the fundamental dimension of religious ethics simply because these ideas are presupposed, and so *fundamental*, in all other moral questions.

The Metaethical Dimension

If one looks at the legacies of religion, there seems to be one further general question that helps to constitute the shape of religious ethics. It arises from the tensions between truth and illusion in human experience. The Buddha insisted that anyone could test the truth of his teaching in actual life. Jesus is reported to have said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Hindu ways of life claim to accord with the truth about the cosmos and also the specific tenor and form of individual life. Muslims believe that the Qur'an gives the final and ultimate revelation of the will of God. Every religion, despite what modern critics hold, purports to be truth seeking and truth teaching. Communities and traditions implicitly pose the question and provide some account of the truth of their morality and their picture of how to orient existence in the moral space of life. Of course, claims to truth differ and so too the means for showing their validity (experience, teaching, revelation, etc.). To enter into this kind of reflection is to engage in what is often called by scholars, somewhat unhappily, "metaethics." Reflection centers on clarifying moral concepts, strategies of validating claims, and forming judgments about the relative weight the

evidence and interpretations from other fields of inquiry can and ought to have in guiding life. This is meant to sort out truth from illusions the confusion of which too often befalls human life. The question of validity or truth is posed from within the religions. This too is a dimension of religious ethics, both about a religious morality and about the discipline of religious ethics itself.

The question of the truth of a moral outlook is without doubt one of the most vexing issues for religious ethics. While the ethicist might explore dimensions of a tradition's morality, how does one judge the truth of an entire religion? How does one show that a constructive religious ethics is true? On one level, the religious ethicist can address this question comparatively and critically. In Volume II of this *Encyclopedia*, readers will see scholars examine the ways in which one or several traditions go about showing the truth of their moral beliefs and practices. Further, if the religious ethicist is working within a specific tradition, say, Shīʿite Islam or Zen Buddhism, then, presumably, its strategies of validation will be in play, a matter also explored in parts of this *Encyclopedia*. Finally, when a thinker attempts to offer a constructive religious ethics, comparatively or not, then some account of how the position is validated must be given.

When the ethical task is to speak critically, comparatively, and constructively across traditions about shared human problems, matters become pressing. It poses a question implied in the very undertaking of religious ethics: from what *standpoint* is inquiry carried out and what criteria of adequacy or truth pertain to its work?

Hermeneutical Standpoint

The *dimensions* of inquiry gleaned from persistent questions and perplexities of human life aim to provide a coherent way to undertake, singularly or collectively, the comparative, critical, and constructive *tasks* of religious ethics. They also signal the kinds of questions engaged by scholars represented in every part of this work. Moral knowledge is thereby depicted as a network of intelligibility, a space of reasons, about how rightly to orient life that is held and enacted by some tradition or community and examined by scholars and religious leaders through multidimensional reflection. The religious ethicist might also make constructive claims about how rightly to live. This is a proposal for the orientation of conduct and life that is responsive to the complexity of the "religions" and also shifts in the way knowledge and disciplines are conceived. The account of the scholarly labor of religious ethics in this *Encyclopedia* does not prejudice one set of moral beliefs over another, say African over Confucian; nor does it specify only one kind of ethics, say virtue ethics or deontology, as best for a normative understanding of the religions and meeting present-day challenges. It is an inductively developed *method* for, or *approach* to, religious ethics. Working alongside other options in the field, this proposal is, hopefully, subtle enough to facilitate the examination of the moral outlooks and practices of the world's religions. Through its dimensions, religious ethics interacts with many fields of inquiry.

However, we have been led to the thorny question of the standpoint and criteria of religious ethics. For those who take a *formalist* approach, the contention is that despite empirical differences among religions one can discern or articulate philosophically a basic structure shared by the religions that facilitates critical, comparative, and constructive work. One seeks to develop an ethics outside of substantive connections to any tradition or the surrounding life-world (see Benhabib 1992). The criterion of adequacy must be determined with respect to moral rationality itself and/or through a metaphysical vision. Those who

pursue a *sociolinguistic* approach in the discipline insist that the sheer diversity among religions and cultures means that material differences rather than formal similarities must be basic to method in religious ethics. Moral rationality, on this account, is tradition-constituted rationality (see MacIntyre 1990). The means to validate a position are internal to a tradition or they emerge at the intersection of competing traditions. *Ethical naturalists*, for their part, insist that norms and values must be grasped and evaluated in terms of their place in a whole outlook on life. And those who adopt a *cultural/ethnographic* approach grant the sheer differences in moral outlooks. The standpoint of the religious ethicist, thereby, is to engage in the examination of a community's moral worldview even while acknowledging the substantive outlook that backs her or his inquiry.

Shifts in how to describe moral knowledge enable one to conceptualize religious ethics in a new way. Similarly, there are developments afoot that demand a standpoint in religious ethics somewhat different than the other approaches in the field. While the method of religious ethics is aptly described as *multidimensional*, its standpoint can also be conceived as fully *hermeneutical* in character conjoined to specific criteria of adequacy. The importance of this standpoint is found in the moral significance of recent global developments that parallel shifts in the construal of human knowledge.

Recent Developments

Developments that characterize the present age warrant a hermeneutical standpoint in religious ethics. These recent developments, and others too, are charted throughout these volumes. A prominent one is the growing awareness around the world of the diversity of religious and moral beliefs, practices, and convictions. A good deal of modern moral theory seemed to efface the particularity of outlooks out of a concern to isolate general features of human existence deemed of universal ethical relevance. The need nowadays is to understand and to explain the moral vision of communities and cultures on their own terms without an initial judgment of truth or goodness. This requires interpretive engagement with the forms of thought, types of texts, practices, rituals, and organization of religions and societies.

The present awareness of global diversity has spawned the critical and comparative tasks of religious ethics, both in formulating more adequate categories of thought (Volume I), by exploring the legacies of traditions (Volume II), and in order to address shared moral problems (Volume III). However, understanding beliefs and practices, no matter how critical that might be, is not the same as justifying them, determining their truth. In a world in which the religions too often and too readily sanction violence and hatred of others, neglect or denigration of the environment, and also back excessive preoccupation with one's religious condition, judgments about what counts as a valid policy for living are required. Present worries about moral diversity provoke inquiry into how one is to establish norms that transcend particular systems of authority in order to address shared human concerns. This seems to require that the standpoint of religious ethics be neither so formal as to efface differences nor so historically particularistic that normative judgment across moralities becomes impossible.

The awareness of moral and religious diversity is just one development in the current situation that challenges how one conceives of the standpoint of religious ethics. The age of "globality," as it is called, is marked by multiple forms of reflexivity, ranging from economic processes to cultural and informational flows (see Schweiker 2004). Reflexivity is the ability of an acting entity to respond to information coming from elsewhere and to adjust its self-understanding and actions in this light. Human persons can

respond to recommendations and judgments on their actions, say, from others, a sage, moral saint, or a god, and then seek to live and act better. Reflexivity is then a kind of self-examination. Increasingly, one is aware of the ways in which social systems, cultures, and religious traditions are, analogically, reflexive or learning and self-testing beings. Global reflexivity works through economic, cultural, imaginary, and legal mechanisms shaping human and non-human life.

The reflexive dynamic of global flows has brought with it new and unexpected developments. During the twentieth century, many scholars of religion defined their work in terms of secularism. The modern world was supposedly a time in which ideas and experiences of religion or transcendence or the sacred were being effaced by the pressure of differentiated social structures and the march of science to demystify the world. Similarly, the legacies of colonialism demanded that peoples around the world adjust their lives and cultures to the secular order (see Appadurai 1996). Throughout this *Encyclopedia*, and especially Volume II, one can trace the ways religious traditions have responded to secularism, colonialism, and modernism.

The noonday of the secular world never really came, or it only appeared in faint glimmers. The present age is characterized by nothing so much as the force and movement of the religions on the global scene. Global reflexivity, the ways in which communities appear in the "gaze of the other," is of great moral import. One can witness the transformation of traditions in and through interactions with and resistance to other global forces, including other religious traditions, rather than the pressure of secularization. This also seems to require a hermeneutical standpoint in religious ethics insofar as hermeneutics examines the dynamics of human understanding through encounters with divergent claims to meaning, encounters in which transformation of life as well as conflict are possible.

The awareness and worries about moral diversity and global reflexivity arising out of the contours of the emerging age are deeply intertwined with shifts in moral sensibilities. These shifts in sensibility are other developments that impinge on the standpoint of religious ethics. The modern world from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries saw the apotheosis of human power in technology, political organization, the media, and economic systems, and with these developments an exclusive concentration on human flourishing. Ironically, modern anthropocentrism turned against itself. Holocausts, genocides, terrorism, grinding poverty, and horrific wars scarred the twentieth century and now too the twenty-first century. Massive suffering and violence have sparked deeper sensitivity to the vulnerability and preciousness of persons (see Gaita 2000; Glover 2000). Conjointly, there is growing awareness of the interdependence of every form of life on this planet. People around the world are imaging the scope of moral value to include but also to exceed human well-being. This ecological sensibility has challenged longstanding beliefs about moral value and standing. In various ways, moral sensibilities for the worth of all realms of life are spreading around the world. This is sorely needed insofar as the religions continue to take violent expression and to foster ignorance and the neglect of finite, planetary resources. Emerging sensibilities can and must aid in the transformation of the traditions that spawn but also thwart moral aspirations.

The realities of moral diversity, global reflexivity, and emerging moral sensibilities are obviously interrelated developments. Taken together, these demarcate some of the contours of the current moral space of life. In order to understand and respond to them, religious ethics must carry out critical, comparative, and constructive work. Because of the deeply interrelated nature of current dynamics, religious ethics obviously needs to be defined beyond modern conceptions of what constitutes a discipline or an intellectual practice. Furthermore, something important is at stake in an account of an ethical standpoint once

the reflexive dynamics of cultural interactions amid human diversity in global times is seriously considered. The religious ethicist does not simply exist within or outside actual traditions. She or he is always thinking at the *lateral connections* among communities, traditions, and intellectual practices. What does this fact mean for the standpoint of religious ethics?

Standpoint and Criteria

In order to specify the standpoint of religious ethics in the light of current global developments, one can reclaim terminology from the Hellenistic world that arose within its religious and cultural imagination prior to the development of "ethics." The standpoint of religious ethics is *hermeneutical*. Derived from the Greek god Hermes, hermeneutics is reflection on the possibilities and limits of understanding ambiguous meanings won through the act of interpretation and thereby how meanings are conveyed from one realm to another. In the Homeric texts, the virtual sacred literature of that culture, Hermes conveyed meanings from the gods to mortals. Other religions, as found in this volume, explore the conveyance of meanings across boundaries in revelations, divinizations, rituals, exegetical strategies, and mystical insights.

The point is certainly not to reclaim Greek ideas in order to define the standpoint of religious ethics! The insight is that religious ethics conceived as a hermeneutical enterprise moves between traditions or among expressions of one tradition, seeking understanding and the orientation of conduct and life. No doubt that movement will always be marked by the ethicist's "home tradition," religious or secular. One remains a Chinese or Japanese Buddhist religious ethicist or an African Christian or a postmodern European Aristotelian. No one (thankfully) must necessarily sacrifice their identity for the sake of undertaking religious ethics. Yet the standpoint, the posture of thinking, takes place at the reflexive connections of traditions and other forces working in the world. The religious ethicist on this picture enacts the lateral links among the dimensions of ethics and other forms of inquiry into the moral beliefs and practices of the religions. In the process some degree of knowledge and understanding is attained, a shared world of meaning is partly disclosed, even as identities can be confirmed or tentatively transformed. The religious ethicist participates in the enacting of a complex network of moral knowledge, never complete yet nonetheless attained. This hermeneutic action is achieved by undertaking the adventure of thought signified through the various dimensions of religious ethics.

How then are we to judge the validity or truth of the work of a religious ethicist? This is a question hotly debated in the pages of this *Encyclopedia,* particularly in Volume I. Generally stated, two *criteria* bear on a hermeneutical standpoint in ethics. First, any adequate ethical claim, whether about the beliefs and practices of a specific tradition or a proposal for meeting a current moral problem, must prove its great adequacy to relevant material in argumentative exchange with other accounts. A position is truer than some other insofar as it answers more comprehensively and coherently the range of questions specified in the dimensions of ethics. It must, accordingly, meet demands entailed in the act of multidimensional inquiry, as well as be error reducing with respect to rival positions or interpretations (see Taylor 1990). Again, scope rather than autonomy is basic to the adequacy of an ethics. This is a *procedural* criterion. It means that a religious ethics is never justified prior to lively engagement with other positions. Additionally, a position must afford some advance in thinking by provoking or providing deeper insight into a moral problem or way of life. This second *heuristic* criterion is more illusive than

the procedural one. What counts as insight, let alone "deeper" insight? Nevertheless, a moral position can claim greater adequacy, greater truth, if it enables one to apprehend, understand, and respond to factors really pressing on human lives but missed by other moral positions. *Heuristic* and *procedural* criteria are applicable to the scholarly labor of criticism and comparison as well as to constructive ethics. These criteria can, of course, be elaborated in much greater detail, a task not needed in this Introduction but one explored throughout the *Encyclopedia* as a whole (see Schweiker and Clairmont 2020).

There are good reasons within the religions as well as those found in global dynamics to adopt a hermeneutic standpoint in moral inquiry. The religious ethicist can isolate and articulate these various reasons as backing for her or his work. Abiding by the criteria of a hermeneutical standpoint within multidimensional inquiry, religious ethics can, but need not, aid in the reconstruction of religious identities around criteria of ethical truth, rather than subjecting the question of truth to communal identity. In this way, a thinker critically and comparatively releases the resources of traditions and communities for constructive thought about how rightly to orient human life.

Conclusion

This entry has sought to address terminological, methodological, and also criteriological issues within the ongoing work of religious ethics. It has sketched an approach to the discipline working alongside others in terms of *tasks*, *dimensions*, and *standpoint*. This proposal is meant to aid the reader in exploring the richness of the thought represented in this *Encyclopedia*, as well as to outline a new possibility for religious ethics itself. One should not expect all scholars represented here to use this proposal, nor is that needed. As noted before, part of the vitality of the field is to keep constantly in play the appraisal of its work and adequacy. Yet by enlisting a vast range of renowned scholars from various disciplines, traditions, and cultures, the labor of religious ethics now crosses disciplinary boundaries that have for too long inhibited its development. *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics* presents an exciting vision of moral inquiry engaged with the fantastic resources of the world's religions, open to other fields of reflection on the human adventure, and dedicated to understanding and addressing moral challenges and possibilities emergent in our global times.

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Part I

Historical and Theoretical Perspectives

1 Judaism

CHAPTER 58

Jewish Ethics?

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It would require scholarship on biblical archeology, the Jewish Bible, Second Temple Judaism, rabbinics, Jewish philosophy (from Philo to Levinas), the Jewish movements during and following the Enlightenment, and more besides to write a "comprehensive" account of "Jewish ethics." Instead of attempting the impossible, I shall employ the traditional Jewish teaching method of focusing on a single passage in the Talmud and proceeding from there. The passage is a fanciful description of how God spends his day:

> Rab Judah said in the name of Rab: "The day consists of twelve hours; during the first three hours the Holy One, blessed be He, is occupying Himself with the Torah, during the second three He sits in judgment on the whole world, and when He sees that the world is so guilty as to deserve destruction, He transfers Himself from the seat of Justice to the seat of Mercy; during the third quarter, He feeds the whole world ... during the fourth quarter He sports with the leviathan, as it is said, There is leviathan, whom Thou hast formed to sport there-with." Said R. Nahman b. Isaac: Yes, He sports with His creatures, but does not laugh at His creatures except on that day. (TB Avodah Zarah 3b)

In this passage, study of the Torah[1] is conceived of as worthy of occupying a quarter of God's day! God does not engage in trivial pursuits. This passage tells us that study is truly a divine activity.

The point of this chapter will be that *this*, the very special value attached to *study*, indeed, the identification of study and discussion of sacred texts (when conducted in the right spirit and in the right way) with the truest human flourishing, is *the* distinctive feature of "Jewish ethics".

But Why Call This "Ethics"?

The reason for calling this "ethics" is that in the Greek tradition (and "ethics" is, after all, a notion we acquired from Greek philosophy), the *central* ethical question was not "what are the right rules of conduct?" (although that was an important question), nor even "what are the several virtues?" but "what

[†] Deceased.

1 The oldest stratum of the Talmud is the Mishnah, a corpus of Jewish law (in Hebrew) traditionally held to have been codified by Judah ha-Nasi (ca. 135–ca. 220). The other stratum is the Gemara, a corpus of interpretations of the Mishnah (in Aramaic). The flexible concept "Torah" can mean just the Pentateuch, or the whole Tanakh (the Jewish Bible), or all this plus the "Oral Torah," and the latter can include not just the Talmud but also the exegesis and the legends that have grown up during and after (and in some cases even before) the Talmudic period.

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should be the supreme aim of a well-lived human life?" If studying Torah (and expressing one's learning in one's actions), and similarly studying the discussions and controversies which grow out of the study of Torah, and doing all this in the service of God (*l'shem sh'mayim*) as well as the service of humanity, is seen as the inclusive human end for Jews, then it is appropriate to say that *study* – in this inclusive sense – is the Jewish equivalent to the Greek notion of *eudaimonia*.

But the study in question is described as the study of "Torah." And is not this too *particularistic* to count as a notion of universal human flourishing?

I shall say two things in response. First, traditional Judaism did aspire to universality, for it is part of the belief in the eventual coming of the Messiah and a final Redemption which was a vital part of the Jewish religion for at least two millennia that at the end of days all of humanity would be converted to Judaism. And in this Messianic age, everyone will presumably study Torah just as God is pictured as doing in our passage from the Talmud. Second, there is a more immediate (and yet complicated) sense in which the study of Torah is part of the ideal flourishing of a gentile life as well as a Jewish one, even prior to Redemption. What makes it a "complicated sense" is that the "Torah" the ideally virtuous gentile studies is *not* the Jewish Torah.

The Gentile's Torah and the Jews' Torah

The Talmud teaches:

> R. Meir used to say, "Whence can we learn that where a gentile occupies himself with the study of Torah he equals [in status] the High Priest? We find it stated: ... '*which if a man do he shall live in them*,' [Leviticus 11:21] it does not say 'priests, Levites and Israelites,' but '*a man*,' which shows that even if the gentile occupies himself with the study of the Torah he equals [in status] the High Priest!" – That refers to their own seven laws. (TB Sanhedrin 59a)

The Torah that Rabbi Meir imagined a gentile occupying himself with is, thus, the seven Noachide Laws. The Jewish tradition holds that every human being is a son or daughter of "the covenant of Noah" (see Genesis 9). While Jews are obligated to observe the entire Halakhah, every non-Jew is obliged to obey the (universal, minimal) moral obligations of this Noachide covenant (TB Sanhedrin 56–60). According to the rabbis of the Talmud, a non-Jew who accepts these obligations is a *ger-toshav* (resident foreigner) or even a "semi-convert" (TB Avodah Zarah 64b). The seven Noachide commandments as traditionally enumerated are (Roth and Wigoder 1996 XII: 1190): the prohibition of idolatry, blasphemy, bloodshed, sexual sins, theft, and eating from a living animal, as well as the injunction to establish a legal system (TB Sanhedrin 56a).[2] They are derived from divine commands addressed to Adam (Genesis 2:16) and Noah (see TB Sanhedrin 59b), the ancestors of all humankind.

2 The prohibition of idolatry was understood to mean that the gentile does not have to "know God" but must abjure false gods. For references, see the article in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Roth and Wigode 1996, 1189–1191) cited in the text. It must also be mentioned that there are indications that in the Tanaitic period (the period during which the Mishnah – the oldest stratum of the Talmud – was composed) there was disagreement on the number and the contents of the Noachide laws. (See Roth and Wigoder 1996.)

If the valorization of "study of Torah" is thus universalized, there is still a sense in which Jewish ethics *is* particularistic. There is a special virtue reserved for those who obey the *mitzvah* (commandment) to study because it is commanded to do so (that is, commanded by the halakhah) and not simply because their natural inclination or their religious sensibility leads them to do so. We see this in the Talmudic tractate *Baba Kama* (38a). In the passage I have in mind, Mar ben Rabana has just interpreted a biblical verse by saying: "It only means that even were they [the gentiles] to keep the seven commandments they would receive no reward," and this is immediately objected to (by the anonymous redactor), who cites the passage we just discussed. At this point, someone (presumably Mar ben Rabana, qualifying his original statement) says:

> I mean [in saying that they would receive no reward] that they will receive reward not like those who having been enjoined perform commandments, but like those who not having been enjoined perform good deeds: for R. Hanina has stated: Greater is the reward of those who having been enjoined perform good deeds than of those who not having been enjoined [but merely out of good will] do good deeds. (TB Baba Kama 38a)

What is remarkable to a modern secular ear is the idea that although there is merit in a gentile's studying the principles of universal morality (the gentile "Torah" or Noachide laws), there is *less* merit in this than the Jew's studying the Jew's Torah *because the Jew does it to obey a divine command and does not simply do it of his own free will*. Here we seem to encounter both the familiar (the idea that at least some basic norms are universally valid) and the unfamiliar (being commanded is better than spontaneously doing good)!

The Question of "Legalism"

It is impossible, in this connection, not to face the longstanding controversy between traditional Christianity and traditional Judaism concerning the merit of obeying *mitzvot* (commandments). Ever since St. Paul famously contrasted "the law" which "worketh wrath" (Romans 4:15) and "faith without the deeds of the law" by which we are "justified" (Romans 3:28), Judaism has been denounced as a soullessly legalistic religion (although there has been considerable rethinking of this in the Christian world in the last century). Here is an example of the polemical use of this contrast by a Protestant theologian (a liberal one, noted for his "liberation theology," his feminism, etc.). Robert MacAfee Brown explained that in the time of Ezra and Jeremiah the Jews "developed a way of life based on adherence to a set of rules" (Brown 1985, 248–249). He tells us that by the end of the Old Testament period Jews had "613 different laws or rules," and says: "You are 'good' if you obeyed the rules, and 'bad' if you disregarded them." Brown then asks the rhetorical question "What happens?" and answers as follows:

> It is clear what happens. You become so worried about breaking one of the rules, or one of the rules about rules, or one of the rulings about the rules about one of the rules – that all your time is taken up with a meticulous observance of these details. And the notion of a living relation with God (which is what the law was originally all about) is lost and forgotten. So is the idea of loving your neighbor. Who would dare to do a spontaneous act of kindness for his neighbor when such an act might violate one of the demands of the law? (Brown 1985, 249)

Traditional Jews think this is nonsense. For them, the joy of obeying a divine command and the love of one's neighbor are not incompatible, but mutually supporting parts of a complex religious way of life. The valorization of doing something virtuous *because God commanded us to do it* even above doing it simply out of spontaneous good will is a distinctive feature of the traditional Jewish ethical outlook and so is the love of one's neighbor.[3]

In response to Brown's claim that in Judaism the notion of a living relation with God and the idea of loving your neighbor are "lost and forgotten," it should suffice to point out that in all of its versions, Judaism has always portrayed God as being tremendously concerned with our morality. At times one's duty to God seems to be identified with ethical behavior, as when the Bible tells us:

> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told thee, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD? (Micah 6:7–8)

And in the Talmud, we learn the famous story of Hillel who, when asked by someone to summarize the whole Torah with utmost brevity ("while standing on one foot"), replied: "That which is hateful to thee, do not do unto thy neighbor. That is the whole Torah – the rest is commentary – Go study!" (TB Shabbath 31a).

Indeed, the picture of the traditional Jew living a life of constant worry about breaking one of the rules is a gross caricature. In every religion, people who lead traditional lives have so internalized not just the "rules," but also attitudes and customs, that following the way of life is what comes naturally. This is not to deny that there are people who make Judaism or any other religious way of life burdensome and oppressive. That type is well known. But it is not characteristic of Judaism.

Study, Innovation, and Interpretation

For traditional Jews, there is no conflict between finding joy in carrying out God's commandments and "loving one's fellow creatures." And we are told that the observance of the commandment to study "surpasses them all" (TB Shabbat 127a). But there is something important I need to add.

Study, especially of sacred texts, is often associated with traditionalism. But in the Talmud it is associated *both* with traditionalism and *anti-traditionalism*, and the struggle runs through large stretches of the Talmud (see Fisch 1997; Hartman 1999). In particular, we find a continual willingness to reinterpret both the Bible and the Mishnah when they conflict with the rabbis' moral sensibility.

The ways in which the Talmud avoided imposing capital punishments prescribed by biblical law and even avoided imposing capital punishments prescribed by halakhah itself illustrates this willingness. For example, Deuteronomy 21:18–21 prescribes that the father and mother of a "stubborn and rebellious son" shall bring him out to the elders of the town and say, "This son of ours is disloyal and defiant; he

3 I wish to emphasize that in this entry I am not taking the view (because I don't believe it) that any one form of Judaism is "normative Judaism," although traditional rabbinic Judaism (today known as "Orthodox" Judaism) was the Judaism of the overwhelming majority of Jews for the better part of two millennia, which justifies the attention that we are giving it here.

does not heed us. He is a glutton and a drunkard. Thereupon the men of his town shall stone him to death." The Talmud, through interpretation, restricted the possibility of carrying out the death penalty against such a son to the point where they made it completely impossible in actual practice to carry out this law! (Elon 1994 I, 365).

Similarly, in Deuteronomy 13:13–17, we encounter the law that "If you hear it said" that someone has persuaded the inhabitants of a town in the land of Israel to become idolators, we are to (1) "investigate and inquire and interrogate thoroughly"; and (2) if "the fact is established," we are to "put the inhabitants of the town to the sword" and "burn the town and all its spoil entirely." The sages hedged this law around with restriction after restriction. Thus:

1 "'If you hear it said of one of your towns.' But not if you are the source yourself." In other words, only if the report comes to your attention unbidden are you to investigate; you are not to investigate on your own initiative. (*Midrash Tannaim*, Deuteronomy, 66)
2 "'If you hear it said of one of your towns.' But not by one who roams around to eavesdrop." (*Sifrei*, Deuteronomy, Re'eh, sec. 92, 153)
3 "Jerusalem cannot have the status of an idolatrous town, for the Torah says 'your towns' – and Jerusalem was not allocated among the [Israelite] tribes." (TB Baba Kama 82b)
4 "R Eliezer says: Every town that contains even one *mezuzah* cannot have the status of an idolatrous town, since it is written: 'Burn the town and all its spoil entirely.' This, however, is not possible where there is a mezuzah." (TB Sanhedrin 113a, 71a)

As we see from these examples, the words of God are not read as if their meaning were self-evident. Rather, their meaning is expected to emerge from the ongoing and admittedly fallible process of arguing about the text and of finding ever new and additional meanings in it. Study, innovation (*hiddush*), and interpretation are always linked.

This study and interpretation was supposed to be engaged in by every male Jew (alas, the tradition *was* chauvinistic!). Indeed, every Jewish community was obligated to support universal education precisely so that this should be possible. We discussed a negative view of all this study. I wish to close by describing a different view. David Hartman writes:

> The word, then, at the deepest, most fundamental level of Torah culture, embodies the living reality of God. And, contrary to the standard interpretation of Paul's description of mitzvah and Halakhah ... the phrase that best describes the essence of rabbinic religiosity is not "the burden of the law" but "*simcha shel mitzvah*," the joy of mitzvah. (Hartman 1999, 8)

Two reasons may make this difficult for moderns to grasp. The first is the common assumption that study of religious texts involves unquestioning acceptance of tradition. As we have seen, the rabbis delighted in finding ever-new interpretations of the text. As Hartman describes this:

> Rabbi Akiva read the Bible as an intimate love letter. He read and reread the words; he, so to speak, felt the parchment and examined the handwriting, the shapes of the letters, and the marks on the page, always looking for signs and clues to secret meanings and hidden messages. In modern terminology, the medium became part of the message, conveying the rich and subtle complexity of the divine world. (Hartman 1999, 9–10)

The second reason is our tendency to assume that seeing a text as ambiguous, complex, difficult, must involve seeing it as creating a *distance* between the recipient and the author. But this is not the way the rabbinic tradition experienced matters. If there is a fundamental novelty in rabbinic religiosity, it is that the sages saw figuring out what God means by his words as a form of *intimacy* with God. Judaism is an interpretive tradition, and as Hartman puts it, "In the interpretive tradition, God never abandons you, because His word is always with you" (1999, 11).

Conclusion

In this entry I have described a unique aspect of the ethical vision of traditional Judaism. That aspect – the valorization of study – is shared by the contemporary Jewish denominational movements, and some trace of it, however attenuated, can be discerned in the thought of most independent Jewish thinkers. That is my justification for calling what I have described "Jewish ethics" and not simply "the ethics of the Talmud."

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CHAPTER 59

Foundations of Jewish Ethics

Ronald M. Green

Any effort to describe the origins and foundations of Jewish ethics faces an immediate problem. If we take "ethics" to mean systematic, reasoned reflection about the norms governing human conduct, then the phrase "Jewish ethics" is inadequate to describe the centuries-long Jewish tradition of ethical thought. A concern only with reasoned reflection leads one to focus on Jewish philosophical discussions in the medieval and modern periods and bypass the vast corpus of moral norms and moral deliberation found in classical Jewish religious law (*halakhah*) (Kellner 1978, 3–18).

The secondary place given to systematic rational reflection in classical Jewish thought stems from the fact that Judaism developed independently of the two traditions that have shaped Western approaches to ethics: the Greco-Roman tradition of moral philosophy, and the Christian tradition of ethical teaching. Ethics focuses on those forms of behavior, intentions, character traits, and moral ideals that pertain to all human beings. "Legalism," "ceremonialism," and "parochialism," too often associated with Jewish teaching, become synonyms for unethical behavior.

I do not want to suggest that these distinctions are simply artifacts of the Western tradition. Many of the distinctions found in "ethics" are implicitly recognized in Jewish thought, and are even addressed in ways that acknowledge their importance. Nevertheless, what is lacking in Jewish ethical teaching, at least in its formative expressions, is any explicit systematic analysis of ethics in terms of these issues or distinctions. The effort to understand the bases and development of Jewish ethics must present the organic, developing body of teachings on the moral life that originates in the Hebrew Bible, continues through the formation of Jewish law in the Talmudic period, and only develops systematic reflection about its bases and problems in the medieval and early modern periods.

Foundational Texts

The Hebrew Bible or Torah forms the heart of the Jewish ethical tradition. The multitude of commandments (*mitzvoth*) found in the Pentateuch became the core of Jewish ethical teaching. These were further illuminated by the many narrative and homiletic elements found elsewhere in the Bible, including the book of Genesis, the historical writings, the books of the prophets, and various books of the wisdom tradition (especially Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). Within this vast landscape of moral requirements, ideals, and

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complex portraits of virtue and vice, we can identify at least two foundational texts that shape Jewish teaching from the beginning.

Genesis

Genesis establishes a profoundly universalistic motif in Jewish ethics. It does so, first, by locating God's purposes in relation to the history of human race as a whole, not just the national life of Israel. This motif reappears elsewhere in the Bible, especially in prophetic writings like Isaiah 2:3 where Israel's national mission is presented as educating the entire world to God's nature and lofty moral standards. This universalistic vision, eventually a part of Judaism's messianic expectations, is a component of the ethical legacy inherited from the Bible by both the Christian and Islamic faiths.

For Jewish thought, this universalistic motif was further reinforced by the statement in Genesis 1:27 that "God made man in His own image." While the concept of the "divine image" eventually gave rise to diverse interpretations in Jewish ethical, philosophical, and mystical literature it was always understood to encompass human beings' ability to understand and heed moral requirements. Hence, "the divine image" served to ground a Jewish sense of human freedom and moral responsibility. In addition, this text reinforced the Jewish commitment to the dignity and sanctity of each individual human being regardless of the person's worth, social status, or skills. The Mishnah, the compilation of the earliest post-biblical teachings by the sages, tells us that judges in capital cases are required to warn witnesses against giving false testimony by reminding them of the descent of the entire human race from one person (see M Sanhedrin 4.5).

In the Jewish tradition, this motif finds expression in diverse texts that extend God's compassion beyond the confines of Israel. In one text dealing with the Exodus account, God chastises the angels for celebrating the death of the Egyptian pursuers. "My children are drowning in the sea, and you are singing songs?" (TB Megillah 10b). In other texts, the rabbis generalized this respect for the worth of each person to include not just the protection of physical life, but regard for the dignity of each person. They condemned conduct that abased or humiliated one's fellow human being and permitted the suspension of any prohibitory law of Torah to spare another person from indignity (see TB Shabbat 81b).

Jewish philosophers have debated whether Judaism possesses a concept of natural law like that found in the Christian, and especially Roman Catholic, moral tradition. Those who defend the presence of this concept in Jewish thinking have looked to the Genesis narratives and to the related rabbinic concept of "the seven laws of the descendants of Noah" in support of their arguments. As presented in the Talmud, these norms precede the specific laws of the covenant and are regarded as pertaining to all human beings. They include one positive requirement, the establishment of a judicial system in society, and six prohibitions: against (1) blasphemy (2) idolatry (3) the wanton destruction of human life (4) adultery, incest, homosexuality; and bestiality (5) robbery, and (6) eating the flesh a living animal (TB Avodah Zarah 8:4; TB Sanhedrin 56a). Rabbinic speculation on Noachide legislation only makes explicit what was already implicit in many Biblical texts preceding the giving of the Torah: that all human beings by their very nature are capable of understanding and respecting the moral norms governing civilized life (Novak 1998). Such "natural law" thinking forms a "precondition" for the very ideas of revelation and covenant that are so central to Jewish ethics.

Although these observations capture an important aspect of Jewish ethical thinking, we must also recognize that some features of Western natural law have no presence in Jewish ethical thought. Jewish ethical thinking could never accept the distinction, so closely associated with natural law theory, between norms based on reason and those based on revelation. From a traditional Jewish perspective, both the Noachide laws and any moral norms rationally accessible by human beings are regarded as inseparable from God's creative activity. The revelation of God's moral purposes for humanity begins with creation, continues through the bestowal of norms on all humanity prior to the covenant, and reaches its culmination in the giving of the Law to the Israelites at Sinai.

The Genesis narrative also furnishes Jewish ethics with a specific understanding of human sexuality and human beings' place in the natural order. Like their Christian counterparts, Jewish thinkers utilized the narratives surrounding Adam and Eve to identify heterosexuality, marriage, and family as created goods and morally required patterns of conduct. However, unlike the Christian tradition, Jewish ethics tended not to elaborate these ideas into a veneration of existing patters in nature or biological "vitalism" in any form. Jewish thinkers generally permitted the modification of nature in order to improve the circumstances of human life. Thus, despite the conviction that "healing is from God" almost all Jewish thinkers rejected passivity before disease processes and permitted human medical interventions. Although specific forms of birth control were prohibited as violating the perceived commandment against the "wastage" of (male) seed, broad latitude was provided for female contraceptive measures (see Genesis 38, 8–10; Feldman 1974). For some Jewish thinkers, the "unfinished" nature of creation and human beings' creative role in it was signaled by the ritual event of circumcision. The need for this was explained by the rabbis under the principle "Whatever was created in the first six days requires further preparation" (Genesis Rabbah 11.3 in Freedman and Simon 1939; see also Green 1998, 1999). Also important as a basis for resistance to biological vitalism and passivity before nature is the extreme sacredness of human life in Jewish teaching and the generally "death averse" sensibility that prevails. In Jewish law, the preservation of life is such a central value that it takes precedence over even the most important ritual requirements, such as Sabbath observance or the annual day of fasting at Yom Kippur. The theme of the preeminence and sacredness of each and very human life is fundamental to the tradition.

A final and very important reason for Jewish resistance to biological vitalism is also based of features of human life depicted in Genesis. This is the understanding of the human being as a psychosomatic unity and the perception of the goodness of the material world and embodied existence in all their forms. While it is not right to say that Judaism lacks a sense of the dangerous power of human material or sexual desires, the tradition always resisted any kind of dualism that elevated the spiritual aspects of human life and denigrated the corporeal. One Talmudic passage focuses on the "evil impulse" or *yetzer harah*, the indwelling aspect of lust and greed in human nature that drives so much wrongdoing. Noting that God declares each day's creation to be "good," the text asks, whether the "evil impulse," then, is also good? Yes, it replies, for "were it not for that impulse, a man would not build a house, marry a wife, beget children or conduct business affairs" (M Avot 3:18). It follows from this acceptance of human nature in its entirety that the Jewish ethical tradition rejected radical asceticism as a religious value. This distinctive appreciation of the physical world and embodied existence also explains a host of Jewish practices and beliefs, ranging from the care given the body in funerary rituals through the relatively "this-worldly" messianic hope of restored national existence in the land of Israel.

Exodus and Covenant

Despite its sequential priority within the Biblical texts, Genesis probably takes second place to the narratives concerning the Exodus and Sinaitic Covenant in terms of its importance for Jewish ethics. Together, these constitute the central "story" of the Jewish ethical tradition (Dorff 2002). Within this corpus, at least four key motifs emerge that profoundly shape subsequent Jewish ethical thought as well as Jewish ways of "doing ethics."

Redemption and Social Justice

The first motif is one anchoring the whole body of Jewish law and commandments in God's activity in redeeming the people from slavery and oppression. The Hebrews agree to obey God not merely because of his awesome power, but because of his demonstrated justice, righteousness, and compassion. This theme, echoed again and again in Biblical and later Jewish texts, confounds the simple oppositions introduced by later ethical theory between heteronomy and autonomy, reason and revelation (Green 1988, ch. 4). That God's will, embodied in his commandments, must to be obeyed is a cornerstone of all traditional Jewish thought. But equally important is the conviction that God's will is righteous. In Jewish thought, faith and ethics cannot conflict. For Judaism, faith is not merely belief in God but the confidence that, despite any appearances to the contrary, God's will and purposes are righteous.

This redemptive motif also founds the intense commitment to social justice that characterizes all expressions of Jewish ethics from the ancient to the modern period. It is not accidental that the Ten Commandments, which begin with the thundering reminder "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2), are followed by an extensive body of legislation requiring compassion for the poor, the sojourner, the widow and orphan. Having experienced conditions of marginality and oppression, God's covenanted people are presumed to have special insight into how evil these states are. As a result, they are required to avoid practices that create new suffering for the powerless or marginal in their midst. "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan"(Exodus 22:21–2).

These themes are not confined to the Exodus narratives but sweep through the whole tradition. In the Pentateuch they take form in numerous commandments that make provision for the poor. These include the tithing of harvests (Deut. 14:28–29), the right of the poor to gleanings (Lev. 19:10), the cancellation of debts in the Sabbatical year of release (Deut. 15:1–2); and the return of alienated property in the Jubilee year (Lev. 25:9–13). In the prophetic writings, social justice becomes pivotal, as the Israelites' failure to observe covenantal requirements pertaining to the poor becomes the most frequently mentioned reason for God's wrath. Following the Roman War in 70 CE, the center of Jewish communal life moved from the agricultural environment of Israel to the more urban communities of the diaspora. In these new circumstances, the rabbinic sages elaborated under the headings of "Zedakah" and "Gemilut Hasadim" a new set of rulings and norms designed to express this commitment to social justice. "Zedakah" included the legally enforced payment of poor taxes, while "Gemilut Hasadim" encompassed the more open-ended and voluntary obligations of interpersonal charity. So extensive were these requirements that everywhere across the diaspora, Jewish communities took the form of "a modified welfare city-state, with its special functionaries who collect the compulsory levy and act as trustees for the poor and the needy" (Twersky 1963: 137–158).

The Ethical Impulse to Law

This conversion of ethical norms into concrete legal (*halakhic*) requirements is the second major motif found in the Exodus-Covenant narratives formative for Jewish ethics. From the start of this tradition, the ethical impulse takes expression as law: concrete, publicly known, authoritative enactments meant to govern the conduct of all members of the community. The core of this legal corpus is the 613 commandments identified in scripture. Beyond this core is a vast and growing penumbra of legislation hinted at and authorized by the Biblical text itself. Anticipating the need to apply the numerous covenantal commandments to the ongoing life of the community, Deuteronomy 17 establishes a process whereby controversies and disputes will be brought for decision before the "Levitical priests" and "the judge who is in office in those days." The authority of these officials is final.

Eventually, this mandate for ongoing judicial interpretation results in a vast body of recorded debates, opinions, and ruling, some of which come to be regarded as parts of an "Oral Torah" revealed to Moses at Sinai. This was viewed as an extended explanation of how the written laws should be executed and followed. Many of these teachings are gathered in the text of the Mishnah (literally, "repetition") produced by the earliest sages (*Tanaim*) who worked during the inter-testamental period. In turn, the Mishnah forms the basis of a further commentary tradition (optimistically called "Gemara" or "completion"). Together with Mishnah, this material was developed over several hundred years from 200 to 500 CE by a later generation of rabbinic scholars known as the *Amoraim*. This compilation forms the Talmud, which, in its larger and more authoritative Babylonian version, contains sixty-three tractates (comprising seventeen volumes in the Soncino English translation). Although much of the text is *halakhic* in nature, recording important debates and rulings on legal materials, the Talmud also contains substantial *aggadic* (narrative, speculative and homiletic) material, forming, as it does, a portable culture for a people in exile. Since the need for normative reflection and enactment never ends within an ongoing community, the *halakhic* tradition continues beyond the Talmud in efforts to codify the accumulated body of norms and in rabbinic rulings and interpretations (*responsa*) elicited in each generation by new circumstances of life.

The impulse to law is partly explained by a major ethical conviction of Jewish faith: that for moral requirements and ideals to be taken seriously, they have to be actively embodied in the life of a community and must be incumbent on every member of that community. While it is good to advocate demanding moral requirements and lofty ideals, these become realities only when their performance is expected of all community members and when their neglect is subject to punishment or censure. A law-creating ethic of this sort can become a "monument of inflexible injunctions and prohibitions." There is also the danger that "spontaneity and inwardness in ethical decision may shrivel into a deadening conformity to the book of statutes" (Schulweis 1995, 34). This problem has sometimes evidenced itself in the life of the Jewish community. Although these dangers are always present, there are corresponding dangers in leaving ethical matters to individual decision making and abandoning efforts to shape the abiding public norms that govern communal life. Faced with these twin dangers, Jewish ethics from its inception opted for the risks of law.

Jewish thinkers tried to moderate this risk by introducing into legal analysis a series of principles that permitted and in some cases required individuals to go beyond the bounds of the law. Perhaps foremost among these was the principle of *lifnim mishurat hadin*, signifying conduct "beyond the line of the law." This principle is often used by the rabbis to identify conduct in which one does more than the law

requires or presses one's legal rights less strictly than the law permits. For example, according to rabbinic teaching, a sales contract is not complete until goods have been transferred (TB Baba Metzia 47b; see Lauterbach 1951, 288). This provides a window of time during which a merchant might legally renege on an agreement. Someone who refuses to do this is regarded as acting "beyond the line of the law." In these and other instances the rabbis were prepared to extend the "fence" around the law to encompass forms of supererogatory behavior.

Hermeneutic Autonomy

Superficially regarded, Judaism's reliance on a fixed and revealed set of norms would seem to be the antithesis of moral rationality and practical reasoning. Not only are the commandments regarded as having their source in God's eternal will, as opposed to human reason, but also, once understood, they must be strictly obeyed without concessions to human needs or inclinations. Despite this appearance of absoluteness, however, Jewish ethics gives enormous scope to human reason and knowledge in its frank recognition and authorization of the interpretive task. This third major motif of the Jewish ethical tradition, rooted in covenant and also implicit in Deuteronomy 17, where, side by side with the admonition against deviating "to the right hand or the left," the authority for applying the law to current disputes is given to "the judge who is in office in those days." The Talmud reinforced this impulse to judicial interpretation. Pirke Avoth, the "Chapters of the fathers," one of the most ethically explicit texts of the Mishnah, begins with the famous observation

> Moses received Torah from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets and the prophets delivered it to the men of the great synagogue. These said three things: "Be deliberate in judging, raise up many disciples, and make a fence around the Torah." (M. Avoth 1)

Use of the word "fence" here is particularly apt. Within the Jewish tradition, the interpretive judicial task was not usually conceived as one of innovation. Rather, it was protection of the once-given body of divine legislation. However, since a fence necessarily extends beyond what it protects, the interpretive task assumed from the start the character of an expansive enterprise.

The process of expansion was guided by the two fundamental beliefs. One was the conviction that the interpretive enterprise rests inescapably on human reason and human experience. A key text here was Deuteronomy 30:11–12: "... this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you; neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us ...'" In later Jewish thinking, the principle "it is not in heaven" becomes, negatively, a rejection of any supernatural appeals or charismatic assertions of religious authority. According to the rabbis, God's direct and supernatural communication came to an end in the prophetic period. From that time forward, God's will is instantiated in the revealed law.

Positively, the phrase "it is not in heaven" founds reliance on the rational interpretive rules and "democratic" procedures established over the generations in countless rabbinic debates. Foremost among these is the requirement that final authority in the settlement of all *halakhic* disputes rests with the majority of a community's rabbinic scholars and decisors. In the Talmudic tractate *Baba Metzia* (59b), this teaching finds imaginative expression in the account of a debate about a minor point of ritual law between

Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua. When Rabbi Eliezer sees that Rabbi Joshua's opinion commands majority assent, he invokes a series of miraculous events to support his own position, a sequence that culminates in a Divine voice from heaven (*bat kol*) asking "What have you against Rabbi Eliezer? The law is always as he says." In response to this intervention, Rabbi Joshua stands up and declares: "It is not in heaven," reminding God himself of the authority invested in the rabbinic majority. The narrative ends with the report that on that day, God smiled and declared, "My children have defeated me, my children have defeated me."

Paradoxically, this mandate for reasoned interpretation of the law was strengthened by a rabbinic belief that would seem to limit the scope of human moral autonomy: the conviction that the law was complete in its revealed content as this was found in scripture and the received oral law. There was never a question for the rabbis of creating or discovering new laws. Nevertheless, the plenitude of scripture, and the confidence that every word, letter, or punctuation mark was expressive of divine intent afforded limitless opportunities for morally creative innovations that could respond to emergent problems or evolving moral sensibilities. One of the more famous examples of hermeneutic freedom based on textual literalism is the replacement of the *lex talonis* of Exodus 21:24 ("an eye for an eye") by a requirement of monetary compensation for personal injuries. Drawing on Numbers 35:31, "You may not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of a capital crime" the rabbis concluded that this explicit prohibition of monetary compensation in capital cases means that monetary payment is required in all lesser circumstances of personal injury (TB Baba Kama 83b).

Taken together, this reliance on reasoned rabbinic decision and the provision of considerable hermeneutic freedom ensured that the norms emerging from the *halakhic* process would provide continuity with the received tradition while being able to adapt to new circumstances and questions. What emerged was a "quasi-democratic theocracy" in which collective wisdom replaced revelation and continual deliberation about the moral norms governing communal life became a central feature of Jewish identity. Within this context, the contrast between a "heteronomous" revealed law, and an "autonomous" law of reason or conscience makes no sense (see Ross 1968, 5–16).

Study and Obedience

Above all, deliberation about the law and obedience to it had religious significance (see Walzer et al. 2000). A fourth major motif of Jewish ethics is the profound liturgical and ritual dimension of the *halakhic* enterprise. Once again, the texts recording the Exodus and Covenant events establish this sensibility. There we learn that the commandments do not just order Israel's life and govern social conduct. Their deeper aim is to create a "holy people" that evidences God's nature and purposes in the world. The law is meant to "separate" this people from the profane world and confer upon them the kind of purity and sanctity – holiness – associated with divine things.

A distinctive feature of this tradition is the fact that the central purificatory ritual is the *halakhic* process itself: the ongoing task of achieving higher levels of *halakhic* observance. Things that depart from *halakhah* defile and must be avoided and cleansed because they distance the people from God and impair their role as mediators between God and man, a nation of "holy" priests. The goal is to create a morally and religiously pure community. This means that all members participate in the common effort and share a common fate. The moral excellences of some enhance the community's stature and invite God's favor, while the failures of even a few blemish the community and alienate God.

This commitment to collective purity, also explains the tendency of Jewish religious law to interweave both ritual and moral requirements. The seemingly indiscriminate juxtaposition of profoundly moral injunctions, such as the requirement to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), with rules against making a garment out of two kinds of cloth (Leviticus 19:19), has led to the assumption that Jewish law is only secondarily driven by moral intent and that Judaism itself is "a religion of pots and pans" (Kellner 1978, 3–18; Green 2016). This impression is reinforced by repeated insistences that all the commandments are equally mandatory are to be equally obeyed. Thus Pirke Avoth (2:1) admonishes man to be "heedful of a light precept as of a grave one."

The reality of Jewish teaching and practice was otherwise. From the earliest date, sages and rabbis perceived important differences between the commandments enjoining ritual matters and those that related to the human interpersonal realm. They were informed in this by prophetic utterances like Amos's imprecation, "I hate, I despise your feasts; and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies ... but let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:21–24). This sensibility is carried over into the Talmud and expressed by a consistent permission to subordinate ritual requirements to urgent human needs. Ultimately, the rabbis ruled that any commandment could be disobeyed – except for the three foundational ones prohibiting idolatry, murder, or incest – in order to save a human life (TB Sanhedrin 74a).

There are at least four explanations for this odd pattern of giving operative priority to moral requirements while affirming the equal bindingness of them all. First, the Rabbis could not formally impose a hierarchy among commandments that are laid down with undifferentiated obligatoriness in the Torah. If choices had to be made in favor of commandments protecting human beings and community life, this was to be done by means of hermeneutic reasoning rather than by a direct assault on the unity of scripture. Second, the rabbis perceived that adhering to any commandment, ritual, or moral, required the kind of self-discipline and subordination of personal desire that was essential for any striving toward moral integrity. Such self-discipline and self-denial were part of the holiness and purity to which the people had been called. Third, some of the commandments had indistinguishable moral and ritual significance. This was particularly true of those dealing with sexuality. In both the Bible and Talmud, homosexual behavior, bestiality, and forms of incest are not only viewed as morally repugnant, they were seen as physically defiling and destructive of the kind of purity to which the holy people had been called (Kirschner 1988, 450–458). Finally, obedience to all the commandments, even the most seemingly trivial and irrational, was understood as a matter of loyalty. Throughout history, Jews suffered an unending succession of trials and hardships as a consequence of the cultural distinctiveness created by obedience to the law. To abandon that distinctiveness was construed as an act of betrayal of God and one's forbears.

Conclusion

In the medieval period, partly in response to the encounter of Jewish thinkers with other cultural traditions, we begin to see the appearance of Jewish treatises specifically devoted to "ethics." In imitation of Greco-Roman or Christian ideas, many of these elaborate supralegal norms and ideals, or stress inner character, moral self-development, and personal virtues. Whether they are influenced by Aristotle or remain more closely rooted in Jewish values, however, these discussions do not represent the

mainstream of Jewish ethics. Instead, this is found in the tradition of law that extends back to the Bible and forward into the ever-evolving tradition of *halakhic* deliberation.

Within this *halakhic* tradition, detailed laws or rulings governing all areas of life and lofty encouragements to saintly behavior exist side by side. What bound this together was the effort to produce a community that mirrored the perfection of a just and compassionate God. Sometimes, this effort fell short of its mark. But if this happened, it was because the task was so demanding and not because Judaism mistook law for ethics or placed ritual over ethics. Whenever it was necessary, Jewish thinkers showed themselves capable of prioritizing ritual, legal, and ethical norms. Nevertheless, they resisted the pressure to make these distinctions and continued to adhere to the Jewish vision of an organic unity of the moral, communal, and religious life.

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CHAPTER 60

Ethics Differentiated from the Law

Shaul Magid

The field of Jewish ethics encompasses the entirety of the Jewish literary tradition, from the Bible to contemporary Jewish thought. However, while ancient and medieval Jewish texts speak of ethics, defined here simply as interhuman relations, it is arguably the case that "Jewish ethics" as a scholarly discipline is an exclusively modern phenomenon. Judaism is built on the foundation of covenant – a reciprocal relationship between God and the Israelite people forged in the desert of Sinai. The fulcrum of the covenant is a system of mitzvot, commandments the Israelites and their descendants are obliged to guard and fulfill, thereby executing their covenantal relationship to God. In the Bible these mitzvot comprise both ritual and ethical acts without any inherent distinction between divine–human and interhuman commandments. In classical Judaism, the sages of the Talmud distinguish between divine–human and interhuman mitzvot. In the rabbinic mind, however, this distinction did not result in ethics as an independent category of mitzvot. Ethical mitzvot (interhuman commandments) were still viewed within the larger framework of Israel's covenantal relationship to God (divine–human commandments) (see M Yoma 8:9; BT Rosh ha-Shana 18b; Yoma 85b, 86b; cf. Maimonides *Mishneh Torah*, "Laws of Repentance," 2:8, 9).

In the Middle Ages, Jews began to rethink this distinction in light of exposure to other ethical systems. Moses Maimonides, for example, built his Jewish ethical theory on the golden mean of Aristotle, reread through the lens of classical Jewish sources, but still did not posit ethics as a sovereign realm of Jewish discourse (see *Mishneh Torah*, "Laws on Moral Dispositions," ch. 1). For Maimonides, ethics, even as it is rationally justified and philosophically constructed, is still always intertwined with Israel's covenantal relationship to God, resulting, *inter alia*, in a particularized hierarchy whereby ethics is defined differently between Jew and Jew and Jew and Gentile. While certainly more universal than the rabbis, Maimonides' philosophical ethics still does not break out of the rabbinic model that ties ethics to the divine–human realm (Dan 1986, 13). The question as to the universal nature and implementation of Jewish ethics and the formulation of ethics as independent of, although not in conflict with, human devotion to God (i.e. severing the dependence of interhuman relations to divine–human relations) is thus a product of modernity, specifically as formulated by Jews writing in light of the Enlightenment.

My concern in this entry is not with the origin of Jewish ethics or how modernity impacts how Jews think (or can think) about ethics (Gibbs 2000). My intention is to question the conventional claim that Jewish ethics, even in modernity, is always framed in terms of its relationship to the law (*halakha*). The claim is that Judaism is reluctant, or perhaps unable, to construct an ethics not born out of, or already

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

encompassed in, the performance of the law. I argue that Hasidism, a late eighteenth-century Jewish pietism built on the foundations of classical Jewish mysticism, disentangles ethics from the law by assuming that the law, while essential, does not and cannot fully cultivate the ethical personality. This entry thereby explores a twofold "differentiation" in Jewish ethics: (1) the differentiation of Hasidic thought and practice from other forms of Judaism, and (2) the problem of the possibility of differentiating law and ethics in Jewish life.

Jewish Ethics and the Law: Contemporary Views

Traditional Judaism posits that *halakha* is the exclusive vehicle for devotional behavior, its fulfillment being the sum total of covenantal living. This is built on the foundation of the oft-cited rabbinic dictum that "God only dwells within the four ells of the law" (BT Berakhot 8a). In an attempt to address the relationship between ethics and the law, traditional Jewish thought, which is devoted to the all-encompassing nature of *halakha*, focuses on supererogatory behavior as a foundation for discussing Jewish ethics. Jews who advocate supererogation as part of, yet not identical to, *halakha*, argue that the origin of supererogation is rooted in the Bible. The Bible, in its delineation of specific rituals and positive law, also contains various general directives to behave beyond the letter of the law (see Lev. 19:2; Deut. 6:18; and Nahmanides' comment ad loc.). However, the biblical exegetes who introduce this biblical charge of supererogation are quick to add the caveat that these directives, while more general than the law, are not outside and thus not independent of the law (see Halivni 1978; Sagi 1998, 230–256). One significant challenge to Jewish ethicists, especially those who write from a traditional and philosophical perspective, is how to forge a Jewish ethical system that protects the commandedness of *halakha* (its heteronymous origin, at least as depicted in classical Judaism) while affirming the principle of autonomy and human freedom basic to ethics. For this reason, law (*halakha*), understood as commandment, plays such a prominent role, and is such a serious problem, in any discussion of Jewish ethics (Siegel and Gertel 1977, 124–132). If ethics were completely outside the sphere of commandments (i.e. if there really were an "ethic independent of *halakha*"), how would ethical behavior be tied to the covenant of commandment forged at Sinai, and, more alarmingly, how would Jews protect the commandments from an external ethical critique?

In his seminal essay on Jewish ethics, Aaron Lichtenstein (1978) explores the notion of supererogatory behavior (*lifnim m'shurat ha-din* – beyond the letter of the law) in rabbinic and post-rabbinic legal code literature to determine whether and to what extent supererogation is part of the law. The sources indicate that if supererogation exists independent of the law (i.e. if it is not required or actionable), then the answer to the question as to whether Judaism accepts an ethic outside *halakha* would be affirmative. Lichtenstein's final answer is equivocal (1978, 119). He argues that *lifnim m'shurat hadin* is surely not simply *halakha* (if it were, then it would not be *lifnim* – beyond or inside). However, he continues, the sources indicate that supererogation is also not independent of the law. The rabbinic and post-rabbinic readings of biblical passages that refer to ethical behavior not tied to any specific mitzvah are absorbed into the larger halakhic system, occupying a special status in that system that Lichtenstein seeks to explore. What Lichtenstein accomplishes in acknowledging the need for a segment of the law to be "outside" normative *halakha* (supererogation), but to deny that segment any power to alter the halakhic system, is twofold. First, it tacitly acknowledges that formal law is, by itself, insufficient to produce

ethics. Second, it protects the halakhic system from any ethical critique that cannot be justified within tradition. The distinction between law and ethics is maintained, albeit in an attenuated way, while the destabilizing potential to wage an ethical critique against the law is diffused.

This last point is precisely what others find so problematic in Lichtenstein's argument. By tying supererogation so intimately with *halakha*, Lichtenstein prevents the "ethical impulse" the rabbis wanted to cultivate in their readers from scrutinizing the construction of certain dimensions of the *halakha* itself. Eugene Borowitz (1987) argues that the ethical impulse so clearly a part of Rabbinic Judaism is stifled by Lichtenstein's analysis and that, without so much as saying so, the rabbis wanted us to look outside the law in order to strengthen it. Borowitz notes the status of women in Judaism as an example. While he essentially agrees "historically" with those who argue that "the so-called ethical impulse behind the women's issue is a gentile importation into Judaism," the "impulse" to offer supra-legal responses to ethical issues, even those born outside rabbinic discourse, is part of the spirit of Rabbinic Judaism's concept of supererogation (1987, 501; see also Rose 1993: 31–32). On the question as to whether there is an ethic independent of *halakha*, Borowitz claims there is an ethical impulse inside, and thus a part of, the *halakha* that may, at times, require Jews to look outside the *halakha* in order to resolve ethical issues that arise in the *halakha*. This is the case precisely with issues that arise as a result of our confrontation with other cultures and ethical systems.

David Novak takes this discussion in a different direction by stating, "if 'ethics' is defined prima facie as a system of rules governing interhuman relations, then 'Jewish' ethics is identified with Jewish law. It is *Halakha*" (1998, 63). He quickly rejects that identification. For Novak, the difference between ethics and law, and the independence of ethics from law, is that ethics is not about "rules" or "cases" (*halakha*), but about principals that govern how rules are determined. Ethics "is about governance and not just guidance" (1998, 76; see also Dan 1986, 2–5). That is, ethics is a kind of *ta'amei hamitzvot* (reasons for the commandments) that determines the meaning of the law but is not determined by it. While *ta'amei ha-mitzvot* only arises from a system of law, it is not bound by the specifics of the law and can offer rationalizations of the commandments that address larger universal claims (see Heinemen 1954; Stern 1998). *Ta'amei ha-mitzvot* consists of two major categories: the historical and the rational. The historical category determines laws (primarily ritual and communal laws) that are exclusive to those who share a particular historical experience (Jews). The rational category determines laws that have no historical basis but result from natural law. This is the category of Jewish ethics. "There can be no idea of natural law in Judaism unless there is an authentic Jewish ethics, part of which is not exclusive to Jews" (Novak 1998, 72).

While establishing a modern category of Jewish ethics through natural law, independent of and even determining the law, Novak laments what he sees as the modern Jewish attempt to conflate ethics with Judaism, making ethics the dominant if not exclusive expression of the Jewish covenantal experience. The destructive nature of the modern conflation of Judaism and ethics is that it destroys the covenant as constituted by tradition, a covenant that has God as the noumenal partner who, through mitzvot, mediates between himself (the ideal) and the real world. In equating Judaism with ethics, God becomes incarnate in the ethical ideal, fully realized and rationally (naturally) determined, leaving no unknowable covenantal partner with whom to relate. While this idea may be aligned with basic tenets of Christianity (incarnation and reconciliation), Novak argues it cannot be born out of Jewish sources (Wyschogrod 1983, 181–182). In this sense, Novak claims that thus far Judaism, traditionally construed, cannot survive the Kantian and post-Kantian critique without rejecting the very premises of that critique,

premises that he believes are essentially true. Divine election, and Jewish particularism, cannot be forsaken, even for the sake of a universal ethics (see Sagi 1998, 316–334; Novak 1995, 50–77). However, universal ethics need not be sacrificed in order to maintain halakhic Judaism.

Novak strikes a kind of dialectical synthesis between Lichtenstein and Borowitz by locating Jewish ethics in a universal source (natural law), seemingly independent of *halakha*, yet functioning within the particularistic frame of the covenant (*halakha*). In this way, ethics can indeed criticize the law (Borowitz), but it cannot change the law without the law. That is, it cannot change the law unless that change can be validated and supported by a particularistic covenantal construction (i.e. via classical Jewish texts). This is not because ethics is a species of the law (Lichtenstein), but because Jewish ethics is the particularistic expression of the universal and must be validated through that particularistic lens.

The cases noted thus far typify the range of options in Jewish thought about "ethics" after the classical period. The law either limits (Lichtenstein), serves as the impulse for (Borowitz), or the contextual frame of (Novak), Jewish ethics. In the two Hasidic cases that follow, the question of *halakha* rarely arises. What is at stake is not the law or its performance (which are taken for granted), but a kind of existential disposition necessary to function as an ethical human being, understood in these texts simply as the ability to love another, be it God or the neighbor. The law, while remaining alive and sacred, is surreptitiously problematized in the pietistic and existential imagination of these Hasidic thinkers.

Hasidism: A Short Introduction

Hasidism can be described as a Jewish revivalist movement beginning in the last third of the eighteenth century in the provinces of Poldolia and Volhynia of Eastern Europe (what now constitutes parts of Poland and the Ukraine). Its enigmatic and mysterious founder, Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov ("Master of the Good Name," 1700–1760), used earlier Jewish traditions of kabbalah and medieval pietism as a foundation for a Jewish renewal of religious praxis based on joy (*simha*) and ecstatic devotion. The Baal Shem Tov's charismatic personality and his reputation as a faith healer and miracle worker attracted other Jewish mystics and pietists and even some prominent rabbinic figures to his circle of disciples (see Rosman 1996; Etkes 2000, 54–162). Many of these disciples became the inner circle of the Baal Shem Tov's admirers. After his passing in 1760, some of these figures began to develop pietistic circles of their own, migrating into the cities and environs of Poland, Lithuania, White Russia, Galicia, Hungary, and other parts of Eastern Europe, spreading the Baal Shem Tov's popular and populist message of serving God with joy, challenging the asceticism of earlier pietistic movements and the hierarchical rabbinical class structure that had come to dominate much of the traditional Eastern European Jewish landscape.

One of early Hasidism's great contributions to Jewish life and letters is its construction of a piety not dominated by the neoplatonic division of body–soul and matter–spirit, but on the search for God in the mundane and everyday. This resulted in, among other things, a kind of non-ascetic Jewish piety. While remaining committed to an ultra-traditionalist lifestyle, Hasidism widened the scope of how one can serve God and, in some very significant ways, problematized the rabbinic dictum cited earlier that "God only dwells in the four ells of the law." But like other movements in traditional Judaism, Hasidism does not have a word for ethics. In this sense it faithfully inherits the rabbinic and later pietistic traditions of the past. However, Hasidism understands "ethics" (interhuman relations) as an expression of an internal

disposition that *halakha* alone cannot fully cultivate. *Halakha* is defined as the formal set of requirements each Jew is obligated to perform in order to live in a full covenantal relationship with God. While *halakha* may encourage such a disposition of piety – that is, it may have ethics as part of its goal – it does not formally (i.e. legally) require it. Moreover, the fulfillment of *halakha*, even in a supererogatory manner, may not always result in ethical behavior. The disposition that the following Hasidic texts speak of is one of absorbing divinity, allowing it to become so much a part of one's being that one acts in the world as divine and subsequently treats the world (both the individual and the collective) as divine.

R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and Incarnational Ethics

It has often been said that Jewish ethics is an expression of the divine self/soul who relates to the "other" as a divine image, using the divine attributes of mercy and kindness as models for interhuman relations (BT Shabbat 133b; Sota 14a and Sifre "Torat Cohanim" to Leviticus, "Kedoshim," 86; see also Shapiro 1978, 127; Greenberg 1997, 387ff.). While this is surely supported by a myriad of sources, it is too simplistic a definition for Hasidism. For Hasidism, a Jewish pietism that focuses on the innate divinity of the person, the notion of divine image does not adequately capture its provocative position. R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk was a contemporary of the Baal Shem Tov and later became an influential part of the circle of the Maggid of Mezeritch (one of the spiritual heirs of the Baal Shem Tov). He immigrated to Palestine in 1777, living in Safed and Tiberias, where his collected writings and letters were completed. He is considered one of the most prominent figures in the first two generations of Hasidism.

His collected writings, entitled *Pri Ha-'Aretz* (lit. "fruits of the land"), presents a nuanced version of the Jewish idea of humanity's divine image and the part it plays in the expression of ethics (Mendel 1987). The first part of the text addresses the question of preliminaries; that is, what is the existential posture necessary to create the possibility of being overcome by the divine. What is suggested is a stance of absolute impotence, emptying oneself of will to make room for the influx, and subsequent incarnation, of God.

This preliminary state of absolute impotence is required because R. Menahem Mendel holds that the core of one's humanness is the autonomous will that invariably interprets human action as sovereign and severed from God. Human beings, acting as independent volitional agents, will always see their actions as sovereign and independent of God. As a result, humans *qua* human cannot love, because love is divine. God is love and only God can love. And the only object of love is God. Therefore, in order to love, and thus to act ethically, one must become filled with God – one must create the context allowing love (God) to descend and overcome the volitional self. This emerges from a creative rendering of a midrashic passage. In describing the simultaneity of God's transcendence and immanence, the midrash states: "God is the place of the world but the world is not his place" (Genesis Raba 78:9; Pesikta Rabati, 21). One half of this phrase is employed here, in one variant subtly substituting "world" for "humankind." That is, God's true residence in this world is the human being (see Vital 1864, 182d).

To be fully human is to become God-like. For R. Menahem Mendel, this requires the dissolution of volition. This experience of radical indwelling, which I maintain crosses over into incarnation, has two immediate consequences: first, it experientially affirms the human impotence that was merely posited earlier; second, and more importantly, it enables the individual to love.

> This [expression of] love results in connecting him to all creatures (*b'eyi 'olam*) and all human beings after realizing that this love is a love of grace that he did not merit in his own soul (M. Rosh

> Ha-Shana 1:2; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, "Laws of Sabbatical and Jubilee Years" 13:13; and "Laws of Kings" 8:10). This is because it is impossible to create or merit this divinity. It is the will of God that it is given as a gift. If he gives this gift of love to another, his friend would be similarly inspired. And, his friend would realize that this gift is not from him [but from God]. (Mendel 1987, 121, 122)

This experience of incarnation enables one to love all things because one sees how all things, even those that are evil (i.e. transgressors), share a divine source. The difference between one who loves and transgressors is that the latter have not yet opened themselves up to the experience of "incarnation" (divine indwelling) and still see themselves acting independent of God. One's ability to elevate those souls is equal to one's ability to love, for love, being divine, is that which elevates (elevation here being the act that reunites a thing with its source).

This ability is not procured simply by following the law. In fact, the law presents certain challenges to this ideal because the practitioner can easily err in seeing herself as an autonomous agent.

> This is not the case with one who envisions himself as having the autonomy and strength to study and fulfill the entire Torah. This person is considered as one who hates Jews and "it is as if he has no God" (Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zara, 17b). He is surely worse than all the transgressors, *like a troubled sea* (Isaiah 57:20) (see BT Sota 8a). This person empowers the demonic forces more than all transgressors and descends to the greatest depths. This individual is a *querulous man* (Proverbs 18:8, 26:22) who *alienates his neighbor* (Proverbs 17:9). He severs the trait of fear, which is the Shekhina (divine presence) from all of life by saying "This is not divine but the work of my hands." Thus Hillel the Sage, who surely was a very humble man, said, "If I ('*ani*) am here everything is here' (BT, Sukkah, 53a). That is, in every place Hillel finds himself, he finds all of humankind – [because he realizes that] he is like one of them and it is only God who is his redeemer. When he ascends, they all ascend with him. (Mendel 1987, 122)

This admonishment of autonomous righteousness is quite stark and uncharacteristically framed around the practitioner of Torah and mitzvot. Why is this righteousness ("fulfilling the entire Torah") worse than transgression, and why is such a person one "who hates Jews" and "one who has no God"?

The basis of these comments is taken from the conventional kabbalistic idea that the demonic is empowered by utilizing the holy (Torah and mitzvot) (see Vital and Agasi 1990, 122–25; Tishby 1984, 28–32). Autonomous righteousness can only be false (and thus demonic) because, as autonomous (i.e. without God), it cannot be based on love. Such a person "hates Jews" because the Torah she lives is an expression of Torah without love, love only being possible through "incarnation." A Torah without love does not result in elevation (of the self or another) but descent ("and descends to the greatest depths"). R. Menahem Mendel seems to be saying that hatred is exclusively a human trait, perhaps subtly invoking Genesis 6:5, whereas only the divine can love. Therefore, in order for humankind to love, it must become divine, or at least be overcome with its own divinity.

Having established an incarnational ethics whereby love is dependent on the realization of one's inner divinity, R. Menahem Mendel turns back to the question of how that posture is cultivated.

> One must [always] contemplate: who do I fear? It is God, who fills all possible worlds, without whom nothing exists. What is the source of my existence? It is God. Where I am destined to go? Toward God. If that is so, what am I? There is no fear except the fear of God's glory. When one achieves this fear he will comprehend that it is also created by God and contains divine effluence, without which it would not exist. If one draws down this fear of God from its lofty place it will become compacted [in human experience] as love because any divine life force that is drawn down and implanted in this world is love. This will evoke love of God, resulting in "the descent of a thread of grace from the source of blessing" (Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 12b). From there, *you will be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters do not fail* (Isaiah 58:11). (Mendel 1987, 122)

"Who am I?" I am God's residence on earth, which enables me to love others whose divine potential I can also see. This love is the basis of ethics for R. Menahem Mendel because only love creates love, resulting in an interhuman (ethical) world that is really a Divine–divine world. To love is to be (fully) God-like, for only then can the divine in others be recognized. To be God-like is to be full of God and empty of self – it is to be incarnate.

R. Levi Isaac of Berditchev: Ethics and the Universalization of the Covenant

R. Levi Isaac of Berditchev, a younger contemporary of R. Menahem Mendel, is one of the most celebrated disciples of the Maggid of Mezeritch. His collected teachings, entitled *Kedushat Levi*, remains a popular and important work of the early period of Hasidism. R. Levi Isaac attempts to reframe the relationship between the divine–human and interhuman realm first suggested in the Talmud. In doing so, he argues for an ethics built on the foundation of unity – first the unity of God, and second the unity of humanity (or, at least, the community that recognizes divine unity). The covenant and its ethical expression is an outgrowth of that dual unity. The first unity creates the possibility for the second; the second unity serves as the earthly embodiment of the first. The surprising end to this approach is that the transference from the divine to the collective results in the universalization of the covenant, or the Judaization of humanity.

R. Levi Isaac begins by juxtaposing two seemingly contradictory passages in the Talmud.

> On the rabbinic dictum "[the aspiring convert asked Hillel the Sage] 'Teach me all of the Torah on one foot.' Hillel the Sage responds 'what you would hate another to do to you, do not do to him.'" (TB Shabbat 31a)

> Other rabbinic sages teach that the first commandments *I am the Lord your God* and *Do not have any other gods before me* were both heard from the mouth of God (*m'pi ha-gevurah*) (see TB Makkot 24b; TB Horayot 8a; Exodus Raba 33:7). [This means] the entire Torah is included in them. That is, all its reasons and secret hints are included in the notion of divine unity (*ahdut ha-Shem*) [as expressed in those two commandments]. All the reasons are hinted at [in these two commandments] in order that we recognize them when we bind ourselves and serve the Creator. So it is that all the esoteric teachings teach that all the mitzvot only serve to teach us of the unity of God. (Isaac 1992: 141a/b)

Given the opportunity to "teach the *entire Torah* on one foot," Hillel cites a negative version of "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), one of the standard biblical verses employed to define Jewish ethics (see *Sefer Mitzvot Gedolot* (SM'G), positive commandment no. 9; and *Sefer Ha-Hinukh*, commandment no. 243).

However, R. Levi Isaac continues, we have another talmudic dictum that states that the *entire Torah* was communicated and is embodied in the first two commandments, referring to the doctrine of divine unity (*ahdut ha-Shem*). If this is so, why didn't Hillel cite these two commandments and their interpretation to the aspiring convert? He answers by interpreting the talmudic distinction of divine–human and interhuman mitzvot.

> However, it is widely known that the mitzvot of the Torah are divided into two distinct categories. The first category is mitzvot between Israel and their Father in Heaven, such as ritual fringes (*zizit*), phylacteries (*tefillin*), and sacrifices (*korbanot*). The other category is mitzvot that are interhuman, which can be encapsulated in *Love your neighbor as yourself* (Leviticus 19:18), as it says, "Rabbi Akiba says, this [*Love your neighbor* ...] is the great principle of the Torah" (Palestinian Talmud, Nedarim, p. 30b). We must understand that interhuman mitzvot are included in the principle of divine unity, as we said *I am the Lord Your God*, and *Do not have any other gods* ... were heard directly from the mouth of God and encompass the entire Torah. (Isaac 1992: 141b)

The foundation of ethics presented here (Hillel's remark) is the result of the transference of the divine unity realized at Sinai to the unity of Israel as one body. When R. Levi Isaac says, "we must understand that interhuman mitzvot are included in the principle of divine unity," he means that the interhuman, as Hillel frames it, is only possible by first realizing divine unity through the first two commandments (Sinai). The consequence of realizing that unity is the realization of the unity of the community as one body. We act ethically toward our neighbor (here, only our Israelite neighbor) because we identify with him or her as part of the unified self that is forged at Sinai (hearing the first two commandments). The covenant with God fostered through the recognition of divine unity is the basis of the covenant with human beings fostered through the realization that any community that recognizes divine unity is "a community that stands as one."

Up to this point R. Levi Isaac supports the normative idea that covenant and divine election underlie the foundation of Jewish ethics. The commandment "love thy neighbor," as interpreted by the rabbis, refers only to the Israelite neighbor and Israel is defined as that collective and their progeny who share, either directly or by proxy, the historical experience of Sinai (*ahdut ha-Shem*). This is necessary as only Israel, who hears the first two commandments, has a notion of the community as a unified body that makes religious ethics possible. From our earlier discussion of different approaches of relating law and ethics, this would support an ethics that exists within and not independent of *halakha*, both born out of a shared experience at Sinai.

However, R. Levi Isaac does not stop here. He is curious about why the rabbinic discussion of Hillel's declaration of Jewish ethics is framed in a conversation with an aspiring convert. Turning from Hillel's answer to the underlying premise of the convert's question, R. Levi Isaac problematizes the idea that election, and thus ethics ("love thy neighbor"), is limited to the original community at Sinai. The aspiring convert wants to know how interhuman relations (ethics) are connected to divine–human relations. He knew that one need not be Jewish to be ethical or to serve God. Being Jewish here is now defined precisely as understanding the dependence of ethics on divine unity (*ahdut ha-shem*). According to R. Levi

Isaac's reading, the convert in this talmudic passage serves as a metaphor for those civilizations that did not experience the historical beneficence of the Sinai covenant but desired to understand how ethics relates to depiction of that Sinaitic God.

Hillel's answer is that ethics is born out of a realization of the unity of the human community that emerges out of the Sinaitic revelation (the unity of God). Ethics results from the transference of divine unity to humankind that is born out of a particular collective human experience of God. While Sinai provides this for Israel, the realization of divine unity can also be cultivated in reverse, that is, by first realizing the unity of the human community and, by extension, the unity of God. This seems to be R. Levi Isaac's idea of conversion. Instead of conversion simply being the ability of others to share in the historical covenant of Israel, R. Levi Isaac suggests that conversion, in an expansive sense, is the deconstruction of the particularistic nature of divine election – or, the substitution of the historical for the universal. "Therefore, all the nations (*ha-'amim*) must become one nation (*'am ehad*)." This is a creative play on the prophetic declaration that, "in that day, the Lord will be One and His Name will be one" (Zechariah 14:9). Universal recognition of divine unity, and universal religion, is realized by the recognition of the unity of humankind, the place where the historical meets and is subsumed in the universal. "This will result in the transformation of all nations to a nation of God." Becoming one nation through ethics results in the universal realization of divine unity and the completion of the Israelite mission to the world.

That is why Hillel responds to the convert with "love your neighbor" (the universal) and does not bring up the first two commandments (the historical). Those commandments only work for those who heard them directly from God (Israel). For those at Sinai, the experience and completion of divine unity must translate into ethics via the transference of divine unity to the unity of the community. For those not at Sinai, however, the way to that unity begins in ethics, culminating in the transference of humankind's unity to divine unity. When the non-Israelite community realizes this connection, both communities actually meet and become *'am ehad* via living the ethical ideal as one community – it is just that they begin from opposite places.

Conclusion

This brief presentation of two examples of Hasidic ethics disentangled from *halakha* serves as an alternative model to the contemporary discussions of Jewish ethics discussed in the first section of this entry. R. Menahem Mendel suggests that ethics is an outgrowth of divine love achieved through a kind of incarnation of God into the emptied human vessel. This love serves to elevate all of creation by evoking the divinity in one's neighbor as a recipient of that love, that is, in receiving God's grace. In this case, while the law may indeed serve as an obligatory and necessary component for the Jew, the law does not produce or even cultivate this love – this love is achieved via supralegal means, through contemplation and the practice of emptying the self of one's ego and will. In R Menahem Mendel's reading, the rabbinic dichotomy between divine–human and interhuman collapses into a "trinitarian" relation. The divine self is completed via incarnation in the individual and, as divine, discovers and relates to the divinity in the other through love. Love of God and love of the neighbor become fused.

In the three contemporary approaches to law and ethics discussed in the first section, ethics was tied very tightly to the mitzvot (*halakha*), either as part of the system of *halakha* (Lichtenstein), implied in the spirit of the *halakha* (Borowitz), or that the *halakha*, as covenantal expression, was the particularistic

frame of ethics (Novak's "postmodern" alternative that presented ethics as natural law and Jewish ethics as part of divine election). R. Menahem Mendel's approach, while not directly addressing these constructions, offers a model of ethics that is, in a significant way, "independent of *halakha*."

R. Levi Isaac's text is more relevant to our modern interpreters, as he directly addresses the rabbinic dichotomy of divine–human and interhuman mitzvot. Instead of simply locating interhuman relations in divine–human relations, something that David Novak claims is fundamental to classical Judaism and largely disappears in modern Jewish ethics, R. Levi Isaac presents interhuman relations for Israel ("love thy neighbor") as an outgrowth of divine–human relations ("I am the Lord your God"), but uses that correlation to construct a universal message of Judaism that, if manifested successfully, deconstructs the particularistic formulation of divine election. The interhuman moves beyond being exclusive to Israel and includes anyone who recognizes the unity of God, even as that unity is achieved through ethics (the universal) and not via Sinai (the historical). For the non-Israelite who did not (and does not) partake in the historical covenant at Sinai, interhuman relations are the source for divine–human relations (i.e. Hillel's answer to the convert). Moreover, the success of this universal message to the convert is that Israel and the rest of humanity forge one world community, all elected because they all recognize the unity of God, each feeling equally obligated to live ethically. While the historical roots of each community may remain distinct (an issue R. Levi Isaac never addresses), the shared recognition of the unity of God creates a universal ethics out of the transference of divine unity to the human community and vice versa. If this is not an ethic "independent of *halakha*" it is surely an ethic that transcends *halakha*, because it applies to those who have no share in the historical roots of the halakhic system.

This entry does not claim to offer a definitive account of Hasidic ethics. What it claims is that Hasidism, seen through the window of these select texts, offers a vision of ethics disentangled, albeit not severed, from the law. Both examples subtly criticize the notion of the exclusivity of the law as the sum total of Jewish living. Whereas even modern thinkers, in different ways, wed ethics to the law, these Hasidic texts offer an alternative showing how the ethical personality is cultivated and nurtured in Judaism. By disentangling ethics from the law, Hasidism challenges some basic conventions about Judaism, both as envisioned from within and from without. The breakdown of those conventions may provide new ways of thinking comparatively about Jewish ethics as part of the larger discourse in the study of religion.

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CHAPTER 61

From Law to Ethics … and Back

Nancy Levene

> R. Simlai said: Six hundred and thirteen commandments were given to Moses, 365 negative commandments answering to the number of days of the year, and 248 positive commandments answering to the number of a person's members.
>
> Then David came and reduced them to eleven: "Lord, who shall dwell in Your tabernacle? Who shall sojourn in Your holy mountain? He that walks uprightly, works righteousness, speaks truth in his heart; has no slander upon his tongue, nor does evil to his fellow, nor reproaches his neighbor; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but honors those who fear the Lord. He swears to his own heart and doesn't change. He does not lend his money on interest, nor take a bribe against the innocent. He that does these things shall never be moved." [Ps. 15]
>
> Then came Isaiah, and reduced them to six: "He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly, he that despises oppressors, who shakes his hand from bribes, who stops his ear from hearing about bloodshed, and shuts his eyes so as not to see evil – he shall dwell on high." [Isa. 33:15–16]
>
> Then came Micah, and reduced them to three: "It has been told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly before your God." [Mic. 6:8]
>
> Then Isaiah came again, and reduced them to two: "Thus says the Lord: keep justice and do righteousness." [Isa. 56:1]
>
> Then came Amos, and reduced them to one: "Seek the Lord and live" [Amos 5:4]. Or one may say, then came Habakkuk, and reduced them to one: "The righteous shall live by their faith." [Hab. 2:4]
>
> Babylonian Talmud, Makkot 24a (Trans. excerpted in Borowitz and Schwartz 1999, 222–223)

It is sometimes worthwhile simply to pause over a text such as this one from Makkot, a talmudic tractate devoted to the judicial procedures concerning false witnesses and other prohibitions. It provides a striking window into classical Jewish reflection on the relationship of law and ethics, quite in contrast to what one finds in contemporary literature, which is beset by such questions as: What do law and ethics have to do with each other? How should they be related? How can one think about the relationship between them without feeling the pressure of Christian appraisals of the law? Is there an ethics outside of law? A law outside of ethics? Should there be? These questions are in fact only the tip of a rather large iceberg (see Lichtenstein 1978, 222–223; Kellner 1978; Dorff and Newman 1995; Fox 1975; Newman

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

1995; Gibbs 2000; Goodman 1998; Rose 1993). "What iceberg?" ask the rabbis of Makkot, and in one creative exegetical gesture, bring what seems a perfectly lucid ancient solution to a modern problem. Or is it a modern solution to an ancient problem?

I want to offer a few reflections on this suggestive text before moving to the question of how one might think about contemporary trajectories in Jewish ethics in light of rabbinic reasoning. There will be some interesting cross-pollinations: Judaism, Kant, the rabbis, modernity. It is frequently Kant who gets blamed for bifurcating, for ruining, what the Talmud holds together (law, ethics), and Kant who thus occupies a kind of negative centrality in Jewish thought. Kant, the stranger to Judaism, is the one who makes it so painfully clear why Jews are forever strangers in the modern West. Or so it is usually argued. I want to say something else: that Kant has much more in common with the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud than one might think, and this is to notice at least three curious things: (1) that "modernity" may be a concept that is indigenous to a Judaism that originates in antiquity; (2) that Kant's Enlightenment may be less a threat to Jewish thought than a working out of its central premises; and (3) that the traditional historiography of Judaism that sees modernity as an unwelcome divorce from a medieval world that successfully integrates law and ethics may need to be entirely reversed. I cannot prove these claims in any detail in this entry, but I want to raise them as food for thought.

An Arrestingly Simple Logic

According to the text quoted above, the commandments given to Moses numbered 613, divided into positive and negative laws – for example, keep the Sabbath with joy in your heart and refrain from work on that day. Here is what we call in English "the law" – those things that are to guide conduct, restrain passion, and promote fellowship and social harmony in the spheres of family, civil society, and polity (with rabbinic interpretations, they ultimately number far more than 613).

What happens next? "Then David came and reduced [*he'emidan*] them to eleven," a trope that is then repeated throughout the remaining five paragraphs. Each successive reduction involves bringing a biblical passage which comments upon the previous one and leads to the next, culminating in the final passage in which there is only one commandment, interpreted variously in Amos and Habakkuk. The effect of the whole is of a seamless commentary on Jewish values, which begins with the law, condenses this law ever more potently into ethical maxims, and then arguably (suggestively, indirectly) reopens law at the end through the notions of "life" and "faith." It is also, not incidentally, a condensation of what Jews call the Tanakh (Bible), containing words of "Torah" (the five books of Moses), "Nevi'im" (prophets), and "Kethubim" (writings, or wisdom literature). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, its words are biblical – the Bible (all three components) being the touchstone for ethical reasoning in Judaism, yet its "composition" is rabbinic ("R. Simlai said") – the rabbis of the Talmud being the preeminent source of law in the tradition.

To be sure, what I am calling "seamless" here is not quite as it seems. The key depends on the interpretation of the word *he'emidan*, to reduce, to found. Reduction implies paring down. But why do that? We are given 613 commandments. Is this too many? Is nine easier to understand? Is six easier than nine? Is ease of understanding even the issue? Reduction has other meanings. To reduce is to concentrate, as in here is the law in its essence. But why essence? Does this help to follow it better? Is it to motivate, or perhaps to explain the law to others?

One might fruitfully trace the entire history of Jewish ethical reasoning through the various avenues opened by this single passage. Taken alone, it has the tone of responding to a general question, such as "how should a person live?" One might deduce, from the source of the compilation and from the surrounding narratives of the revelation on Mount Sinai, that the passage only concerns Jews, but there is otherwise no indication that there is a specific audience intended. On the basis of the passage alone, Moses could be understood to be God's emissary for all persons, and the revealed commandments relevant to all.

This ambiguity is noteworthy, because one well-attested way of distinguishing law from ethics – and indeed what is often at stake in doing so – is to claim that law (or positive law) refers to a particular people, while ethics (or natural law) is universalizable. Hence, to move from law to ethics in this case is to move from Judaism to all the nations, without any clear sense of how to move back. On this reading, what is happening with the reduction is that the yoke of the law given to Moses is instantly relieved by David – law is *translated* into ethics without remainder – and from then on it is a matter of acquiring a list of qualities (uprightness, honesty, integrity, goodheartedness, humility, and so on) rather than obeying a set of prescriptions. Alternatively, one could read the translation as internal to law itself – what is translated is not law *into* ethics, but legal prescriptions into legal norms and maxims. In this latter version, one moves from law as commandment to ethics as one might move from the US Constitution to its Bill of Rights (amendments), a movement of greater generality within a single class. It follows that there would still be a need to ask how one moves back – that is, how one holds together the ultra-general with the ultra-specific – but this is presumably far less strenuous than trying to retrieve the law having moved in a unidirectional flight away from it.

These are two of many interpretations possible, but they do capture a tension that the passage makes no effort to hide (see Novak 1998). It almost seems to dare the reader to take the antinomian way out, declaring that since faith and righteousness are what the commandments *amount to*, they themselves are not necessary. But the passage evinces no particular concern about this conclusion, and it would be left to later rabbis and philosophers to close off this option. On its face, there is no compelling reason to read it in an antinomian way, no reason to agonize about whether ethics goes further than or takes one away from the law, or whether one of them translates or interprets the other out of existence, or into existence, or neither. We have Moses and we have Amos and Habakkuk, and everything in between, and it is all as "R. Simlai said." The law can be reduced to ethics, and, one gets the sense, ethics can be reduced to law (or would one speak of reconstitution here?), and this is as it should be.

But, of course, Jews *have* agonized. One could even say that the history of Jewish ethics just is this agonizing. In part this is due to the proximity of Christianity through the ages, and its claim to "fulfill" the law through ethics (see Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:31). If Judaism, then, is going to have an "ethics," it cannot be sovereign; it cannot lead away, but must in fact lead back to the law. With the advent of liberal Judaism and the philosophies of the Jewish enlightenment, this defensiveness was turned inward as Jewish defenders of the centrality of law battled those who pushed ethics – in the form of ethical monotheism – to the fore. In all cases there is this palpable anxiety concerning – in the language of our passage – the move from Moses to David, as if the movement is one of stepping off a cliff. Where is one going? How might one get back … to the law? For it *is* about law, as even R. Simlai knew – without it, there is no ethics. And it *is*, equally, about ethics, as R. Simlai knew – without it, there is no law. I will come back to this point in due course. Let me turn now to the question of trajectories in Jewish ethics.

The Modern Challenge: Law to Ethics

The greatest challenge of thinking through trajectories in Jewish ethics is confronting the modern history of the term, which has tended to interpret the reduction in our passage literally – as an act of diminution. More precisely, law and ethics have been siphoned off as independently existing entities, with ethics emerging as the prime focus of philosophical energy. From Immanuel Kant, of course, we are bequeathed the notion that a true ethics is one that is independent of any modifier: there can be no "Jewish" ethics, just as there can be no "French" or "left-wing" or "feminist" ethics. From modern Judaism, and especially from Kant's strongest Jewish reader Hermann Cohen, we are bequeathed the contrary notion that ethics must be grounded in its sources, that is, it must emerge out of the reasoning of a people, community, set of texts, and life-world (see Cohen 1995). One hesitates to see this as a distinction between autonomy (independence, universality) and heteronomy (dependence, particularity), since to do so would seem already to grant to Kant the terms of the debate, and thus to privilege the autonomy he privileges, to the distinct disadvantage of Judaism (*pace* Cohen). But for modern readers, unlike for R. Simlai and his cohort, there may be no easy way to avoid the question that Kant raises for us, namely, how is Jewish ethics possible?

The question is not only whether Judaism (or any tradition) can count as generating a foundational ethics if it clings to the communal priority of its own members; the question is also can Judaism provide an ethics that is achievable? As Kant is wont to put it, human beings *ought* to be ethical, therefore they must be able to be (Kant 1960, 55). This simple statement is crucial for Kant because it rules out the classical project of *imitatio Dei*, the imitation of God that, according to the Jewish and Christian Bibles, was to constitute the highest human end. While the Christian story of the life of God in Jesus may have seemingly made this imitation more doable, the injunction comes from God's words to the Israelites in Leviticus 19:2: "You shall be holy [*kadosh*], for I, your God, am holy." Both Jews and Christians have had to struggle with this exhortation, for the narratives in which God acts in both traditions are various, complex, and sometimes contradictory. Kant wanted to do away with the uncertainty of this project altogether, though not with imitation per se. In his model, it is the moral human being I am to imitate in my conduct, and I need look no further for the model than my own heart. Prima facie this would seem to insist that insofar as Judaism has an "ethics," this ethics cannot be (solely) Jewish.

Of course, Kant is not the only thinker to dominate ethical reasoning in the modern world, and certainly the starkness of his ethics, and responses to this starkness, are attested elsewhere in Western philosophy. Indeed, the struggles over what counts as ethical in the West have historically tended to vacillate between satisfying the condition of universality as Kant understood it and attending to the particular details and priorities of a given situation or community – a given ethos. Yet Kant was enormously influential for modern Jewish philosophy, and more importantly, the particular problem he addressed is one that goes to the heart of the project of "reducing" Jewish ethics (Seeskin 2001). The question is not only the alternation of ethos versus universality. The question is whether Jewish ethics presents another case study in this same alternation, or does it add yet a third condition – the "religious" – that disturbs the relationship between human and human assumed both by ethics rooted in ethos and ethics as universality?

The provisional answer to this question has to be yes: Jewish ethics is religious ethics, and therefore presents to the Kantian position a particular kind of counterview. At the very least, and again, these

terms are Kant's, it involves the distinction between rooting the source of obligation in God and conceiving the end of ethics to culminate in God. Kant insisted on the propriety of the second as strongly as he took issue with the first. If God is the source, he reasoned, I am not solely the author of my own moral actions. It is not just that I would be acting morally *for* God but that my ability to act morally would be dependent on a being other than myself. For Kant, Jewish ethics is not possible because ethics just means independence and independent is the one thing the partners to a covenant with a law-giving God seem not to be (see Seeskin 2001, 233).

The question is, though: Is Kant's question – "How is Jewish ethics possible?" – a Jewish one? Need Jewish ethics respond to a critique that challenges its most foundational terms – that assails its right to reveal a uniquely Jewish contribution to the problems and challenges that beset the achievement of moral aims and conduct? In asking, moreover, whether Kant's question is Jewish – more specifically, whether it can be justified in Jewish terms and/or whether Jews do or should ask it – a second series of questions seems also to come to the fore. What is modern about Jewish ethics? How has modernity impacted ethical reasoning in Judaism and how has Judaism impacted ethical reasoning in modernity? This connection between Kant, Judaism, and modernity was suggested historically by the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendlessohn, whose final Jewish work, *Jerusalem*, contended (in so many words) that Kant's universalism posed no problem at all for Judaism. Jews, like all other rational beings, were able to attain the knowledge of universal truths (such as the moral law) irrespective of tradition, while tradition, in the form of a revealed law, could give sustenance to Jews on their path towards holiness (Mendelssohn 1983, 126–139). In his own way Mendelssohn dismissed the possibility of religious ethics altogether by making religion and ethics part of distinct and irreconcilable conceptual planes.

Contemporary Options?

For Jewish ethics, then, Kant presents a singular challenge, even for those thinkers who *mutatis mutandis* aligned themselves with his worldview. The thinkers most committed to retrieving Jewish ethics from the narrowness of the modern debates initiated by Mendelssohn and Kant have been those who refuse the Kantian question altogether. For Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas, the question of the nature of *Jewish* ethics is not even asked. What they both ask is, simply, what is ethical? What does the ethical demand of me now and what will it demand of me tomorrow? Both draw freely on classical Jewish sources, but neither could be said to be reasoning *out of* these sources in the way that Hermann Cohen is. For the Buber of the classic work *I and Thou*, "in the beginning is relation," a "wholeness," he says, in which "persons are still embedded like reliefs without achieving the fully rounded independence of nouns and pronouns. What counts is not these products of analysis and reflection but the genuine original unity, the lived relationship" (Buber 1970, 69–70). Levinas expresses something similar in the dense knots of his *Totality and Infinity* (1961) when he speaks of the ethical (which one accesses as metaphysics) as the foundation of existence: "Meta-physics, transcendence, the welcoming of the other by the same, of the Other by me, is concretely produced as the calling into question of the same by the other, that is, as the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge" (1961, 43). At the heart of these works is a conception of ethics as "first philosophy," as the groundwork, the primordial place of origin, out of which all human possibility, as well as corruption, emerges

(Levinas 1989). Both thinkers also have their "Jewish" works in which they grapple explicitly with concepts like covenant, revelation, tradition, law, and text (see Buber 1967; Levinas 1990a, 1990b, 1994). But their commitment to an ethical refashioning of philosophy is what each most contributes to modern thought. In a curious way, it could be said that in refusing the Kantian question, each is following Kant in his insistence that ethics not be hyphenated. Their Judaism can be seen to impact their thinking in the same way that Kant's Protestant Christianity impacted his, providing simply a vocabulary, a set of values, a vernacular.

But something plagues these Jewish standpoints (beyond the charge that they are not Jewish enough), as it plagued Kant. The translation of law into ethics – or ethics into law – still sees the ethical as something to be retrieved, something disconnected from the ordinary, even (or precisely) as it is placed at the center of thinking. "When man truly approaches the Other," Levinas writes, "he is uprooted from history" (1961, 52). There is a flavor of overcompensation here, as if "otherness" can coexist with "history" only by (provisionally) banishing it. Like the distinctions between ethics and law, or even Athens and Jerusalem, Greek and Jew, German and Jew, there is the sense that in modernity the terms are straining away from each other at the very moment of contact (see Derrida 2002). The very locution "religious ethics" seems unconsciously to reflect this strain, glossing over these uncomfortable pairs in a breezy hybrid.

When the question is asked how modernity has impacted Judaism and Judaism modernity, it is with these uneasy distinctions that one must wrestle. It is these distinctions that most envelope the Jew in the modern and the modern in the Jew. In the modernity of Mendelssohn and his heirs, these distinctions between Judaism and its others and within Judaism itself become uncoupled and strange, calling not for "reduction" in Rav Simlai's sense but rather for redress, mediation, therapy.

Yet if modernity is a problem for Judaism because law and ethics are seen to have radically distinct spheres, this is surely the flip side of medieval Jewish philosophy and its classical Greek sources, where the thrust was to domesticate dualities in one of two ways: either via Aristotle, according to whom one thing cannot at once be itself and something else, or Plato, according to whom difference is ultimately (from the perspective of the one) illusory. The first asserts that thinking about difference is thinking about contradiction and incommensurability; the second that it is about shadows and appearances. In deducing that Jewish dualities were threatening, modern thinkers were doing nothing less than following out the conceptual trajectory laid down by Maimonides, whose philosophical work displays both the Platonic and the Aristotelian impulses. What emerges from Maimonides is the ultimate identity of a purified ethics and the laws of God, without giving up the notion that they are contradictory kinds of things (1972, 379–380). Indeed, this topos is the Christian medieval anxiety in a nutshell: theology and philosophy can be harmonized only if it is absolutely clear that they are incommensurate. Is it Kant who troubles this Maimonidean serenity? Certainly, the Maimonidean legacy was precisely the circulation of a purified ethics as the *solution* to modern Judaism and its conceptual dilemmas. But in so doing, all modern Judaism did was to conceal the either/or of contradiction or illusion (identity) at the heart of medieval Jewish thinking.

Ethics is made therapeutic, serving to unify the Jew unhappily bifurcated between law and ethics – ethics becomes the standard of both itself and the law. And the modern Jew is conceived as escaping, narrowly, the medieval mindset which would have forced a choice – Jew or modern – only by siphoning off the ethical as an end – or a beginning – in itself. How do we get around the violence ("war") that presents itself through the very "exercise of reason," Levinas asks at the beginning of *Totality and Infinity*? "A primordial and original relation with being is needed" that begins and ends with the face of the particular other,

beyond reason (1961, 21–22). This beautifully captures the ambiguity of the move from law to ethics in the passage from Makkot. What it does not reveal as clearly is the way back. For if what the law shows is that in the beginning was ethics, how will ethics itself account for the origin of law?

Ethics and Law

There is a temptation in modern Jewish ethics to conjure an eden, an original, "before the law," from which one would be protected from the constant, unremitting labor – the agon, as Gillian Rose often put it – of lawful resistance: to war, to injustice, to thoughtlessness. We moderns stumble over this eden precisely because it is so foreign to the ordinary terrain we walk on, where the distinctions between law and ethics seem to shift with ground under our feet. This eden is not, though, the fault of Kant, or "modernity," or even Buber and Levinas, who do, to be sure, romanticize the ethical moment. Indeed, what enables Rav Simlai to move (via reduction) from Moses to David is what Judaism *shares* with Kant, over against the Maimonidean (dis)union of ethics and law. For in Rav Simlai, as Kant and his Jewish inheritors, Buber and Levinas, struggle to embody, the insistence seems to be that there can be no bifurcation between law and ethics, just as there can be no identity between them. The one can be reduced to the other precisely because each is only true if contained, reductively, in the other; each can become the other *with remainder* … such that there can always be a movement back.

The difference between autonomy and heteronomy is not between ethics and law; the difference is between an ethics that struggles with law (a law that struggles with ethics) and one that seeks to bypass these struggles with recourse to a commanding source. It is possible to see this recourse as at the heart of Judaism; this has certainly been the Jewish argument with Kant, however much he is then rehabilitated. But it is also possible to see that what Kant insisted upon was no different than what Rav Simlai teaches courtesy of David, Isaiah, Micah, Amos, and Habbakuk, namely that commandments must be founded upon righteousness, which lives in and through them, and that righteousness is, above all, law. That those commandments were "given" to Moses makes hardly more difference than the moral law being "given" to humanity from who knows where (Kant 1993). The point in both cases is the same, namely that ethics is sorted out in the law of interpretation and the interpretation of law. One could say that the maxim "the righteous shall live by their faith" is commanded 613 times so that those who miss it the first time can still learn how to live by it.

Contemporary Jews stumble, perhaps, over what Rav Simlai passes over gracefully because unlike him, we have learned to see this struggle as a problem to be concluded. We have learned to feel anxious about whether we have the resources to wage a battle for the ethical in the heart of the struggle between commandment and freedom. It is not that the grace of the rabbis was subsequently broken by modernity. Even Rav Simlai appears to know that the "reduction" involves breakage, if only through the language of *he'emidan*. Perhaps this breakage and its constant repair is from a Jewish perspective the human task *par excellence*. Certainly, it is just as possible to see the rabbis as moderns solving an age-old problem as it is to see them as ancients hauled in to respond to a specifically modern problem. What they see for us, with us, is that ethics cannot be hyphenated, except by the laws (whosever they happen to be) that are its eternal partner. The question, then, "How is Jewish ethics possible?" is not just Kant's question. It is a question Judaism asks from the beginning; a question that shows us the way back to the law even as it makes the way itself the point.

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2 Christianity

CHAPTER 62

Christian Ethics?

Gene Outka

The Question of Appropriateness

Does Western discourse about "ethics" afford an appropriate way to think about the moral life of Christianity? On one highly general but non-trivial level, let us stipulate that "ethics," Christian, Western, and otherwise, is self-conscious inquiry into a human activity as common as cooking or doing sums. This activity is *judging* (e.g. that certain kinds of actions are right or wrong, that certain kinds of character are good or bad). "Ethics" examines everyday normative judgments concerned with human actions, character, and social arrangements; in short, with the "guidance of life." It reflects upon, theorizes about these; it describes, analyzes, and assesses them.

Although the activity is common, two considerations suggest complexity and ambiguity. First, when we consider actual moral judgments across centuries and regions, we find differences, disagreements, and clashes, together with similarities, agreements, and overlaps. Often conflicting judgments are not provisionally held. Adherents within many traditions who are committed to certain judgments do not look tolerantly on the positions of those in the same or other traditions who disagree. Yet their efforts to persuade may fail. Moreover, each tradition may explain disagreements differently.

Second, religious traditions bring distinctive commitments and conflicts, including the multiple "sources" employed in reaching judgments. Christians take two sources as basic to their own identity. One is the Bible, which retains indispensable, nontransferable authority. References to the biblical God may then reverberate in various judgments. The other is tradition, which makes attention to the institutional church also indispensable. With Western thinkers, Christians employ three other sources: practical reason, experience (including emotions and desires), and human learning (in both the sciences and humanities).

Christians bring this combination of sources to every culture in which they find themselves. Yet Western discourse presents peculiar challenges. It offers inquiries exceptional in variety and volume. Christians encounter diverse movements and figures (e.g. Platonic, Aristotelian, Kantian, Hegelian, utilitarian, and feminist). And Christians must make their way among elaborate disputes on all manner of ethical subjects; for example, how to regard distinguishable domains (actions, consequences, virtues, and motives), divergent normative theories (deontological and consequentialist), and rival estimates of status and justification (ethical relativism, ethical objectivism, "universalist" and "particularist" clams about morality).

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

From these preliminaries, we draw out three more determinate ways that Christians address the question of appropriateness.

First, how Christians employ the multiple sources to which they are committed characteristically generates a line of division between what we shall call *intramural* and *extramural* questions. Intramural questions assume that the Bible and tradition retain non-transferable authority for depicting the moral life of Christianity. The questions focus on action guidance within the church, on the manner of life that Christians enjoin on one another. Extramural questions shift attention to surrounding social worlds, including ethical and political standards, theories, and institutional arrangements, various forms of cultural life, and so on. These two sets of questions represent more than a convenient starting point for discussion; they indicate a permanent orientation. Christian ethics as self-conscious inquiry ordinarily distinguishes the two sets, though it includes asking how continuous or discontinuous the intramural and extramural are with one another. Answers to the latter influence estimates of appropriateness.

Second, many Christians themselves deliberate on whether they may cross the line between intramural and extramural in one significant way. They ask how far they may *vindicate* certain moral insights that arise outside their tradition and incorporate these into a depiction of the moral life that they themselves present as true. Here Christians feel the force of the question of appropriateness from the inside. They take over the question, and articulate certain types of answers to it.

Third, Christians also confront the question of appropriateness when they offer judgments on particular normative topics. One topic serves here as an extended illustration: the ethics of peace and war. We meet a central case where the Christian tradition's self-description is evident, and some of its own continuities of conflict are embodied. We further suggest how the line of division and the question of vindication described above affect the judgments made.

Let us now sketch these three determinate ways more fully.

Intramural and Extramural Questions: Christian Ethics as Self-Conscious Inquiry

First, we face intramural questions about the content of the manner of life displaying Christian convictions. What is discernibly Christian in such a life? Can Christians locate a pattern of discipleship for all centuries, or only changeable patterns for different centuries? If a single pattern perdures, how should we specify it? Does the pattern consist in attitudes and virtues only, or fixed sorts of behavior also? Can we find a key notion or category to which we might always appeal as we carry out the work of specification? How much homogeneity should the church demand in its common life? Are there lifestyles and values that it requires everyone to exemplify and uphold? Is a whole pattern of normative thought implied which we can trace and apply to issues left unaddressed?

Second, we face extramural questions about the moral and political values and institutional arrangements with which surrounding cultures confront the church. If we are in the church, which of these values and arrangements can we positively assimilate? Which may we indifferently leave alone? Which should we resist as incompatible? Should we specify a general strategy for the church's relation to the world? If so, should the strategy be communal withdrawal, qualified participation, or attempted dominance? Should the church proceed rather in a piecemeal or ad hoc way, confronting forms of daily life and various issues one by one?

Intramural questions often correlate with "thick" moralities (rich and detailed, for a particular community); extramural questions often correlate with "thin" moralities (minimal prohibitions of actions found to be destructive of the bonds of any human community). Finally, Christian versions of the contrast between thick and thin often correlate with a distinction between the Christian community, or the "religious–spiritual" government, on the one side, and the civil community, or the "civil–moral" government, on the other side. A shorthand referent is "the doctrine of the Two." This doctrine exerts enormous influence on Western ethics and politics. Insofar as the doctrine of the Two mandates divided loyalties and circumscribes the competence of the civil–moral government, it conflicts with totalizing schemes, both theocratic and secular (e.g. fascism and certain variants of Marxism). According to such schemes, one explicit worldview, one complete way of life, governing a whole society, culture, or civilization, should be singly promulgated, comprehensively preferred, and coercively enforced. To be sure, the doctrine of the Two is hospitable to a view of the church as a thick community (in this regard, the language of "religious–spiritual" should not obscure social and political dimensions). But partly because this thick community excludes a full range of coercive activities ("banning" and "excommunication" may occur, yet these do not rely necessarily on civic policing and "crime control"), it resists mandating a single society that intervenes and enforces coercively, from top to bottom.

How Far Should Christians Vindicate Moral Insights that Arise Outside?

Certain types of answers to this question that Christians give make their several estimates about appropriateness more precise. How many and which insights should be vindicated? Some Christians limit them to the Decalogue as prohibiting actions destructive of the bonds of any community. Other Christians put the question more ambitiously: Should Christians subscribe *qua* Christians to any comprehensive ethical scheme whose intelligibility is established and sustained *independently* of Christian convictions? We can link this question to the matter of "sources." Do some ethical schemes systematically subordinate the first two sources (the Bible and tradition) to a combination of the other three? Western discourse formidably advances a variety of such comprehensive ethical schemes. Practical reason (say) puts the ingredients of an ethical scheme in place and adjudicates. Christians give at least three answers to this ambitious version of the question of appropriateness (Outka 1996).

First, some reject the terms of subordination and deny that any such scheme contains positive insights that Christians should incorporate. Christian ethics depends on comprehensive convictions to which there is no universal epistemic access. It specifies behavioral thickness that is not generalizable to those outside. Between patterns inside and outside, normative discontinuities reign.

Second, some reject the terms of subordination, and are prepared at most to vindicate certain moral insights that arise outside, after they review, modify, and integrate them. Still, Christian ethics depends on comprehensive convictions, and these include a doctrine of creation that presents more than a morally structureless world. Appropriations should always bear the marks of particularist convictions. Christians should not commit themselves to justifying any part of their morality in terms that are wholly available to them before they encounter the Christological paradigm. Between patterns inside and outside, they find complex encounters, where normative continuities and discontinuities both obtain.

Third, some accept the terms of subordination with regard to morality, because what the Christological paradigm discloses is never at odds with what rational persons apprehend morally, when their practical reasoning is in good order. Alan Donagan accepts, for instance, the claim on behalf of a Kantian scheme that morality "does not presuppose the truth of the Christian faith, but is presupposed by it" (Donagan 1993, 54). A similar claim about what Christianity presupposes is sometimes made on behalf of the natural law and the cardinal virtues. To be sure, the Christological paradigm discloses more than this (e.g. about a relation to God). But again, what the paradigm discloses morally is continuous with what persons can apprehend when they do not fail as moral reasoners. When the paradigm tells them something that is morally incompatible with what they tell themselves, this is because they have in fact failed as reasoners, or have been corrupted by erroneous moral theories or deformed cultural practices.

We amplify as we turn to the ethics of peace and war.

The Status of Pacifism and the Just War: Interlocking Judgments

Christians elucidate and defend two stances, "pacifism" and the "just war." (We leave aside notions of the "holy war," or the "crusade," because so many Christians have progressively subjected them to critique, denying them the fixed place that the other two now occupy)

Pacifism covers several distinguishable views. Traditional pacifists judge that it is intrinsically wrong to participate *directly* in *killing* in *all* wars. "Abolitionists" dwell on war's palpable evils and believe that we may reasonably hope to eliminate it. "Non-violent resisters" actively oppose evil and seek effective non-violent means to pursue justice. Evangelical Anabaptists and Quakers exemplify pacifist views (Yoder 1992).

Evangelical Anabaptists press normative differences between intramural and extramural ways of life. Regarding the former, they claim that Christians identify a pattern of discipleship for all centuries, not changeable patterns for different centuries. The pattern depends on historically particular events, yet is not itself historically variable. It seeks to imitate Christ, and dwells on specific exhortations such as the Sermon on the Mount and on crucifixion. The New Testament teaches what characteristic attitudes and virtues and fixed sorts of behavior discipleship requires. Pacifism is not only an acceptable stance; it is the only acceptable stance.

Extramural questions receive these replies. We leave the sword alone both in our church life and in our relations to neighbors outside the church, and so witness *consistently*. Whether the church should follow a general strategy of communal withdrawal or qualified participation is a question on which Christian pacifists differ. Quakers discriminate among the uses of force. They accept policing but disallow soldiering. In some measure, they seek "peace through politics." For them, the civil–moral government presents constructive as well as destructive possibilities.

Just war doctrine stems from the Christian tradition as well, though secular sources play important roles too (e.g. the chivalric code of the knightly class and the *jus gentium*). The doctrine's roots go back to Augustine, but its classic form appears at the end of the Middle Ages. Later, it receives articulation in secular international law (Johnson 1975). It interacts with Western discourse about ethics and politics in extensive ways. Indeed, it serves increasingly in certain societies as a normative point of reference.

We may plot responses to intramural and extramural questions within the Augustinian legacy as follows. Christians identify a pattern of discipleship for all centuries, and appeal not only to the Sermon

on the Mount and to the crucifixion, but also to the double love commandment, to justice, and to the Decalogue, among other things. Love for God and love of neighbor predominate. Augustine lauds peace as a richly active condition. Yet to regard pacifism as the only acceptable stance for Christians leaves innocent neighbors at the mercy of the unscrupulous. This prospect offends against care for the needy that Jesus enjoins. Discipleship requires a comprehensive depiction where love rather than non-violence per se integrates its myriad commitments. The depiction further requires that we attend to creation, human sinfulness, and eschatology, together with Christology and ecclesiology.

Extramural questions receive these replies. As we extend care, we meet social worlds where injustice and brutality call for judgments that are both diminishing to weigh and unloving to ignore. One such judgment is that it can be loving for societal representatives to intervene, in order to enforce the prohibition against murder. The estimate is that more, not fewer, benefits accrue from organized efforts of the civil community to restrain unjust coercion by counter-coercion. Such counter-coercion need not be sheerly arbitrary, although it is permanently corruptible. Policing and soldiering as vocations in civil society deserve better than to be condemned or placed outside the sphere of what Christians might do.

These replies to extramural questions lead us neither to equate policing and soldiering nor to separate them entirely. Both are sad necessities. Yet policing is liable to a greater measure of public oversight. To bring soldiering under moral evaluation, we look to the just war doctrine, and uphold both parts of its distinction between *jus ad bellum* (criteria for limiting resort *to* war) and *jus in bello* (criteria governing just conduct *in* war).

Alliance and Misalliance with Ethics

Christian defenders of pacifism and the just war find different points of alliance and misalliance with Western discourse. Christian pacifists sometimes appeal to "all persons of good will" to banish war's horrors. The timbre of these appeals is "universalist." They are justified without necessary recourse to particular beliefs and practices. More frequently, however, Christian pacifists find "particularist" accounts of morality more appropriate. They embrace historically oriented moral philosophy that views traditions and local cultural agreements as not accidental but essential to moral knowledge. They may also invoke "postmodern" critiques of "universalist" moral schemes. Here they purport to "unmask" legitimations of violence and domination that universalist schemes simultaneously hide from view and perpetuate.

Some Christian defenders of just war seek to address two overlapping audiences, one that is Christian and another that is wider. Their defense stems overall from particularist Christian warrants; for example, the way Augustine in some cases extends charity to a mournful acceptance of force. Yet they also hold that their verdicts do not confront a structureless moral world where every normative appeal is exhaustively subject to historical variation and cultural change. Hence a second audience can come into view. Its members need not formulate just war teachings out of their own resources. But they may find them intelligible following exposure, and come to make them their own.

Other Christian defenders of just war articulate a natural law theory that is "logically independent" of Christian convictions (Finnis 1996). They present the basic tenets of just war as binding on all persons of good will. These tenets map the moral landscape of war for good. Christian convictions that increase

awareness are not at odds with what we apprehend morally as rational persons. Teachings on just war are permanently valid, though we must combat moral blindness.

While Christianity is emphatically a world religion, its long history in the West requires continued engagement here as well as elsewhere, and renewed attempts to make the most of interactions already bequeathed. We have seen that no single answer to the question of appropriateness persuades all Christians, but that certain considerations lend structure to their several answers. One is a recurrent line of division between intramural and extramural questions. Another is a series of answers to the question of vindicating moral insights that arise outside the tradition, where the matter of appropriateness is felt from the inside. Still another is where Christians face their own continuities of conflict (e.g. the ethics of peace and war). Christians address this conflict by referring to the line of division, and by choosing parts of Western discourse that ally themselves most closely with what defenders of pacifism and just war each extol. The balance of views canvassed here suggests that for the moral life of Christianity to retain its own identity, Christians should at the end of the day keep their own counsels about everything, including Western discourse.

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CHAPTER 63

Origins of Christian Ethics

Jef Van Gerwen†

It may be useful at the outset to clarify a number of issues that are related to early Christian ethics, so that we get a distinct picture of the typical limits and characteristics of the subject.

First, this study is not limited to the moral teaching of Jesus of Nazareth or to New Testament ethics. It covers the debates and texts on Christian morality during the entire period of late antiquity from the first to the fifth century CE. This larger scope opens some interesting perspectives for interpretation, since it does not only focus on the founders of this tradition, but also on the enculturation of Christianity outside its original Jewish setting. Christians gradually integrated elements of Greek, Roman, and other Mediterranean cultures into their ethical codes of conduct as the Christian message spreads far beyond the limits of the Holy Land.

Second, ethics for early Christians was a matter of attitudes or habits, rather than just rules and commandments. Although the Jewish Law (especially the Ten Commandments) played a central role in it, Christian morality was primarily based on the practice of a number of virtues, such as love, hope, justice, forgiveness, and patience. Consequently, it was committed to fight vices such as hate, envy, lust, sloth, and anger. Early Christian ethics resembles more closely other antique schools of ethics, such as Aristotelianism or Stoicism, than our modern Kantian and utilitarian paradigms.

Third, our present knowledge of early Christian ethics is biased because of the selection process to which the primary sources have been subjected throughout history. All the texts of early Christianity (called Patristic literature, or Patrology) have been transmitted to us mostly by monks. These members of religious orders tended to show more interest in the ascetical and mystical aspects of Christian life than in the urban and professional life of married lay Christians. As celibate males living in a patriarchal culture, their gender perspective was one-sided, to say the least. They were often involved in long disputes between heretic and orthodox movements within Christianity, and this may also have led them to exclude or to misrepresent a number of positions on doctrine and ethics.

New Testament Ethics

The ethical teaching of Jesus of Nazareth fits perfectly into the tradition of prophetic and early rabbinical representatives of Jewish ethics. In the line of the prophets, Jesus stresses the importance of the virtues of justice and mercy over the ritualistic ethics of purity and cult offerings that had been developed in the

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Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Jewish Law (the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy). In his interpretation of the Mosaic Law (Matthew 5–7) he focuses on the purity of intention of the agent, rather than on the mere act of trespassing a rule of law. The intentions of his followers are to be trained by the virtues of justice, humility, hope, patience, and forgiveness within the communal setting of the group of disciples. Their primary virtue is love, as God himself is love (1 John 4, 9). Christian love should not be identified with friendship or erotic passion, but rather with hospitality and attention to the needs of neighbors, especially strangers and the poor. This type of solidarity is suggested by the typical Christian term for love, which is charity (Latin: *caritas*; Greek: *agape*).

Jesus' moral teaching demonstrates a tendency towards ascetic radicalism, which was a typical corollary of the prevalent Messianic and eschatological expectations of his day. The Messiah is the "Anointed one," a righteous prophet-king who would restore Israel to its ideal state; "Christ" is the Greek synonym for Messiah. He proposed a radical ethic of pacifism, common property, voluntary celibacy, and renouncement of family ties, in order to prepare oneself for the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. In doing so, he followed an original course among other Jewish movements, dissociating himself from collaborators with the Roman occupying forces (Sadducees), from armed rebels (Sicarii, Zealots), as well as from more secluded desert communities (Essenes). Similarly, he did not comply with the popular image of the Messiah as a mighty military and religious leader, but rather chose to give a different meaning to Messianism by accepting the role of the humble and suffering servant of God (see Isaiah 53). After his death, when the end of times (and the related Second Coming of Christ) failed to occur as soon as the first generation of Christians had expected, the Christian movement needed to redefine its place in history and in society. This adaptation was already initiated in the New Testament letters of Paul and Peter, in which the believers are admonished to adopt a long-term perspective of the future, and to get settled as citizens and church members.

The New Testament, with its 27 different writings (including Gospels, Acts, Letters, and the book of Revelation), includes a plurality of ethical stances, rather than one uniform position. All New Testament authors, however, agree on the following main issues:

1 All moral commitments depend on a prior acceptance of God's redemptive coming into the world in Jesus of Nazareth. This affirmation of faith offers the foundation for any ethical orientation. As a consequence, ethics is understood as a way of imitating Christ, following the way of Jesus in daily practice.
2 The love of God and the love of neighbors are intimately linked in one commandment, which represents the core of Christian (and Jewish!) ethics (Mark 12:30–31).
3 The message of Jesus cannot be limited to a Jewish audience; it has a universal meaning. However, some authors, such as Paul and Luke, move further than others in directing the Christian message to non-Jewish followers.

The writings in the New Testament may present divergent ethical orientations on many other topics. This is the case, for example, with the relationship between faith and good works as a basis for the justification of the believers (the letters of Paul versus the letter of James or the gospel of John), or with the respect that is due to political authorities (Paul's letter to the Romans, ch. 13, versus Revelation, ch. 13).

Each of the four gospels also presents a particular perspective on Jesus' teaching, reflecting its specific social setting. The gospel according to Mark focuses on the ethics of discipleship, stressing the paradox of human fulfillment through a process of self-abnegation (the acceptance of the Cross). Matthew, writing for a community of Jewish Christians, offers the most thorough reinterpretation of the Jewish

Law as a code of righteousness. Luke pays attention to the ethics of riches and poverty, and to practices of healing and service to the needy. John's gospel is built on the opposition between the community of brotherly love of the faithful over against the evil nature of the outside world.

Apostolic Fathers

The texts of the New Testament were composed between 50 and 120 CE. As such they reflect the doctrinal and ethical attitudes of the first generations of Christians. Not all early Christian texts of that period were included in the biblical canon. A wide variety of non-biblical sources has been conserved, such as the Apostolic teachings, Gnostic literature, and Apologetics, that provide us with valuable information on the moral life of Christians in the first and second centuries.

Among the collection of Apostolic teachings, a most interesting source for ethical reflection is the Teaching of the Apostles (*Didache*), especially the teaching on the Two Ways (of life and death) that refers to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and to the lists of virtues in the letters of Paul (e.g. Galatians 5:19–22). The anonymous letter to Diognetus offers an excellent short treatise on Christian lifestyle written for a non-Christian audience. One may find a third type of approach in the Shepherd of Hermas, which represents a more rigoristic doctrine on sin and penance in a rich symbolic ("hermetic" = hard to disclose) language.

The moral teachings of the Apostolic Fathers move between two poles. On the one hand, they contain a faithful commentary to the canonical writings; on the other hand, they incline more or less to the doctrines of Gnosticism and rigorism that exerted a strong influence on the worldview of Greek-speaking Christians during the first two centuries CE. Gnosticism is a religious philosophy that is derived from neoplatonism, a rather popular philosophy in antique Mediterranean society. *Gnosis* means "knowledge," referring to a mystical type of insight into the world of eternal ideas. It is based on a dualistic view of reality: material reality is considered as inferior to the realm of ideas, and so is the human body with regard to the soul. The passions, such as erotic affection, anger or envy, are seen as sources of evil and corruption for the good life. Salvation is possible: a divine seed has been detached from the divine being by one of its aeons (higher spiritual beings, usually identified by Christian Gnostics with Christ as the preexisting Son of God). This spark of light has been introduced into the human body as a living soul, where it is held prisoner. By asceticism and spiritual growth, the soul will be set free and enabled to enter into communion with the divine mystery.

For most of its Christian adherents, the Gnostic movement called for a rigoristic ethics (Greek: *Encratism*, from the word *egkrateia*, temperance or continence), which moved beyond the ethical radicalism of Jesus and his disciples. Instead of an ethics in view of the imminent coming of the Kingdom, a permanent attitude of abstinence from sexual intercourse was considered a superior mode of conduct to married life. The use of cosmetics and the consumption of meat, wine, and other luxury goods are to be avoided, whereas practices of frequent fasting and of frugality are promoted. Many Christians opt for a solitary life in the desert, rather than pursuing their professional activities in an urban setting. As a consequence, a fundamental distinction appears between two classes of believers: the *gnoostikoi* (those who know, who strive after perfection) and the *koine pistis* (the ordinary believers). This distinction was institutionalized in the hierarchical structure of religious orders with the clergy over against the laity. The first group must follow a more radical ethics of the evangelical counsels (poverty or community of

goods, celibacy, and obedience to an abbot or bishop); the second group has to obey to the ethics of the mandates (i.e. the Ten Commandments). Gnostic sources include figures such as Marcion, Montanus, Tatian, Basilides, and Valentinus, and non-official gospels (called Apocrypha) such as the gospel of Thomas.

Starting from the second century, Christian intellectuals were also answering anti-Christian critiques coming from political and philosophical circles. The ethical critiques often focused on accusations of atheism, anthropophagy, and promiscuity. The issue of atheism was raised in relation to the official cult of the emperor as a sacred or divine ruler, to which Roman citizens owed a public display of loyalty. Christians were accused of forming a secret society with an attitude of disloyalty to the emperor and to the public order. They believed in one God, and failed to pay respect to the deities of other religions. The other accusations originated in misunderstandings concerning the rituals of the Eucharist and baptism. Outsiders supposed that the "eating of the body of Christ" included some form of cannibalism and human sacrifice, and that the baptism of adult people led to sexual promiscuity or orgiastic excesses. Christian authors such as Justinus Martyr (Apology), Athenagoras (A plea for the Christians), Clement of Alexandria (Christ the Educator; Can Rich Men Be Saved?), Irenaeus (Against Heresies) and Tertullian (Apologeticum; Treatises on Marriage; The Chaplet; Spectacles; On Idolatry) wrote a number of treatises to defend the position of Christians for a non-Christian public. The works of Clement and Origen had a strong influence on subsequent developments, because they were speaking as trained philosophers of the school of Alexandria. Their thoughts on the nature of evil and on anthropology provided the first systematic framework for Christian ethics, finding a third way between the rationalism of classic Platonism and the deterministic views of neoplatonism, with its Manicheistic and Gnostic overtones. They did so in stressing simultaneously the fundamental goodness and transcendence of God, the freedom of human beings (including responsibility for their wrongdoings) and the human need for divine grace.

Tertullian, born in Carthage as the son of a Roman centurion, presents another interesting source for ethics, because he comments on a number of concrete ethical cases, such as the participation of Christians in the public life of the empire, and the apparel of women. Generally speaking, Tertullian defends a rigoristic position. Christians should not bear arms as soldiers in the Roman army; neither should they accept administrative positions in the empire, nor assist in the spectacles of the amphitheater or the theater, because all these public activities are tainted by idolatry and the contempt for human life. Indeed, human sacrifices were not uncommon in theater plays and circus events. Women should show modesty in dress and behavior. Christian marriage is interpreted as an indissoluble and exclusive bond between husband and wife; sexual intercourse is justified for the cause of procreating offspring only, not for the sake of pleasure. On this last point, Christians tended to agree with the Stoic teachings of their era.

The Church Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries

The split between the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman empire also led to a growing divergence between the Eastern and Western Latin churches. Active centers of Latin Christianity were found in North Africa (Numidia), Italy, and Gaul; the major centers of Eastern Christianity were situated in Alexandria, Byzantium, Greece, and Cappadocia. During this period Christianity was slowly evolving

from a marginal social position as a semi-secret society, prone to persecution, towards an established religious institution. As the social position of Christians is rising, political leaders, including the emperors, start to take an active interest in church organization (e.g. the formulation of the common Symbolum of Faith by the Synods of Nicea (321) and Chalcedon (381), guaranteeing the unity of the church in the empire). In the domain of ethics, Christian positions were moving toward a less radical stand, especially in economic and political matters, as Christians start to take active responsibility in the public domain. This is demonstrated, for example, in the writings of Ambrose (Letters, On the Duties of the Clergy) and Augustine (*The City of God*). Examples of this shift toward an ethics of responsibility are the appearance of the just war theory and the deontology of public office.

With regard to the former issue, Christians had initially been defending a pacifist ethic: the believers could not use violence, and Christian converts had to leave the army. Gradually, however, Christians started to accept the right to defend oneself against an aggressor, especially in order to protect the weak; later, the right to legitimate self-defense was also accepted. As a result, Christian authors such as Augustine developed a theory of just war (see his Reply to Faustus the Manichean), in which the ethical criteria to start and continue armed struggle were strictly defined. Also in the realm of economic ethics, Christian communities had initially accepted a radical critique of wealth and private property, asking the believers to sell their possessions for the benefit of the poor, and to organize a system of common goods in the local church. At the end of the second century, Clement of Alexandria had already defended a more pragmatic position, in which the rich could be saved, not by actually distancing themselves from their wealth. Rather, they should manage their property in a spirit of inner detachment for the good of their households and the surrounding community. Eventually, this ethic of responsible management (or stewardship) became the dominant ethic for laypersons. Only monks were supposed to follow the more radical ethic of poverty and sharing of all goods within the monastic community.

These adaptations were stimulated to a great extent by the decline of the Roman empire in the West. As the public administration of the empire was crumbling under the weight of Germanic invasions, the church leaders took over more tasks that belonged to the public domain, ranging from schooling and transportation to public defense and administration. In order to do so, they needed a new type of political and economic ethics, taking into account the conditions of effective government. In the East, however, the Roman empire continued to function for several centuries. As a consequence, the Eastern churches were in a different position. On the one hand, they were used by emperors as an instrument for maintaining the unity of the empire, and are kept under the control of his political power. This led to a regime of "Caesaropapism," in which the emperor imposed himself as the effective head of the church. But on the other hand, several groups of believers, and especially the members of religious orders, maintained a critical distance and autonomy with regard to their political rulers. Such critical attitude can be observed, for example, in the Two Treatises against Julian the Emperor by Gregory of Nazianzus, and in the Twenty-One Homilies on the Statues of John Chrysostom. Other important authors in the Eastern empire are Basilius and Gregory of Nyssa. In the West, next to Ambrose and Augustine, one may consult the works of Lactantius (The Divine Institutes) and Prudentius (The Spiritual Combat) to get a good view on Christian virtue ethics in the fourth century.

In matters of sexual ethics, including marriage and celibacy, Christians changed their positions. The initial ideal to give equal consideration to men and women in Christian communities (cf. Paul's letter to the Galatians 3:28) was abandoned for a more traditional patriarchal conception of gender relations,

including a tendency towards misogyny. Typically, most fourth-century writings on the subject of women address the position of virgins as a model of Christian lifestyle and organization. Virgins and widows represented a socially vulnerable position in a patriarchal society, in need of social protection. By giving a specific status to virgins as a sort of precursor to female religious orders, the early Christians were pursuing a social aim (solidarity) as well as a gender (submission) and an ascetical (abstinence) agenda.

New ethical debates appeared in the context of church discipline. Church leaders (mostly bishops) not only faced persecutions and criticisms coming from outside, but also faced divisions within their churches on matters of doctrine and morality. Countless schisms and heretical movements flourished, as Christianity spread fast over the entire Roman empire (and even outside it, into Ethiopia and the Middle East). The church organization still remained decentralized. Ethical discipline was established gradually, for example through the initiative of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (The Lapsed, The Unity of the Christian Church) and by Zephirinus and Callistus, bishops of Rome. These bishops argued for a more lenient position against the rigoristic camp on the issue of penance and the forgiveness of sins. The crucial question they faced was the reacceptance into the church of "the fallen brothers and sisters" (i.e. those who had forsaken their faith during persecutions). The rigorists wanted to exclude those defectors permanently, since they had broken their faith commitment. The lenient party argued that Christians had to meet the gospel demand of forgiving sinners, and pleaded for a procedure of public penance (temporary exclusion from the liturgy, public confession) for those who had committed serious sins. Serious sins were considered to be homicide, adultery, and idolatry – the last sin included those who had left the church during persecutions. After fulfilling their penance requirement, they had to be readmitted into the communion of the church. Later, under the influence of the Irish monks, this practice of penance would develop into a ritual of private confession and moral counseling.

The experience of persecutions also led to the recognition of the importance of martyrdom, meaning public witness of the faithful, even if this would imply public execution and a violent death. These martyrs became the objects of public veneration, which evolved later into the popular practice of venerating local saints as role models of Christian life. The stories of martyrs and church founders provide an important source of narrative Christian ethics, not only in antiquity, but also during the Middle Ages. Interesting early examples are the *Life of Cyprian*, written by his deacon Pontius, the *Life of Macrina*, written by her brother Gregory of Nyssa, and the *Life of Anthony* by Athanasius of Alexandria.

Conclusion: Trends in Early Christian Ethics

The demarcation line between early Christian ethics and medieval ethics is not a clear one, even if one accepts the fall of the Western Roman empire (476 CE) as a major historical marker. The orientations that had been set in place by the authors of the fourth century continued to influence ethical thought and practice during the subsequent centuries: authors such as Boethius, Cassiodorus, Benedictus, and Isidorus continue to build on the tradition of antique Christianity. The same was true even to a greater extent in the Eastern empire, where the political regime remained intact. Nevertheless, the fourth century represents a clear demarcation line for sociological reasons: during that century, Christianity left behind its marginal status and become a major established religion in the Roman empire. Medieval society would be organized, indeed, around the dyadic structure of the "two kingdoms," one directed

toward the pursuit of temporary interests (the state, the empire) and another to eternal values (the church, the pope, and the bishops).

If one looks for a synthetic overview of this rather complex period, one should at least consider the following five major factors that have shaped early Christian ethics.

Eschatology and an Open-Ended Future

Christians regularly needed to adapt their views on time and history during this period. They started with the short-term perspective of eschatological literature, expecting the return of Christ and the Kingdom of God to come soon and to introduce the end of the known world. The death and resurrection of Jesus became indeed a symbolic turning point of history, but it did not immediately introduce the end of time or of this world. As a consequence, Christians had to resituate themselves with regard to a long-term and unknown future, learning to deal with the power structures of the present social order. This process ended with Augustine's *City of God*, in which even the fall of the Western Roman empire no longer foretold the end of time, but was accepted as a secular event. This process of reinterpretation relied on the neoplatonic scheme of a dualistic worldview, distinguishing clearly between heaven and earth, and between the heavenly and the earthly city. In the Jewish view of history, these two symbolic spheres had always remained united: the Kingdom of God was a transcendent reality, a gift of grace, but it had to be realized gradually within this world, and not referred to some afterlife outside the realm of human history. In Augustine's view, the distinction had become almost a separation. This reinterpretation also implied a more compromising attitude towards the logic of power and of the secular world. Christians have to avoid absolutizing the importance of the earthly city, but they can deal with it, rather than opting for a principled course of withdrawal.

Radicalism and Compromise

This second characteristic flows as a logical conclusion from the previous point. For historical as well as institutional reasons, early Christians came to accept a double strategy of church membership and ethics. On the one hand, they maintained a radical ethics for the clergy and the religious orders, which reflected more directly the ascetical demands of original Christianity as an other-worldly community, based on poverty, celibacy, discipleship, non-violence, and strict obedience to a spiritual leader. On the other hand, they developed an ethics of lay Christians, of soldiers, traders, and married couples, living in households that from an outside perspective could barely be distinguished from non-Christian households. Lay Christians followed an ethics of compromise with the existing world, while holding fast to the Ten Commandments and to the central virtues of love, justice, and forgiveness as beacons for Christian life. This double strategy produced great results in the organization of Christian hospitality, schooling, political order, and economic stewardship. It proved to be better adapted to the use of power and of institutional government than the prophetic ethic of the founders of Christianity. By accepting such adaptations, the church tried to find a middle ground between faithfulness to its origins and the necessity to adapt to the new era. But the tension between the two types of ethics remained present in subsequent church history, and the ethics of compromise would regularly be put to the test by new movements of radical reform.

Jewish and Non-Jewish Cultural Contexts

The Jewish people inherited a rich tradition of Semitic culture, with its roots in Egyptian and Mesopotamian societies. Christianity emerged within this same environment, but soon had to translate its message into a variety of other cultures, such as Greek, Roman, Celtic, and Germanic settings. This transfer posed a formidable challenge to Christian philosophers, missionaries, and teachers alike, which they met with considerable creativity and inspiration. Nevertheless, some crucial insights of Jewish thought may have been lost in the process, and this had a far reaching effect on the future of Christian doctrine and ethics. The concept of God among the Jews and Greeks, for instance, was not an identical one. Jews tended to stress the intersubjective and intrahistorical qualities of Yahweh, who is a God of a concrete people, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Most Greek philosophers, on the contrary, represented God as an absolute and unchangeable being, functioning as the cornerstone of the universe. Many ethical differences follow from this fundamental distinction. The Greek belief in the eternal existence of the soul may not have the same meaning as the Jewish concept of the resurrection of the body; Greek concepts of virtue (prudence, justice, magnanimity) do not find their counterpart in Jewish virtue ethics, or have different connotations. The Greeks had different ideas on the reality of radical evil, and on the role of the human will and conscience, than those that were implied in the Jewish concepts of freedom, guilt, and redemption. And last but not least, the sexual and gender ethics of the Gnostics, Stoics, and neoplatonists had a long-lasting effect on later Christian morality. Early Christians had no choice but to enculturate their faith in new settings, as they felt called to establish a worldwide, multicultural community of God. By doing so, they also wanted to express the correspondence of their faith with the insights of reason, and the universal significance of their vision. But from time to time, a call would be heard to "return to the (New Testamentic, Jewish) sources" once the enculturation process has gone astray.

Internal Pluralism, No Uniformity

The early church started as a multiform charismatic movement, not as a well-disciplined institution. Initially, the highest authority resided in the circle of the Twelve Apostles, but divergent attitudes between Greek and Jewish Christians emerged as soon as missionary efforts led to the establishment of various local Christian communities. Faced with an unending series of internal schisms and conflicts, the Christian churches made continuous attempts to maintain a unity of hearts and of faith, based on one canon of scripture, one creed, and on a vast communication network between local churches and their leaders. Nevertheless, efforts to maintain unity often failed, as doctrinal controversies, such as the one between rigorists and lenients, continued to divide the faithful. Also, in liturgical customs and in ethical practice, a great plurality could be observed from the start. Eventually, greater organizational uniformity was established, both under the influence of the bishops of major centers (Rome, Carthage, Byzantium, Alexandria) and because of political pressure by the emperors, who saw in the unity of the Christian church a means to reinforce the unity of the empire.

Ethics of Virtue

Early Christians all agreed that morality was a matter of training in the basic virtues, rather than just the application of a universal set of rules or rational principles. These approaches stress the particular features of moral education in a concrete sociohistorical community. Morality depends on the training of

character, and seeing and imitating concrete examples, such as Jesus Christ, the saints, or the ordinary faithful. This ethical approach is not contrary to reason. The insights of Greek philosophy and of Roman legal thought were also readily integrated into the Christian tradition. But the moral outlook of early Christians did not depend as exclusively on the role of reason and on the ideal of the self-sufficient individual as was usual within the rationalistic logic of Platonism or late Hellenistic thought.

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CHAPTER 64

Differentiation in Christian Ethics

Vigen Guroian

For the purposes of this entry, differentiation may be defined as the process of growth and diversification of ethical attitudes and judgments that results from the response of a religion to changing conditions of life. In this sense, differentiation inevitably is an accompaniment of history. Every religion, Christianity included, has a vital interest to ensure that moral beliefs and behaviors are consistent with a complex of convictions, rules, activities, and institutions that comprise the whole of the religion. Thus, differentiation, though it inevitably attends history, is never a neutral thing from the standpoint of a religion. For it can strengthen a religion or weaken it, measured by that religion's internal criteria of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Within Christianity, results of differentiation are judged good and creative or deleterious and destructive according to core beliefs about the character of God, nature and grace, human goodness and human sin, and valuations of the course of human history and God's purposes within it.

Though differentiation may be an inevitable concomitant of history, the Christian faith, by affirming divine and human freedom and rejecting fatalism and determinism, is bound to regard differentiation as something that can and ought to be controlled and directed. Of the three major traditions that comprise historic Christianity, Protestantism is decidedly the most "open" to differentiation. Protestantism seems highly fissiparous, producing a continuous stream of new denominations and sects. While this dynamism of Protestantism can reinvigorate ossified forms or help to shed old for new and suppler "skin," it also can weaken legitimate authority and threaten the essential unity of the church. Even the most free-spirited Protestant, who is thoughtful, will agree with more tradition-conscious Orthodox and Roman Catholic co-religionists that differentiation in ethics is almost always a two-edged sword.

This entry examines differentiation in Christian ethics that has defined the distinctive character of the three great Christian confessions: Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. First, however, it is important to take a look at another kind of differentiation that effects how Christian ethics is understood in relation to the faith as a whole and as an academic discipline. This concerns an ongoing debate, internal to the faith, over whether a distinction should be made between ethics and other dimensions and expressions of the Christian religion, and, if so, how sharply that distinction ought to be drawn.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Differentiation of Ethics and Christian Life in Modern Thought

Since the European Enlightenment there has been a strong impulse within some sectors of Christianity to treat ethics as a subject or discipline separate from other parts of Christian life, such as worship, sacraments, dogma, and pastoral practice. This impulse is closely associated with a debate over the so-called autonomy of ethics. Immanuel Kant defined the terms of this debate with his attempt to demonstrate that universalizable moral judgments are grounded in practical reason and cannot be derived from or verified by religious beliefs and practices. Kant's analysis has heavily influenced modern Protestant ethics and to a lesser degree Roman Catholic ethics. Each in its own fashion has taken up the challenge to give a systematic account of Christian ethics and clearly establish its foundations either in reason, as Kant would have it, or faith, or both.

Until Kant, Protestantism did not strongly distinguish between ethics and theology or moral norms and ecclesial discipline, and ethics has continued to function within Protestant Christianity as a pedagogical tool (Gustafson 1978, 3–4). Much of Protestant ethics has been built upon the dual concepts of law and gospel as elaborated by both Luther (1483–1546) and Calvin (1509–1564). Within that vision, biblical law plays a role in Christian ethics insofar as it exposes the fallen and sinful character of human existence and leads the repentant sinner to Christ. Calvin describes a third use of the law as a teacher to spur Christians "to learn what that will of God is which they aspire to follow" (*Institutes* 2.7.12). Both Luther and Calvin agree, however, that the law compels and convicts, whereas the gospel of love is a gift of justification, forgiveness, and salvation. The gospel of love is the good news ("gospel") of the release of sinful humanity from the condemnation of the law that Jesus Christ has accomplished by his own willing and pure sacrifice on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Jesus summed up the ethical heart of the gospel of love as love of God and love of neighbor as oneself and promised that those who live by this double commandment will inherit the Kingdom of God (Mark 12:29–30, 34). Under Kant's influence, Protestant ethicists have endeavored to found this rule in practical reason or the rational will, giving it a formal claim to universality that does not need to be secured in a particular religious vision of the ultimate good.

From early on, Roman Catholic moral theology was closely allied with canon law. The medieval canon lawyers mastered the art of moral casuistry and made it useful to priestly confessors, in whose hands Catholic moral theology was applied to daily living. Under these conditions, Catholic moral theology assumed a distinctively juridical character tied closely to church order and penitential practices. Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274) expounded a Christian natural law ethics in detail. Aquinas drew from Aristotle (388–322 BCE) for his ethical theory and relied upon St. Augustine (354–430) for theological muscle. The main idea in Catholic natural law theory is that by creating human persons as rational beings God has built into them – into human nature itself – a capacity for discerning the divine law, whether they immediately recognize it as such or not (see Rom. 2:14–15). As propounded by Aquinas, natural law morality is theonomous. It is a mode of participation in the divine law that leads to mystical communion with God. Morality is tied closely to prayer, the sacraments, blessing, and doxology. Over time, however, especially as impacted by the Renaissance and Enlightenment, proponents of natural law commenced upon a project to stand natural law on its own. Similar to the attempts of some modern Protestant ethicists to ground the law of love in a doctrine of man and only secondarily a doctrine of God, some modern Catholic theorists have argued that natural law is a rational standard of morality fixed in human nature. There it obtains an autonomous standing that makes it

accessible and knowable for all human beings. This has enabled contemporary Catholic theologians to argue that there is no fundamental difference between Christian ethics and all the rest of human morality (see Curran 1976).

Of the three major traditions of the Christian faith, Eastern Orthodoxy is least drawn to this modern project to ground, or "reground," Christian ethics in reason and/or nature with the goal of a universal morality that transcends religious boundaries. Orthodox theologians and ethicists have judged that these endeavors narrow the meaning and content of Christian ethics and the Christian faith as a whole. Eastern Orthodox writers have hesitated even to speak of Christian ethics as a separate discipline. As Stanley Harakas writes:

> For Orthodox Christianity, doctrine and ethics may be distinguished but they may never be separated. It is only the "division of labor" in which some theologians of the church turn their attention to things, which in the words of St. Athanasios, "make known the word concerning Christ, and the mystery regarding him," on the one hand, while other theologians concern themselves primarily with the Christian teaching, again in the words of St. Athanasios, whose intention is "to point to the correction of habits." (Harakas 1983, 1)

Orthodox theologians, however, are not the only ones that hold this view. Important contemporary Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians and ethicists have argued similarly against the autonomy of ethics and the assimilation of Christian ethics to a "cosmopolitan" ethics that substitutes formal rules and principles for religious teachings and norms.

In the ethics of the Eastern church, morality has to do principally with the goal of faith itself, the restoration of the image of God in human beings and their *theosis* or growth in holiness and god-likeness. Love is the "sacrament" or "medicine" that cures humanity's sinful and mortal condition and the energy that unites persons in communion with God. There is no room in this vision for the autonomy of ethics. Rather, ethics is a peculiarly human mode of apprehending and living the truth of existence. The twin ends of human morality are holiness and immortality. In the human person the ontological "is" posits a moral ought. God has implanted this ought in the human "heart" as an "inner" imperative, a "natural" dynamic principle of life (Guroian 2001, 21–22).

Orthodox Christianity has not elaborated a formal theory of natural law with a hierarchy of divine, natural, and civil law. Nor is the duality of law and gospel the fulcrum of its ethics. It does not draw the sharp distinction between nature and grace that is often entailed in natural law theory and also the law and gospel formula. Rather, the Incarnation demonstrates that the ontological gulf between God and creature may be bridged by love once sin is removed and death is overcome. Redemption is not merely a corrective or remedy for original sin. Just as important, it is the continuance of God's creative and perfecting action in the world. Its aim is that all creatures, but most especially the one whom God has created in his very own image, be drawn into an evermore intimate communion with God's Triune Being.

According to this view, Christian ethics is Christocentric and theocentric. It depends upon conversion (*metanoia*) and faith in the truth of salvation and eternal life revealed fully by God in Jesus Christ. The Christian is made a new creature by baptism, as he or she is transformed and renewed in mind and heart. This is not merely metaphor: it is sacramentally and ontologically real and actual. The Christian yearns for God and his Kingdom. She is moved to deeds of love from the gratitude she has for what God has done for her and for his abundant grace that transforms her from within and assimilates her into the

divine life. It is in this sense that Christian ethics is singular if not, in fact, *sui generis*. The ascetic and mystic Pseudo-Macarius (fourth to fifth centuries) sums up this Orthodox stance. He admonishes and corrects Christians of his own day who believe that whatever differences there are between Christians in their belief and behavior and others are merely matters of form or externals. Although "many Christians believe the difference does lie in some eternal sign ... it is through the renewing of the mind and the tranquility experienced in our thoughts and the love of God and love of heavenly things that every new creation of Christians distinguishes them from the men of this world. For this reason did the Lord come" (Maloney 1992, 64–5, homily 5:4–5).

The modern project to establish the autonomy of ethics – or at least a basis for Christian ethics that ensures it is fully accessible even to non-Christians – reflects a broader concern shared by contemporary religious and secular people alike to identify universal norms of conduct that might be employed to address and negotiate a vast array of moral issues and problems confronting pluralistic modern societies. Such issues and problems include biotechnology, environment, poverty, weaponry, wars of insurgency, and international law. This modern project may be judged foolish or wise from the standpoint of Christian faith. But there is no doubt that it is an instance and example of differentiation in Christian ethics.

Differentiation and the Beginnings of Christian Ethics

The lodestar of all Christian ethics is the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. His story is told by the gospels and explicitly applied to Christian living and the church's mission by the Pauline, Johannine, and other epistles of the New Testament. Early Christianity turns to the entirety of scripture, both Old and New Testaments, as the source of moral guidance and help with judgments and decisions about behavior befitting the saints. Late first- and second-century apostolic writers, such as the author of the "Didache," Clement of Rome, and Ignatius of Antioch, describe a new life in Christ embarked upon through baptism and repentance, nourished by Eucharistic worship, and perfected by the Spirit in the communion of the saints. The book of Acts reports that on Pentecost many to whom Peter preached in Jerusalem were "cut to the heart" and repented, being "baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" and received "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37, 39). After their repentance and baptisms these new Christians "devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers (Acts 2:42). In like manner, St. Paul instructs the Christian community in Rome to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship," adding: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1–2).

The early Church Fathers and Mothers conceive of ethics as integral to the whole of the Christian religion. For example, 1 Clement, a late first-century apostolic letter written from Rome to the church of Corinth, assumes that Christian prayer, doxology, and good works are interwoven, framed by the eschatological hope for the full and final advent of the Kingdom of God:

> The good workman receives the bread of this labor with boldness; the lazy and careless cannot look his employer in the face. Therefore we must be prompt in well-doing, for all things are from him [Christ]. For he warns us: "Behold the Lord cometh, and his reward is before his face to pay each according to his work. He exhorts us therefore if we believe in him with our whole heart not

> to be lazy or careless in every good work." Let our glorying and confidence be in him; let us be subject to his will; let us consider the whole multitude of his angels, how they stand ready and minister to his will. For the Scripture says, "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood by him, and thousand thousands ministered to him, and they cried Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Sabbaoth, the whole creation is full of thy glory." Therefore, we too must gather together with concord in our conscience and cry earnestly to him, as it were with one mouth, that we may share in his great and glorious promises. (Lake 1998, 1 Clement 34)

The early church did not invent its ethics out of whole cloth or from within a hermetically sealed community. In his parenetic admonitions and advice on right and appropriate Christian conduct, St. Paul sets the pattern and tone for relations with the secular order. He and his immediate followers in the apostolic age are influenced by a variety of "external" sources and pressures. First, they are indebted to the ethical thought of Judaism in the Hebrew scriptures, although they interpret it strictly in light of the Christ event. Second, they seek and find analogies for their ethical reasoning in Stoicism and Platonism. For example, Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254), Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 330–ca. 395), Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339–97), John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407), and Augustine of Hippo (354–430) employ "the early ethical terminology of the philosophers but also" assimilate into their Christian ethics "the philosophical ideal of a practice of virtue that led to fellowship with, and likeness to, the Divine" (Norris 1986, 453).

Our contemporary debate about the autonomy of ethics, along with the issue of whether or not there is a singularly distinct or *sui generis* Christian ethics, genuinely would have puzzled these early Christian writers. While the ethics of Christians certainly could overlap with pagan and philosophical ethics, they thought that salvation in Jesus Christ is an objective fact that transforms human ethics just as it transforms human life.

Differentiations in Premodern Christian Ethics

If we apply the concept of differentiation to premodern Christian ethics, what comes immediately into view is, of course, the major division of world Christianity into Eastern and Western, and subsequently Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches. Just as these major divisions of the Christian church reflect real differences in worship and doctrine, so too, as we have begun to see, they express and embody differences of ethical content and vision. Nevertheless, in their classical and magisterial forms, all three of these traditions hold together the relationship of ethics with worship and dogma. This distinguishes the classical phase of differentiation from differentiation that has happened in contemporary Christian ethics. In their classical forms, Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism (Lutheran and Reformed) are quite conscious that Christian ethics originates in baptism – that, in other words, Christian ethics is simply inconceivable apart from conversion and the freely given grace of God – and is oriented toward salvation and eternal life.

The remainder of this entry explores more deeply this classic differentiation in Christian ethics through an examination of two subjects with which Christians have wrestled from the very start. The first is the nature and purposes of Christian marriage and family and the second is church and state relations. These two issues are connected in at least two important ways. First, both draw upon and ground

themselves in the Christian understanding of the human person as a social being created in the image of a triune and personal God. Second, whereas the first concerns the microcosm of Christian life and morality, the latter addresses the macrocosm of church and world. Over time, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant responses to these issues have assumed quite different forms from within a broadly shared faith.

Before beginning a discussion of these two issues in which differentiation marks off the three great Christian confessions, another type of differentiation has to be mentioned, although there is not room here to discuss it. In addition to differentiation that follows the threefold division of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant, historically there occurs also differentiation that stretches *across* classical confessional boundaries. One example is Luther's redefinition (as I mention below) of marriage that rejects Roman Catholicism's sacramental and contractual interest in that institution, yet draws nearer to the Orthodox vision of marriage as a churchly vocation.

Marriage

Questions about the moral dimensions of marriage arise early in the history of the Christian faith. For Christianity, the state of marriage presupposes also the valid choice of singleness. St. Paul sets down the terms for a debate in the Patristic era and Middle Ages over the relative good of each of these ways of life. He favors a life of singleness and continence over the married state (1 Cor. 7:25ff.). A variety of factors influence his opinion. The most noteworthy is Paul's evident expectation that the *parousia* is imminent and that therefore marriage may detract from preparation for that event. Gnosticism and other currents of extreme asceticism deprecating the human body and sexuality, some condemning marriage outright, also challenge the church. Paul is aware of these also and rejects them. Thus, even as he favors singleness, Paul affirms the goodness of the body and the psychosomatic wholeness of the human person. He therefore commends marriage "in the Lord" as a legitimate way of life for Christians who cannot or do not want to remain single and celibate.

By the middle of the second century, important writers launch a strong defense of marital monogamy as a valid arena for Christian askesis and sanctification. Celibacy and singleness certainly remain serious options, as witnessed by the rapid spread of Christian monasticism from the third century forward. Indeed, the medieval Roman Catholic Church propounds a formal teaching that elevates celibacy above marriage as morally and spiritually superior. It interprets the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount as marking off two distinct paths or "tracks" for Christians. For those who choose a "religious" vocation, the beatitudes are strict counsels of perfection, whereas for lay and married persons the beatitudes may be received merely as general precepts for moral guidance. Not until Vatican II (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50) does the Catholic church officially revise this teaching and declare that religious and lay life are equally valuable and honorable paths.

The Eastern church has left undecided which if any form of Christian living is the more perfect or honorable. It never has spoken officially of Christian ethics as on two tracks or as two-tiered. Early, there even arose strong voices in the East who insisted that marriage and not celibate life is the more difficult school of holiness. In the second century, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215) argues "true manhood is shown ... by him, I say, who in the midst of his solicitude for his family shows himself inseparable from the love of God and rises superior to every temptation which assails him through children and wife and servants and possessions." He "who has no family is in the most respects untried" (Meyendorff 1984, 95).

Some Eastern Patristic writers criticize those in the church who excuse laity from the highest standards of Christian morality and holiness. They argue that this teaching contradicts the Christian doctrine that God proffers salvation to all men and women. St. John Chrysostom states that it is unthinkable and absolutely inconsistent with God's love that the beatitudes do not apply to married people every bit as much as the monk. The beatitudes, he insists, should not be viewed as "spoken to solitaries only." For Christ himself "permitted marriage" and he would not have barred the way for the vast majority of humankind to enter the kingdom of heaven (Chrysostom 1890, 402, homily on Hebrews 7). There are, of course, some in the East, especially among the severe ascetics, who do insist that celibacy is a superior life. Nevertheless, the view of Clement and Chrysostom that marriage is no less high and demanding a vocation as monastic living retains a strong place in the Eastern tradition.

In Western Christianity, Martin Luther breathed new life into this vision of marriage as a high Christian calling. Like Chrysostom, Luther objects to a double-track Christian morality. He argues that this demotes the lives of the vast number of Christians to an inferior status unworthy of God's love or of human freedom and potential. Luther condemns celibacy and monasticism as well as the Catholic teaching of marriage as a sacrament. Protestantism, in general, comes to the view that marriage and its ethical core are summed up as a sacred partnership of male and female entered by *free consent* for the purposes of Christian living and family.

Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism have continued to teach that marriage is a sacrament that belongs to the church and is in its own right a vehicle of salvation. Despite a rich harvest during medieval times of profound mystical writings on the love of man and woman as metaphor and symbol of the soul's union with God and the church's marriage to Christ, Roman law made a distinct impact on the Catholic Church's interpretation of marriage. Roman legal tradition stipulated that the essence of marriage is in the free consent of the couple. The canon lawyers laid a heavy veneer of contractualism and legalism over the mystical and sacramental vision of marriage as conjugal union in Christ. In the East, the principle of free consent arrived late and never made the impact on its theology of marriage that it did on the Roman Catholic Church. Emphasis remained on the conjugal union as the heart of marriage. For example, in the Greek Orthodox version of the rite of holy matrimony there is no exchange of vows. In other Orthodox churches, these vows are added under Western influence.

In the Roman Catholic Church, a legalistc interpretation of marriage would obscure the deeper theological meaning of marriage as covenant and weaken the ancient ecclesial and soteriological, even eschatological, vision of marriage. In the East, the understanding of marriage as a "small church" and school of the virtues of the heavenly kingdom remained strong. St. John Chrysostom stands out as the great champion of this view of marriage. The goods of marriage are strictly the conjugal love, union, and procreation, in that order. The ultimate end of the sacrament of marriage is to render persons fit to inherit the Kingdom of God. Therefore, marriage requires a self-denying love that secures the union of the husband and wife in mutual self-giving and ensures the good upbringing of children. The crowning of the bride and groom in Orthodox weddings signifies not only that the marriage is a sacrament of the Kingdom but that in holy union the spouses put to death their selfish desires and bravely in humility endure whatever discomforts come along the way. The crowns, therefore, are not just the crowns of a king and queen but also crowns of martyrdom (i.e. a witness to holy and righteous living).

God holds parents responsible for disciplining and educating their children in virtue, not merely to make them good citizens but, first and most important, to make them saints. One's children are not only one's nearest neighbors; also, they are the weak and the vulnerable, deserving of special care. Christian

marriage (and family) is a moral calling precisely because it is an ecclesial, soteriological, and eschatological entity. "If we regulate our households [properly] ... we will also be fit to oversee the Church, for indeed the household is a little Church," Chrysostom insists (Chrysostom 1986, 57, homily 20 on Ephesians).

Virtually everything that the Eastern Christian tradition believes about marriage as a special location of self-sacrificial love and moral perfection may be found in Protestant and Roman Catholic interpretations of marriage. Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, however, lend to these themes lesser or greater emphases that, in turn, introduce significant variances of meaning and practice. Different ecclesiologies and sacrament theologies account for a large part of this. For instance, the Anglican Church interprets marriage as a sacred covenant between a man and woman, not a sacrament. Nevertheless, Anglicans may speak of marriage as "an image of divine reality" and "divine love." Like other Protestants (and the Roman Catholic Church), however, Anglicans hold that the bride and groom marry each other and that the church merely witnesses to the union. In other words, bride and groom are the ministers (or officiates) of their own wedding. In sharp contrast, the Orthodox tradition states that the church marries the couple and accepts them into its ecclesial body. According to the former interpretation, marriage may be an "image of divine reality" but is not necessarily regarded as an ecclesial entity or a vehicle of salvation. "It does not denigrate marriage to say that it belongs to creation rather than to redemption," states the Anglican theologian Helen Oppenheimer. "It is made, not by prayer, but by the consent of the spouses" (1986, 366–367). One sees, from this example alone, that the marital virtues of self-sacrificial love, fidelity, and mutual assistance, which rank high in all three of the great Christian traditions, obtain significantly different meanings due to differences of ecclesiology and sacramentology.

Politics

The story of the early relations of the Christian church with the Roman empire through Constantine has been told many times. The sources of the tension between the first-century church and the Roman imperial power were broader and deeper than mere politics. After Pentecost, the church's initial problems with the Roman state were not centered on formal relations, for these did not yet exist. The early Christians certainly bore no inherent objections to secular rule. Jesus did not oppose offering tribute in taxes to the state (Mark 12:17). And St. Paul called for obedience to the secular powers (Rom. 13:1–7), since they are ordained by God to keep order and justice in a sinful world. However, the book of Revelation also graphically depicts the empire as a demonic beast arisen from the abyss ready to consume the saints. This reflects the early Christian conviction that the empire was inherently idolatrous, witnessed by its insistence upon worship of the emperor and its claim to universal and everlasting dominion over the whole human race. The church struggled to gain sufficient freedom and space within this world order so that it might organize openly and pursue its evangelical mission.

The argument often is made that the source of the church's tension with the empire was a world-denying faith accompanied by a radical expectation of the imminent *parousia*. This is not true. The church did not deny the value of this world created by a good and loving God, but it did have a different vision of the world's origin, condition, and destiny than the empire's civil religion. The church believed that this world obtains lasting value strictly through its relationship to God as its creator and redeemer, and the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The early church was not anti-world or anti-empire: it was pro-Kingdom of God. This put the church at odds with the imperial ideology that identified Rome as the

eternal city. Nor was it mere opportunism that moved the church to "accept" the "invitation" by the Emperor Theodosius I in 380 to become the legally established religion of the empire. There was a sincere, though perhaps misguided, desire on the part of the church to render a "holy service" for society, to exorcise the imperial idolatry, and give the world back to its true Lord (Guroian 2001, 145). At the start, the church in the Greek- and Latin-speaking West held a common vision of a unified Christian society in which the two entities of church and state cooperated and essentially joined together to ensure that the commonweal prosper.

Ideologies developed differently, however, as the empire divided politically and geographically, and then ecclesiastically, with Constantinople and Rome issuing mutual anathemas against one another in 1054. The different visions of a *corpus Christianum* are commonly identified as Caesaro-papism in the East and theocracy in the West. Nevertheless, both East and West made two fundamental theological errors in articulating their distinct visions. The first was "in thinking that the authority of Christ could be identified with the political *power* of the state." The second was "in considering that the *universality* of the gospel is definable in political terms" (Meyendorff 1978, 143). In the fifth century, Pope Gelasius I articulated the key terminology of the Western theocratic idea in his doctrine of the two swords. Christendom, he said, is ruled by two independent powers, the church represented by the pope and the imperial state by the emperor or king. This idea was used to secure sufficient freedom for the church to enable it to maintain independence from the state. It even opened the opportunity and justification for the papacy to dominate in a politically weakened empire. Meanwhile, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I lent classic expression to the East's conception of the Christian empire as a "symphony" of church and state under the rule of the emperor.

Caesaro-papism and theocracy are misleading terms, however. They do not accurately describe or contrast the situations that develop in East and West. It makes more sense to identify two deep and differing metaphysical biases: monism in the East and dualism in the West. These two biases, respectively, bear quite different fruits in the organization of empire and relations of church and political order. Eastern monism and Western dualism have theological, ethical, juridical, and institutional dimensions. The West's dualism may be traced back to the language of Pope Leo I's (d. 461) famous tomb on Christology that figured prominently at the fourth Great Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, wherein he offered a doctrine of two natures in Christ that was suspected in many Eastern locations as scented with the Nestorian error of virtually dividing the One Lord, Jesus Christ, in two: into a human entity and divine entity who were joined but not truly united in one person. Leo may not have committed the Nestorian error, but his bias was toward dualism.

In the Latin West, this dualistic bias was not restricted to Christology; it also obtained juridical expression and emphasis, as the church quite deliberately defined itself vis-à-vis the state as a legal entity in order to gain leverage and power over it. The centrifugal force of the Protestant Reformation and the later dismemberment of political Christendom into nation-states, however, undercut the imperial church's efforts to maintain its independence and equal (if not superior) legal relationship with the state. These events and processes gave rise, ultimately, to national churches that for a time kept alive the vision of Christendom in their own separate territories. All the same, the national churches fell increasingly under state control and supervision. This is called Erastianism within Protestantism and Josephism (or Febronianism) within Roman Catholicism. The Enlightenment crystallized a process of secularization that was prompted and furthered by the Western dualism, and the churches' influence diminished in virtually all locations. In some instances, as under fascism and communism in the twentieth century, the churches even lost their legal status and freedom to practice the faith openly. Elsewhere in Europe,

national churches continued to function under increasing pressures of religious pluralism. In America a system of complete disestablishment came about that resulted in a separation of church and state. It may be that the dualism embraced by the Western churches, both Catholic and Protestant, is no longer sustainable and over the long term will bring about its very negation under a thoroughly autonomous state and a unitary secularism.

The bias toward monism within Orthodox Christianity has borne different fruit. This monism is traceable to the East's emphasis on the hypostatic union of humanity and divinity in Christ and an extension of that dogma to the vision of the *corpus Christianum*. This monistic bias was reflected in the modification made by the Second Council of Constantinople (553) to the Christological formula of Chalcedon. It emphasized the more monophysitically oriented Christological teaching of St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444). Thus, the East envisioned Byzantium as a unified Christian society, fully church and fully imperial order, mirroring the doctrine that Jesus Christ is wholly God and wholly human being and still a single indivisible person. A powerful realized eschatology that got joined to this vision made trouble for the church. The resulting utopian ideology did harm to the freedom of the church. The idea that the Kingdom of God was being realized already in the temporal realm permitted the emperor and Byzantine state to dominate over the church.

Yet it is a misconception to interpret this in juridical terms, as the term Caesaropapism invites. There was not an understanding of one juridical entity, the church, subordinated to another juridical entity, the state. The Byzantine idea of symphony conceived of just one subject, not two. The church got defined as a function of the state – not an independent juridical entity, but a sympathetic sacramental organ whose function it was to bring the world increasingly under the rule of Christ and thus make the Kingdom of God present on earth. By accepting this role, the Byzantine church forgot two fundamental perceptions about its relationship to the world that it inherited from the ancient church. First, it forgot that this world is fallen and mortally sick. The church, having said *yes* to the invitation to render the empire holy before God, did not say *no* to the claim that the imperial realm was also the Kingdom of God brought to earth. Second, the church permitted itself to be defined as a hierarchy, with the *authority* of spiritual dogmas and the *power* of sacramental grace, at the awful price of losing sight of its calling as a *free community of faith*, whose presence in the world is also a judgment and limitation upon the inordinate and inevitably corrupt claims to power and authority of all earthly kingdoms (Guroian 2001, 147): "For better or worse, the unity of the Eastern Christian commonwealth was not broken as it was in the West." Byzantium did not shatter into pieces, but fell hard and whole to the alien forces of Islam. Georges Florovsky concludes: "Byzantium collapsed as a Christian kingdom, under the burden of its tremendous claims" (1974, 123–124). Byzantium failed as an experiment in Christian politics, but it left no experience or legacy of the secular and autonomous state in which there exists a plurality of Christian denominations. This helps to explain why, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union and communist regimes in Eastern Europe, there has been little enthusiasm for adopting an American model of separation of church and state and an almost equal unwillingness to give strong legal sanction to religious pluralism.

Differentiations in the Contemporary Scene

The future will tell how church and state issues are worked out in the Orthodox countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. But however things turn out, in the interim, the church and state issue may actually take more classic form in these locations than in the West, although the results may

differ from legal arrangements in the West. The so-called national Orthodox churches of the East lay much more powerful claim on the imaginations and memory of the people than do the deracinated Christian denominations in America and the highly eviscerated churches of Great Britain and Western Europe. Whereas the immediate danger in Western nations in which Roman Catholics and Protestants predominate is assimilation into a unitary secular society, the danger in the East seems inherently related to Orthodoxy's historically monistic and mystical biases. The national Orthodox churches bethink themselves as representatives of the ethnos and nation and are tempted habitually to imagine that collaboration with state authority and special privileges gained from the state will secure their legitimacy and an influence over the nation. Thoughts of being compromised through such concordats do not come easily to these churches that have thought of themselves as the soul of the nation.

The church and state issue as it is unfolding in the "new" nations of Africa, Latin America, and Asia forms the contemporary horizon of this analysis. In most African, Latin American, and Asian countries, Christianity is represented predominantly by Roman Catholicism and/or Protestantism and so developments follow patterns of separation of church and state truer to the dualistic and juridical biases described above than in Orthodox lands. Nevertheless, in Africa and Asia, especially, strong forces of nationalism enter the mix in ways that especially invite comparison with events in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This is a reminder also that differentiation in Christian ethics is not limited to the historic divisions of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant, but often crosses boundaries.

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CHAPTER 65

Trajectories in Christian Ethics

Jean Porter

During the course of the last century, the field of Christian ethics has been characterized by a bewildering profusion of approaches, methodologies, and concerns. On first inspection, this diversity appears as an embarrassment of riches, too complex to be sorted through. Yet on closer examination, it is given form by the recurrence of certain key motifs, which serve as touchstones for the development of specific theories. These recurrent themes set trajectories of reflection, which provide the Christian moral tradition with much of its coherence. Given the scope of this entry, I will confine myself to examining three trajectories that have historically been central to Christian moral reflection, and will conclude with a brief look at recent developments. In the modern and contemporary period, I will focus primarily (but not exclusively) on Anglophone authors.

Moral Norms as Divine Commands

The image of God as a lawgiver, and correlatively, an approach to moral norms that construes them as God's commands or laws, is central to the Hebrew Bible. Even though later Christian reflection emphasized the contrast between the supposed legalism of the Old Testament and the orientation to grace characterizing the New Testament, more recent biblical scholarship has underscored the fact that God is characterized as a lawgiver in parts of the Christian scriptures as well (Meeks 1993, 119–210). This is what we would expect, since the Jewish and Christian conception of God as both a supreme being and a personal reality lends itself to a perception of morality as a set of divine decrees. Among Christians, this idea was expanded to include dominical commands, that is, the authoritative moral teachings of Jesus, which for many Christians carry divine authority. Given this scriptural orientation, it is scarcely surprising that an approach to moral norms that emphasizes their authoritative status as expressions of God's will emerged very early in Christian moral reflection.

This trajectory continued throughout the Patristic and medieval period. It is particularly evident in the moral thought of Augustine (354–430 CE), who placed great emphasis on the authoritative status of morality, seen as an expression of God's eternal law. Augustine's influence, in turn, helped to guarantee that an emphasis on the authoritative status of morality as an expression of God's will continued to play a central role in Christian thought, at least in the West. In the medieval period, this tendency was re-enforced by a juridical approach to sin and repentance. This approach reflected early medieval

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practices of penance, which were governed by penitentials in which sins were carefully defined and their appropriate penalties were set out in some detail. Later theological reflections on sin and developments in the practice of private confession led to more sophisticated and humane practices of reconciliation, but this practice continued to reflect a juridical model of sin and repentance throughout the medieval period (and among Roman Catholics, up until the modern period).

Yet it would be misleading to characterize either Patristic or medieval conceptions of morality as versions of a divine command ethics, as that term later came to be understood. Divine command theories are characterized by the fact that they distinguish God's will or authority from other aspects of the divine reality and identify this aspect as the ground of morality, whether as a foundation which grounds and encompasses other sources of morality, or as the sole source of morality which is set over against other putative sources of moral obligation. Certainly, Christian ethical reflection has always traced morality back to some aspect of God's will, wisdom, or providential love, but until the later middle ages, God's will was not set over against other aspects of the divine reality in such a way as to give rise to a divine command morality in the strict sense. While moral norms were thought to reflect God's will, they were also seen as reflections of God's wisdom or benevolence, insofar as they reflected exigencies of reason or human nature. Medieval theologians did raise the theoretical possibility that moral norms might depend on God's authoritative will alone, but in general they resisted separating this aspect of morality from its rational or naturalistic aspects.

The first theologian to defend a divine command theory of ethics appears to have been Duns Scotus (1266–1308). Scotus claimed that God's will is not bound by any considerations of order or justice, or any rational considerations save the law of non-contradiction, since on his view the will is nobler than the intellect and cannot be constrained by it. Hence, only those laws governing our relationship to God are natural laws in the strict sense, because only these follow by strict necessity from the divine nature. The laws of nature pertaining to our relations with one another are seen as expressions of God's ordained power, but not God's absolute power. That is, God forbids (for example) murder and adultery, but absolutely speaking, God could have commanded otherwise, rendering such actions just and right. Scotus' fellow Franciscan William of Ockham (ca. 1285–1349) took this line of argument one step further, arguing that absolutely speaking, God could even have commanded us to hate God. Similar considerations led both Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564) to affirm that God is the ultimate source of justice and morality. Not only does this mean that moral norms derive from God's will; it also implies that God's actions cannot be evaluated by our standards of justice and consistency.

Similar concerns to preserve God's complete and unconditional priority to, and independence from, impersonal structures of reason, justice, or even consistency have continued to shape theological ethics up to the present. One of the most influential expressions of this approach was offered by Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) in *Fear and Trembling*, in which he takes God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as the starting point for raising the possibility of a teleological suspension of the ethical, in which God's direct command may supersede the demands of universal morality. This treatise, one of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings, is too complex to be taken as a straightforward defense of divine command morality, but by raising the possibility that God's command can transcend the ethical universal, it has proven to be an influential source for later divine command moralities.

Probably the most influential statement of a divine command theory of ethics in the twentieth century is that developed by Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics* (1957, 509–781). For Barth, any attempt to

develop an ethic based on considerations of nature, reasonableness, or the like reflects human rebellion against the sovereignty of God, who confronts the human person with a Word of command that is both heteronomous and absolutely binding. Barth insists on this, not only to uphold the omnipotence of God, but also to uphold God's personal character as one who establishes a relationship of authority and obedience through divine commands. At the same time, through Jesus Christ, God's commands confer liberty, even as they bind us to obedience. God commands us in order to claim us through grace for our ultimate salvation.

Moral Norms as Natural Law

Since classical antiquity, the idea of law has been interpreted in at least two ways, that is, as authoritative command and as intrinsic principle of order. The first line of interpretation lends itself to a divine command approach to morality; when the latter approach to law is emphasized, we see the emergence of a second central trajectory in Christian ethics, namely, the construal of moral norms as a natural law. There have been many forms of natural law morality, including both moralities that stress the intrinsic moral significance of pre-rational natural processes, and those that ground it in the exigencies of reason. What these have in common, however, is a view of morality which grounds it in intrinsic, ordered structures of being, in contrast to approaches that emphasize authoritative will. So understood, the idea of natural law appears to have originated with the Stoics, and we find it expressed near the beginning of the common era by the Roman philosopher Cicero (106–43 BCE).

It might seem that the Hebrew scriptures, with their strong emphasis on God as lawgiver, would not lend themselves to a natural law interpretation of morality. However, the psalms and wisdom literature place great weight on God's law as an expression of wisdom, more excellent than the philosophical wisdom of any other nation; even within Deuteronomy, we read that the excellence of God's law will be acknowledged by all the nations of the earth (Deut. 4:6–8). This strain of Hebrew scriptures lends itself to an interpretation of God's law which emphasizes its origins in God's wisdom, and which therefore opens the way to presenting it as an expression of natural law (Barton 1998, 58–76). In the Jewish philosopher Philo (b. ca. 10 BCE), writing roughly a generation after Cicero, we find precisely this interpretation; according to Philo, the Law of Moses represents the law of nature in perfect written form. Similarly, St. Paul's appeals to nature and conscience as a source for moral norms, and as the basis for a law that stands parallel to the Law of Moses for the Gentiles (Rom. 2:14–16), were foundational for later Christian theories of the natural law.

When we turn to the Patristic era, we once again find Augustine playing a decisive role in setting an agenda for later Christian moral thought, at least in the West. We observed above that Augustine placed great emphasis on the authoritative status of law. Yet he also understood law as an intrinsic principle of order, along the lines of classical accounts of the natural law. These two approaches to law came together in his conception of God's Eternal Law, which Augustine understands as an expression of God's ordering wisdom as well as God's authoritative will. In addition, Augustine, together with many other Patristic authors, took the Golden Rule to be the fundamental principle of the natural law inscribed in the conscience of every human person, and the Decalogue to be a summary of its basic precepts.

In the medieval period, the natural law approach came to dominate Christian moral reflection, at least among the scholastic jurists and theologians whose work laid the foundations for so much later work in Christian ethics. The most influential medieval exponent of a natural law approach to ethics is Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274). For Aquinas, the natural law in its primary sense consists of basic, self-evident principles of practical reason (for example, the principle that the good is to be pursued and done and the bad avoided), which are analogous to first principles of speculative reason, such as the law of non-contradiction. In a secondary sense, the natural law consists of precepts ordered around basic human inclinations to live, to reproduce, to seek the truth about God, and the like; Aquinas also endorses the almost unanimous view that the Decalogue offers a summary of the precepts of the natural law. Seen from yet another perspective, the natural law represents the human person's participation in God's eternal law, understood in Augustinian terms, but with a stronger emphasis on the eternal law as an expression of God's wisdom, rather than God's will (Porter 1999, 92–95).

In the modern period, natural law reflection took a new turn. Under the influence of the early modern revolution in mathematical and scientific thought, moral thinkers began to aspire to a theory of the natural law based on deductions from first principles, which theory would have the same perspicuous rational force as a mathematical system such as Euclidean geometry. On this view, distinctively theological claims have no foundational or essential place in a theory of the natural law, although they may serve to confirm, correct, or supplement the moral code generated by moral reasoning. This approach also led to a greater emphasis on the discrete rules that comprise the natural law. This approach to the natural law, in turn, lent itself to the more pronounced emphasis on the natural law as an expression of God's authoritative will, and at this point, the two trajectories, divine command ethics and natural law ethics, began to come together in the work of such theologians as Suarez (Schneewind 1998, 58–78, 118–38).

Luther's radical critique of the idea of salvation through works kept the idea of natural law from taking much hold in Protestant theology, although it continued to play some role in Anglican and Reformed thought. However, versions of the natural law similar to that developed by Suarez continued to be foundational to Catholic moral theology up until the twentieth century. In the years just before and after Vatican II, the idea of an immutable natural law was sharply criticized by Catholic theologians, and these criticisms, together with controversies over questions of sexual ethics after Vatican II, seriously undermined the credibility of the natural law among Catholic theologians.

More recently, there has been a revival of interest in natural law approaches to ethics. One of the most influential contemporary versions is the "new theory of the natural law" (Grisez 1983, 173–274; Finnis 1998, 103–131). On this view, moral laws are derived from an apprehension of certain basic goods, which are known to be such as soon as they are experienced, together with norms of practical reasonableness which determine how we are to relate to these goods. This version of the natural law places great emphasis on its rational character, and allows only a very limited place for the moral significance of pre-rational human nature. However, recent developments in biotechnology, medicine, and ecology have led to a revival of interest in the moral significance of pre- or non-rational nature, among both Protestant and Catholic scholars (Gustafson 1981; Pope 1994). At the same time, a renewed interest in human or natural rights has led to the revival of other strands of the natural law tradition (Nussbaum 2000, 34–110; Tierney 1997, 1–12; Schweiker 1995). Finally, it should be noted that some Protestant scholars have recently argued for an account of moral norms similar to that associated with the natural law, but grounded in explicitly theological principles such as Christian love (Ramsey 1967).

Ideals of Virtue

In recent years, the topic of virtue has received a great deal of attention from Christian ethicists as well as philosophers. In fact, there are many theologians who argue that, correctly understood, Christian ethics is predominantly or even exclusively an ethic of virtues, rather than an ethic of rules. Yet this would not have been obvious at every point in Christian history.

The virtues as such do not seem to have been a central theme for early Patristic thought, although we do find discussions of the traits of character appropriate to, or contrary to, the Christian life in this period. Augustine offers a reformulation of a Stoic conception of virtue as wisdom, according to which Christian love is the fundamental virtue that other virtues express in specific circumstances. However, the best-known aspect of Augustine's treatment of virtue is his severe critique of classical Roman ideals of virtue, which on his view were at best vitiated by pride and a failure to know and love the true God (Rist 1994, 148–202).

Virtue began to be a central topic for Christian ethics in the medieval period. By the mid-twelfth century, two distinctive approaches to virtue ethics had emerged, exemplified by Peter Abelard (1074–ca. 1142) and Peter Lombard (ca. 1100–60), respectively. According to Abelard, the virtues are human excellences that can be attained even without grace. They existed among the best of the pagans, and were adequately described in philosophical terms. Lombard, in contrast, understood the virtues in Augustinian terms as expressions of Christian charity, which as such presuppose grace. For most of the later scholastics, however, these alternatives are too stark, and they attempt to synthesize them by developing accounts of the virtues, which allow for them to be understood both as human attainments and as gifts of grace. Typically, the complex character of virtue is spelled out in terms of a distinction between the political virtues, which can be attained through human ability alone and understood in philosophical terms, and theological virtues that presuppose grace and can only be identified through revelation. The former are generally identified with the classical cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, courage and temperance, the latter with the Pauline triad of faith, hope, and love.

We find a different approach to synthesizing these two conceptions of virtue in Aquinas, who offers the most influential scholastic theory of the virtues and their place in the Christian life. In the place of the widely accepted distinction between political and theological virtues, Aquinas introduced a distinction between the acquired virtues, which can be attained through human effort, and the infused virtues, which can only be attained through grace and which correlatively provide the operative principles through which grace becomes an effective principle for action. The acquired virtues include both the traditional cardinal virtues and other traditional virtues that are analyzed as derivative from these four. The infused virtues include the three theological virtues, but they also include infused counterparts to the acquired virtues. These latter resemble their acquired counterparts in some respects, but differ insofar as they are directed towards a distinctive end, that is to say, union with God as opposed to human well-being understood in purely rational terms.

In the early modern period, theologians began to question the suitability of the idea of virtue as a category for Christian moral reflection. One of the most thoroughgoing such critiques was offered by Luther, for whom an emphasis on virtue reflected a more general tendency to attempt to guarantee one's salvation through personal works, in contrast to relying on God's free grace. Yet Luther also insisted that the Christian life is marked by stable dispositions such as joyfulness and a readiness to be of service to

others. While he did not speak of these dispositions as virtues, there are clear affinities between this aspect of his thought and virtue ethics, and some contemporary Lutheran theologians have taken the relevant aspects of his thought as a starting point for a distinctively Lutheran virtue ethic (Meilaender 1984, 100–126; Stock 1995).

Catholic thought in the modern period continued to use the traditional language of the cardinal and theological virtues, yet these were increasingly reduced to organizing principles for moral rules, while many of the traditional concerns of virtue ethics were relegated to the study of spirituality or mysticism. Yet during the modern period the idea of virtue continued to play an important role for some Protestant and secular thinkers. The Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), the greatest American theologian before the twentieth century, devoted a treatise, *On the Nature of True Virtue*, to developing a Christian theory of virtue out of elements of the moral sense theory. True virtue consists in benevolence towards Being in general, and as such it goes beyond natural virtue to take in love for God as supreme Being. Only true virtue can be considered to be an effect and sign of election to salvation. Yet natural virtue is good in itself, and it is not destroyed, but transformed by true virtue (Edwards 1960). Even more significant is the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). Schleiermacher offers an interpretation of virtue as a capacity to grasp and to act upon the concrete implications of the moral law, which is similar in some respects to the Aristotelian idea of practical wisdom. However, Schleiermacher's overall theology has probably been more important, from the standpoint of contemporary virtue ethics, than his remarks on virtue per se. According to him, all genuine religion is grounded in an awareness of an infinite and eternal source of all finite realities, together with a sense of our absolute dependence on that infinite source. For the Christian, this awareness takes the form of reverence for Christ as the mediator between God and the human person. In our own time, this approach to theology has inspired an ethics of piety or Christian dispositions, among both English speaking and German theologians (see Gerrish 1984; Gustafson 1981, 1984).

During the early part of the twentieth century, virtue was not a major theme among either Catholic or Protestant theologians. Among Catholics, one of the earliest and most influential such attempts to reclaim virtue theory was that of Bernard Häring (1965), who provided a moral theology based on charity, understood as the paradigmatic Christian virtue. Similarly, the Jesuit moral theologian Gerard Gilleman (1959) attempted to retrieve Aquinas' account of charity as the root of the Christian moral and spiritual life, and his fellow Jesuit Karl Rahner (1969) developed an account of love as a fundamental option which lends itself very readily to a virtue-oriented moral theology. More recently, a number of theologians, predominantly but not exclusively Catholics, have turned to Aquinas to provide starting points for a contemporary Christian virtue ethics (Abbà 1983; Cates 1996; Keenan 1992; Porter 1999; Rhonheimer 1994).

Among Protestant theologians, advocates of a return to virtue ethics argue that it provides the best way to understand the distinctive character of discipleship within the Christian community (Hauerwas 1981). The Christian community is rooted in ideals of non-violence and communal solidarity quite different from those which prevail in the dominant culture. Christian ethics should reflect these differences by focusing on the virtues which enable the individual to live in a truly Christian fashion. During the last decades of the twentieth century, there has been a revival of virtue ethics among philosophers (MacIntyre 1984). The trajectory set by reflection on the virtues as well as divine commands and natural law continues to play an important role in Christian moral reflection.

Recent Developments in the Field of Christian Ethics

To a considerable degree, the diversity within the field of Christian ethics has reflected the variety of concerns faced by Christians in the twentieth century. At the beginning of the last century, the plight of workers within an increasingly industrial and global economy gave rise to the social gospel movement, most closely associated today with Walter Rauschenbusch. His *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1991) combined searching social critique and deep optimism for the possibilities for communal reform and regeneration. Yet this very optimism led to widespread critiques, including most notably Reinhold Niebuhr's widely influential Christian realism, which emphasizes the tension between the ideal of Christian love and the harsh necessity of sustaining justice in a fallen world (see Niebuhr 1941–1943).

The challenges posed by war and peace continued to be central to Christian ethics throughout the twentieth century, culminating in a widely influential revival of a principled Christian pacifism (see Yoder 1994; Hauerwas 1981). At the same time, however, beginning in the 1960s, other social issues emerged as central concerns for Christian ethics. This was of course a decade of social ferment and concern for the previously marginalized, including women, historically disadvantaged minorities, and sexual minorities. These concerns shaped Christian ethics in a variety of ways. Around this time, feminist voices began to emerge within Christian ethics (Daly 1973; Ruether 1975; Harrison 1985), while at the same time liberation theology inspired a new attentiveness to the concerns of the poor and marginalized around the world (Gutiérrez 1973). In the United States, the liberation paradigm was quickly applied to the situation of African Americans and other marginalized groups (Cone 1969; West 1982). Finally, during the last decades of the past century, scholars in Christian ethics increasingly turned their attention to the challenges presented by globalization, the need to defend human rights in a pluralistic world, new possibilities in biomedicine, and the imperative to protect the environment.

In addition to the varieties of Christian ethics generated by specific social concerns, this field has also been diversified through the adoption of a variety of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. One of the most influential early works of twentieth-century social ethics, Ernst Troeltsch's *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1995), fostered an interdisciplinary approach to Christian ethics through its appropriation of sociological theory. This approach continues to provide a starting point for discussions of the interaction between Christian beliefs and the wider society (see Niebuhr 1951). In addition, H. Richard Niebuhr pioneered the appropriation of American pragmatism, which he developed into his own distinctive theory of Christian ethics as a form of responsiveness to, and responsibility in the face of, the divine initiative (Niebuhr 1963). This approach has proven to be widely influential. It was developed by James Gustafson (1981, 1984) with serious attention to the constraints of contemporary science and social theory. Still more recently, "responsibility ethics" has been enriched through the appropriation of European hermeneutical theory and discourse ethics in order to develop a more robust account of what is involved in construing a situation from a theistic viewpoint (Schweiker 1995). The "responsibility ethics" approach has also been adopted by some Catholic moral theologians, most notably Charles Curran (1999).

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3 Islam

CHAPTER 66

Muslim Ethics?

Ebrahim Moosa

The Idea of Ethics in Islam

As part of the Abrahamic tradition, Muslim ethics both resemble and differ from the way ethics is practiced in Judaism and Christianity. Given the geographical breadth of the cultures in which Islam flourished, one cannot ignore the complex crucibles in which Muslim ethics were formed. The genealogy of Muslim ethics can be traced to pre-Islamic Arabia, Islamic Arabia, and Persian, Greek and sūfī (mystical) sources, as well as later influences of an African and Asian provenance. However, the formation of ethics is not a mechanical and instrumental use of cultural resources. It occurs gradually as Muslim communities organically become established within different cultural and social settings.

The discipline of ethics has several synonymous nomenclatures in Muslim culture. It is most often described as the "science of innate dispositions" (*ʿilm al-akhlāq*), the "science of comportment or conduct" (*ʿilm al-sulūk*) or "science of mysticism" (*ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*). From these descriptions it becomes obvious that the emphasis is almost exclusively focused on the formation and cultivation of individual practices. Two terms, rich in semantic signification, shape the debate on ethics: "character" (*khuluq*, pl. *akhlāq*) and "civility" or "etiquette" (*adab*, pl. *ādāb*).

The word *khuluq* has deep roots in Arabic culture and its use is preserved with its early semantic field. The Prophet Muḥammad is described as being given an "extraordinary noble character"(Qur'an 68:4). The word *khuluq*, say lexicologists, means "religion" (*dīn*), "nature" (*ṭabʿ*) and "natural disposition" (*sajiyya*), "chivalry" (*muruwwa*) or even "habit" (*ʿāda*). Essentially, says the Indian encyclopedist Tahānawī (d. ca. 1777), *khuluq* "is a habitus or disposition (*malaka*) with which the spirit produces certain acts spontaneously, without need of reflection, seeing, and pretense." The other key word is *adab*, meaning right conduct or norms of right conduct. A standard definition is:

> Right conduct (*adab*) constitutes the sum of prudential knowledge that shields one from all error in speech, acts, and character. It signifies all the Arabic sciences, for they cumulatively promote etiquette. *Adab* is thus a *habitus* or disposition (*malaka*) that protects one from disgrace. A perfectly urbane and cultivated person (*adīb*) is one who possesses this *habitus*. Therefore it is said: "the way to ultimate reality is through [the practice of] right conduct." (Khānzāda 1980, 4)

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Any disciplinary practice that results in the cultivation of a virtue is called norms of right conduct. Ethics is thus the cultivation of this disposition through education and practice. In fact, the Arabic word *adab* derives from the root signifying a feast, *ma'duba*, in order to nourish the body; but in its changed morphology it denotes a disciplinary practice for the nourishment of the mind.

Persian culture had the most significant impact on the development of ethics in subsequent Islamicate cultures. When speaking about disciplining the self (*adab al-nafs*), early ethicists also meant the ethics of speaking (*adab al-lisān*), as well as the proper attitude in order to internalize the norms one learns in pedagogy (*adab al-dars*), as both aspects are indispensable components for a complete ethical formation. ʻAbd al-Nabī al-Aḥmadnagrī (d. 1769), also an Indian encyclopedist, describes the discipline of the self as shielding the limbs and religious symbols from harm. The principle of non-maleficience, the obligation not to inflict harm intentionally, is a feature of Muslim ethics.

There is a famous report in which ʻĀ'isha describes her husband, the Prophet Muḥammad, as having a character that mirrors the Qur'an. He is described as the embodiment of the values of the Qur'an. In this pithy statement, the linkage between the Qur'an and ethical values should not be ignored. The Prophet Muḥammad embodies the virtues proposed in the Qur'an. *Imitatio* Muḥammadi is an essential part of Muslim ethical teaching and practice. In fact, the Qur'an, addressing the Prophet Muḥammad, declares: "Indeed you have been endowed with a noble character" (Qur'an 68:4). Numerous prophetic reports place an extraordinary emphasis on the need to cultivate good character, *ḥusn al-khuluq*. It appears as if the aesthetic quality of beauty (*ḥusn*), inherent in good, serves as an antidote to sinful behavior.

Muslim ethics is a responsibility-based ethics, invoking reciprocal rights and duties. Thus a range of social actors from parents, teachers, and professionals to every individual is an active moral agent. Ethical discourses are part of all the major disciplines of religious thought, ranging from the teachings of the Qur'an, the prophetic reports, juridical literature, theology, and mysticism to philosophy and literature proper.

Historical Trends

The formal discipline of the "science of ethics" takes shape under the rubric of a philosophical-cum-literary genre with writers like Miskawayh (d. 1030), Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023), and Abū al-Ḥasan al-'Āmirī (d. 992). In political ethics, the work of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 1058), is significant.

Early Muslim pietists like Hārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857), ʻĀlī bin Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), Rāghib al-Isfahānī (d. ca. 1108), and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) combined the disciplining of the self with the observance of ritual and legal obligations, better known as positive law (*fiqh*). Obedience to the norms derived from revelation (sharīʻa) enables the individual to develop an inner disposition that is analogous to the notion of conscience. Readers of ethical treatises are taught how do undertake a personal moral diagnostic on sincerity, how to cultivate virtuous habits and good character.

Law and ethics are inseparable. Two terms, *fiqh* and sharīʻa, signify what we would call the law. The sharīʻa refers to revealed normative discourses; *fiqh* (literally meaning "discernment") is the interpretation and application of these discourses. Law (*fiqh*) has to meet two ends: the practices must fulfill worldly ends and simultaneously serve as acts of salvation. The founder of the Ḥanafī school of law, Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767), described *fiqh* as "the soul/self knowing its rights and its duties." In *fiqh* discourse, piety,

morality, theology, and law coalesce into a single coherent narrative. Thus Abū Ḥanīfa named a very brief catechism "The Greater Discernment"(*al-fiqh al-akbar*) that included teachings on doctrines, law, and piety.

In the twelfth century, Ghazālī became dissatisfied with the popular and legalistic understanding of *fiqh* that was preoccupied with hairsplitting and arcane debates. True *fiqh*, he argued, meant more than just the law of marriage and divorce, contracts and sales. Issuing authoritative opinions or *juridical responsa* (*fatwā*, pl. *fatāwā*), Ghazālī said, was the least important part of the law. The earliest iteration of *fiqh* meant "the path of salvation in the afterlife." The external law regulating one's actions must be complemented by an inner discernment (*fiqh al-nafs*), said Ghazālī. *Fiqh* should ideally ensure that the practitioner develops a moral consciousness of the divine (*taqwā*).

Individual responsibility is at the center of Muslim ethics. Even if a jurist issues an informed opinion, the lay person is compelled to subject any ruling to the scrutiny of the inner forum of the conscience. The martyred jurist-mystic, ʻAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī (d. 1131), approves of expert knowledge and ethical guidance, but insists that it must be "an opinion of the heart" (*fatwā 'l-qalb*). For some ethicists, the heart is the seat of conscience and a more reliable ethical barometer than the jurists' dispassionate reasoning. A report attributed to the Prophet says: "Solicit a response [*fatwā*] from your heart, even though the jurisconsult [*muftī*] had issued an opinion."

Historian ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) points out that in early Islam *fiqh* was a *malaka* which he conceived of as a sociobiological-cum-moral disposition. Corrupted over time, this disposition became predisposed to soulless legalism. The professionalization of the law estranged it from its deeper ethical and moral impulses. It was the mystics who tried to revive ethics in its embodied form with an emphasis on autonomous intuitive cognition or aesthetic sensibility (*ḍhawq*), cultivated through extensive ascetic practices (*mujāhada*) and exercises in self-examination (*muḥāsaba*).

Theological Presuppositions and Legal Reasoning

Theological reasoning does indeed shape ethical and moral thinking. Competing theological schools of medieval Islam, namely the rational-pietist Muʻtazila and the traditionalist-rational Ashʻarī schools, bequeathed rival moral theories. The Muʻtazila promoted a doctrine of ethical objectivism in which reason and revelation were coeval. The Ashʻarīs accepted discursive reason, but for them reason was always subject to the authority of revelation. Their position can be described as ethical subjectivism. For the Muʻtazila, reason is capable of deciding if something is good or detestable; the Ashʻaris believe that something is good or bad because the divine discourse declares it to be so. Muslims affiliated to the Sunnī branch of Islam follow the Ashʻari school or other analogous ones, while those affiliated to the Shīʻa branch developed their own type of rationality, also borrowing some ideas from the Muʻtazila doctrine.

Modern debates on legal ethics are informed by premodern theological developments. Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388), the jurist from Muslim Spain, argued that one can rationally extrapolate the divine intent embedded in the sharīʻa discourses. Shāṭibī theorizes a grand scheme of moral philosophy in relation to the law. The objectives of the sharīʻa, he said, can be listed in terms of a three-tier hierarchical taxonomy of ethical categories or directives: (1) compelling necessity (*ḍarūriyāt*), (2) needs (*ḥājiyāt*), and (3) improvements (*taḥsīnāt*). Under the category of compelling necessity, the divine lawgiver seeks to

preserve and safeguard five ethical objectives: religion, life, property, reason, and paternity. Legal interpretations should ensure that the rules and judgments meet the broad rationality of these objectives, especially in areas where there are no prescribed rules. The category of needs urges the ethical–legal subject to seek out flexibility in order to eliminate hardship. The category of improvements promotes aesthetic perfection and ethical refinement to practices. A doctrine that also has broad currency is (4) public interest (*maṣlaḥa*). The assumption is that public interests are embedded within legal rules; one extreme view even considers public interest to trump the letter of the law. It is generally agreed that rules premised on custom and public interest considerations change with time and place.

Contemporary Approaches

Debates on contextual legal ethics remain muted in circles of traditional scholarship. Reformist and progressive tendencies take contextual ethics seriously. Very few traditionalist jurists – save for some in Iran and individuals elsewhere – are prepared to examine the letter of the law in terms of its ethical and moral imperatives as well as the altered human subjectivities over time produced by social, political, and economic changes. On issues such as the status of women within the family, marriage, and Islamic governance the ideological differences and methodological fault lines between the different Muslim approaches to ethics become apparent. By supplementing the inherited body of ethical knowledge, Muslim ethics can be updated as a discursive tradition. Of course, scholars have always debated the extent to which tradition is open to change, transformation, and updating. Mindful of this tension, one can outline some of the main contemporary approaches to Muslim ethics.

Kinds of Traditionalism

Traditionalism, or what some people call orthodoxy, is of course a highly differentiated category. *Doctrinaire traditionalism* is predominant in contemporary Islam. Here, the formalized legal and ethical opinions of past jurists form the canon of normative teachings. This normativity, rooted in the past, is regarded as universally valid and perfect as inherited from the ancients. To depart from the views of past authorities is only permitted in very limited instances. Furthermore, *fiqh* is not subject to historicization. Doctrinaire traditionalist circles are indeed receptive to ethics and mysticism. The weakness of this approach, however, lies in a static and idealistic notion of history. Authenticity lies in the experience and knowledge of the past savants of the tradition. Contemporary experiences do not qualify to influence adaptation and change to the law or ethics. Knowledge developed in the present is either resisted or reluctantly adopted in order to supplement or update the inherited corpus of ethical teachings. While rigidity is the face of traditionalism in the modern period, historically speaking this same tradition was much more robust and dynamic in its heyday. Versions of doctrinaire traditionalism are prevalent among large sections of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, Africa, East and Central Asia, and the Middle East, and cuts across sectarian divisions of Sunnī and Shi'a.

Given the impact of modernity on some Muslim educational institutions in the Middle East and East Asia, often by means of coercive state-driven reforms, some sectors of Muslim traditionalism have taken on board elements of modernism in order to constitute neo-traditionalism. Here, both modernity and tradition are viewed as instruments for pragmatic ends. Some critics point out that this approach is

deficient in that it creates a dichotomous universe, effectively advocating the privatization of religion and also susceptible to the arbitrary use of tradition without a serious and rigorous knowledge project to sustain it. This neo-traditionalist approach is viewed with some skepticism by doctrinaire traditionalists for its eclectic and pragmatic mix of theological and legal doctrines derived from various schools.

Critical traditionalism is an emergent trend in Muslim ethics. Intellectuals who lean towards this ethical orientation view the juridical tradition as a work-in-progress. They invoke the critical thinkers of the past, historicize the tradition, and adopt contemporary knowledge and experience as part of tradition. Some in this trend identify themselves as progressive or critical Muslim thinkers. A growing number of scholars in the Muslim world, especially in Iran as well as those living in the Atlantic world, have succeeded in engaging both the Muslim and Western knowledge traditions. Often, those identified with critical traditionalism are engaged in new ethical and legal interpretations of the tradition. Here the attempt is to affect a new knowledge synthesis, starting with traditional Muslim religious sciences in a dialogical engagement with the modern social sciences and the humanities. Of course, this tradition appreciates the multiple and diverse identities of Muslims and the self-reflexive nature of their subjectivities. What sets the progressive or critical approach to tradition apart from other versions is its concern for the coexistence of the transcendent and the historical dimensions of a religious tradition. Norms are generated through the dynamic interaction between the transcendent authority and the mediation of human history. Each of these traditionalist approaches is a hermeneutical tradition and they vary in terms of their sophistication.

Doctrinaire traditionalists generally do not distinguish between facts and values. Some modernist influences on certain aspects of traditionalist thought have resulted in the anachronistic appropriation of values disembodied from practices. Since facts and historical realities continue to change, the challenge for critical traditionalism is to develop a hermeneutic that accounts for differences in practices rather than valorizing change along the lines of social Darwinism or modernist absolutism.

Modernist Transcendentalist Approaches

The hallmark of the modernist transcendentalist approach is that it is almost exclusively a revelation-centered hermeneutic without engaging with the equally important lived experience of the community (Sunna) as embodied in history. Even though this approach has some faint premodern antecedents, it received a boost in the modern period in the wake of a revolt against orthodox authoritarianism and clerical monopoly of authority. It also partly stems from a failure of nerve to deal with history. Exaggerated skepticism that reports of the Prophet may have been corrupted during their transmission has also undermined the status of historical sources and implicitly eviscerated the historicity of tradition. Thus, there is an almost exclusive reliance on the Qur'an as the idealized source of norms and a refusal to attach any credibility to history. There has been little attention to the fact that even transcendent values become manifest in competing and diverse formats.

Of course, anchoring an argument on the authority of a divine text can be rhetorically persuasive, but it also predisposes it to modernist absolutism. Ethics in the transcendentalist key plays down differences and insists that the latest iteration of ethics is the most perfect incarnation of the revealed norms. Past communities are implicitly judged as having failed to discover the true norms – only us moderns have grasped it. But this approach does have the advantage of appealing directly to the authority of scripture with the aura of deriving fresh inspiration from the revelation.

A major weakness of this approach is that it presumes that all norms are self-explanatory and literally derived from the revealed sources. It fails to account for the role of the interpreter as co-author of the normative tradition and our changing subjectivity in both the interpretation and practice of ethical traditions. It is a short step from transcendentalism to text-fundamentalism, with its accompanying ethical fundamentalism.

Conclusion

In order to reinvigorate law and ethics, many modern-day Muslim thinkers have sought relief in the doctrines of public interest and the ethical objectives of the law as construed centuries ago. However, these theories are employed in instrumentalist fashion. Contemporary Muslim thinkers have yet to devise a satisfactory ethical theory in which the dialogic of transcendent norms and history are effectively demonstrated. Perhaps the challenge for Muslim ethics is twofold. How does one foster a law and ethics that continuously responds to a dynamic and changing universe? And how do such changing theories and practices retain their sacrosanct character and simultaneously also meet the psychological criteria to serve as salvific practices and performances? It remains to be seen whether the critical traditionalist/progressive approach can address this pertinent issue of ethical theory.

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CHAPTER 67

Origins of Islamic Ethics: Foundations and Constructions

A. Kevin Reinhart

Scope of the Entry

Islamic ethics is a term that provokes as much as it defines. Do religions have ethics or is the term irreducibly philosophical? And philosophy, as W. C. Smith (1984) has argued, is itself a competing religious tradition. Given that no religious tradition originates in a cultural vacuum, is "origins" a meaningful term?

Here, by "ethics" we mean norms for the moral life, and also second-order reflection on where the sources of moral norms are to be found, as well as how norms are to be derived from them. By "origins" we mean Islamic stipulations found particularly in the Qur'an that shaped Muslims' moral action and reflection. In addition, we will discuss structural features and lacunae in those sources that were decisive in helping to create what we know as Islamic ethics. Finally, we will briefly show how these three helped form Islamic ethics in its early classical form.

In this entry we distinguish between "Islamic" – religion in the commonsense understanding of the term – and "Islamicate" – other cultural features of the society in which Islam was the dominant cultural force. This means that Islamicate *falsafah*, the tradition derived particularly from the peripatetic tradition of Greek philosophy, will not be considered here. Nor will we discuss the *adab* tradition of cultivated scribal cultural norms (Hodgson 1974 II, 169–196). Rather, it is from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the Prophet, and the early community (as remembered and (re)constructed by subsequent Islamic scholarship), and from *kalām* theology, and above all from the sharīʿa or legal–moral sciences that we will draw our argument.

Impinging Norms

Historical Islam arose on the cultural fringes of the Eastern Mediterranean world.[1] In the cities of the Eastern Roman empire – Antioch, Beirut, Damascus, Alexandria, Smyrna, Caesarea, and, of course, Athens and Constantinople – the full range of Roman, Greek, and Christian moral content and technique

My earlier studies in Islamic ethics have profited from guidance by Ronald M. Green, Walter Sinnot-Armstrong, Bernard Gert, and Matthew Bagger.

1 We use this term to refer to the Islam of academic history. It is of course Muslim doctrine that Adam was the first Muslim and that from his time forward some form of Islam – perhaps corrupted but still grounded in Islam's primordial truths – was in the world.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

was freely in play. In the Persian empire the rich body of moral and religious thought was supported and propagated by the state. Non-Orthodox Christian and several varieties of Jewish thought found a home in greater Persia as well.

It is nearly impossible satisfactorily to sort out the extent to which any of these elements might have influenced the pre-Islamic Arabian world, or the Prophet himself. While it is unlikely that, say, Stoic ethics was read in Mecca, it is clear that to some extent all of these traditions formed a sort of *koiné* substrate to the moral and intellectual life of those living in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Once Islam appears, it shares many structural features of its ethics with the older Near Eastern traditions. Among the things that Muslims shared with Jews and Christians was the belief that membership in a given community gave one a monopoly on truth and therefore salvation. Muslims also shared with them an ethical cosmology. Time was seen as moving toward a predetermined endpoint at which moral conduct would be eternally rewarded and vice would be punished. These traditions also shared a view of "progressive revelation." God's unfolding providence is manifested in an increasingly precise and detailed set of injunctions – on how to act, and for all to know how God regarded their community and those outside it. At a general level it is hard to say more than this: certain general ideas from other traditions show up in the earliest Islamic ethical understandings. This is hardly surprising when Islam was understood, among other things, as a movement to reform the previous two Near Eastern traditions (see Smith 1963).

Pre-Islamic Arab Ethics

It is easier to discern pre-Islamic Arab ethics in the ethics of early Islam. One example is "thanking the benefactor" (*shukr al-mun'im*). Someone who provides a benefaction to someone, particularly the giving or saving of life, has a claim (*ḥaqq*) on the person benefacted. The benefactor is entitled to satisfaction (*riḍā*) and also to "thanksgiving" (*shukr*), that is, the public acknowledgment of the benefaction given to the benefactor. God has given humankind life, and what satisfies him in return is acknowledging his benefaction by moral conduct and observing the cultus (Qur'an 5:6–7). The Qur'an takes for granted this relationship of the giver and gifted and it is the basis of God's claim to obedience and observance from humankind. In this manner, a pre-Islamic view of gratitude as a virtue passed into later Islamic society and became part of the social glue that held Islamicate society together (see Mottahedeh 1980). Similarly, Muslim *convivencia* with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) may be rooted in the pre-Islamic practice of *al-jizyah 'an yadin*. This is a pre-Islamic practice of granting armistice in return for some gesture of subordination (Bravmann 1972, 199ff.). Such a gesture removes the need to defeat or kill an otherwise antagonistic enemy. Muslim disinclination to force conversion in the way Christians and Jews did may be located in this pre-Islamic warfare practice. In other domains, pre-Islamic values may be present in antithesis. Islamic rules of marriage and chastity are understandable seen as reactions against the anarchy of marriage and descent types in the Arabia of the sixth and seventh centuries. Other features of seventh-century Arabia – polygamy, slavery, warfare – are all taken for granted in the Qur'an, but disciplined, moderated, and re-understood.

Specifying the outside influences on the formative period of Islamic ethics is difficult. We have too little information on the Persian, Jewish, and Christian worlds at that time. Moreover, any one of these could have influenced the pre-Islamic Arab world and then, indirectly, Muslims, rather than directly

influencing Islamic morals and the premises that undergird it. For the study of Islamic ethics' origins, we are on firmer ground if we look to what all but the most radically skeptic scholars acknowledge to be the authentically early Islamic text: the Qur'an.

Qur'anic Ethics

The Qur'an is not a work of analytic ethics but a hortatory work that sometimes specifies the good, but more often assumes that humans know it. As the Qur'an understands it, the central fact of human life is that humans have moral agency (Qur'an 81; 82:5). The response of humans to the fact of agency is shaped, however, by their temperament.

Human beings are not fallen. The transgression of Adam was not a cosmic event that determined human nature, but the failure of one human being – the Prophet Adam – to obey God. That failure of course had consequences. Adam and his progeny were expelled from the Garden. Yet this was not, as for Christians, the origin of a permanent estrangement from God. In fact, Adam repented and was reconciled with God (Qur'an 2:31–8). Still, the Qur'an presents humans as inclined to be obedient to God in difficult times, but indifferent to God's commands when things go well (Qur'an 17:83). They are hasty, oppressive, and ignorant (Qur'an 17:11; 13:34; 33:72). Yet they also "love faith" and hate ingratitude, wickedness, and rebellion (Qur'an 49:7). Humans are God's bondsmen and bondswomen (the meaning of the common phrase "'Abdallāh") and owe God fealty and obedience.

Throughout its pages, the Qur'an assumes human beings can discern God's claim on them by the use of "reasoning" from signs[2] and "thinking" or "reflection."[3] Muslims are urged to reflect and consider, on the assumption that reflection is a means to moral knowledge. How it is that reflection leads to morality is not clear. Do we possess knowledge that we come to know through reflection, or do the structures of reflection lead us to moral knowledge? Yet the fact remains that the Qur'an constantly urges its hearers to do good (to parents, orphans, enemies, wives, husbands) without specifying of what the good consists. If humans can know the good, are they free to act upon that knowledge?

Human Volition

Theologians and philosophers require consistency, but that is seldom a feature of religious insight and vision, particularly one with a kerygmatic focus like that of the Qur'an. Islamic theologians became preoccupied quite early (see below) with the question of whether humans lived in a predestinarian world. The Qur'an keeps two insights bound together that might seem to be in tension but, for its distinctive vision, are not. The first is that, despite the perspicacity of the Islamic summons, humans respond in ways that disappoint. Moral conduct is sometimes outside the boundaries of suasion and intent. To this fact, the Qur'an responds: "Whom God leads astray, you can find no path for him" (Qur'an 30:29). "God caused their hearts to go astray. And God does not guide a corrupt people" (Qur'an 61:5). And, classically, "God leads astray whom He wishes and

2 The Qur'an uses verbs from the root *'-q-l*,; the noun form means "intellect" (*'aql*).
3 Using verbs from the root *f-k-r*, whose nominal form (*fikr*) means "thought" or "reflection."

guides to Himself those who turn to him" (Qur'an 13:27). Despite exposure to the good, persuasion, and revelation, one has to recognize that there are incomprehensible limits to some human moral actions.

Yet the Qur'an is nothing if not a call to moral conduct and moral reform. This would make no sense in the absence of an effective human volition. Repeated discussions of justice, the fact that God does not oppress and so others ought not to oppress their fellows, would be incomprehensible unless humans could freely act. "Who wishes, let him have faith; and who wishes, let him reject," says the Qur'an (18:29). For "God does not charge a soul beyond what it can encompass. He has for it only what it has earned, and against it what it has earned" (Qur'an 2:286). God's absolute authority is assumed, yet so is humankind's capacity to act, and so, to be held responsible.

Individual and Community

Moral responsibility is the individual's. It is he or she who will be judged for acts done and undone. The Qur'anic imagery of the Last Day focuses on experience – fear, foreboding, gratification, and ease – all sentiments that are experienced individually. There is no sense that mere membership in any community, including the Muslim, is sufficient to guarantee moral behavior and hence a felicitous outcome on the Day of Judgment. At the same time, the Qur'an envisions a community sharing with Christians and Jews certain values, but sociologically apart from them (Qur'an 5:51). It is a community constructed by "commanding the good and prohibiting the reprehensible," a community in which Muslims offer "advice" to one another (Qur'an 7:79; Cook 2000). It is also a community that replaces the tribe and other kinship groups for purposes of marriage and association (Wagner 1977). Within the community, ethical requirements are shaped by roles: fathers and guardians, adult children responsible for parents, wives and mothers, husbands. What is required of one depends in part on what role one has (Qur'an 2:215; 2:180; 4:36).

Failure to act rightly is described as "going astray," but also as "betrayal," "enmity," and "reneging on one's contract" (Qur'an 20:121; 49:7; 66:3–4; 2:98). In later Qur'anic passages (that is, those that come first in the text of the Qur'an), there is a strong sense that ethical failure (e.g. fornication, lying, rejection of the Prophet and his message) makes the rejecter not just someone astray (*ḍāll*) but also an ingrate (*kāfir*) and an enemy of the community and of God (Qur'an 9:13–14). This perspective revalorizes the relationship between individual and community. It is not surprising that (a) some believed membership in the community guaranteed salvation, and (b) struggles over the issue of what constituted membership in the community and what merited expulsion raged so fiercely in early Islamic history (Hodgson 1974 I, 214–230).

In sum, there is no doubt that pre-Islamic pagan and Islamic Arabs shared values and ethical practices with Christians, Jews, Persians, and others in the Eastern Mediterranean milieu. Yet, given the state of the historiography, it is neither possible nor very interesting to try to determine the non-Arab, non-Islamic "influences" on Islam. With pagan Arab influences, we may be on somewhat firmer ground, though that ground is still mushy from speculation. The Qur'an gives us good evidence of early Islamic norms, not least because, read carefully, it is sometimes at variance with later Islamic ethics. The Qur'an represents humans as weak but capable of acting ethically, which it commands them to do. It exhorts Muslims to act virtuously, frequently without specifying what constitutes virtuous practice. It assumes humans can, by revelation, reflection, and intellectation, know the good from the bad. The Qur'an assumes human agency while recognizing that some seem doomed to act unjustly. Qur'anic ethics is

individualist while recognizing that knowledge can come from a community and is shaped by social and communal identities. What you must do sometimes depends on who you are.

Lacunae and Islamic Ethics

The key to the historical development of Islamic ethics is the structural tension between the appearance of a highly prescriptive tradition and the actual absence of a great deal of ethical prescription. The Qur'an requires one to act well, and very occasionally specifies in some detail what the good is. More often it simply exhorts the Muslim to do the good without further information. This created the expectation of detailed prescription without satisfying that expectation.

Take, for example, the repeated Qur'anic injunction to do "good deeds."[4] What constitutes or defines the good act? Ethicists looking for a Golden Rule definition of the good, or a utilitarian definition, or indeed any definition at all will search in vain. Rather, the Qur'an assumes that its hearers, certainly in the context of the 610–632 CE period of its revelation, would know the good from the not-good. In another passage, Muslims are told to "vie with one another in good works" (*khayrāt*), but the good works in which one is to compete are assumed to be known (Qur'an 2:148; 3:114). Indeed, a very common term for the good is *al-maʿrūf*, literally, "the known." Yet because it is known, it is not specified.

This would seem an argument for a kind of moral intuitionism. As Islamic ethical thought developed, nevertheless, the very prescriptivism of parts of the Qur'an text, especially in the chronologically later passages (generally toward the front of the Qur'anic text), where the details of contracts, of marriage, and divorce are spelled out, sets up an expectation of precise stipulation that is frustrated by such general terms as "the known" and "good works."

The Qur'an's anticipation of listeners' moral consensus can be accounted for by its rhetorical strategies. Its text is very often an attempt not to innovate, but to recast what the listener already knows. Hence the text is allusive, intertextual. In Chapter 12 (*sūrat Yū suf*), the genealogical narrative of Genesis that explains, through the Joseph story, how the Canaanite Hebrews came to be exiled in Egypt, becomes instead a story of prophetic trial and triumph that foreshadows the mission and challenges of Muḥammad. Similarly, the morally corrective passages in the Qur'an give Arabians a new perspective and new reasons to do the good, which they likewise already know. It is not to ignorance but to heedlessness that the Qur'an attributes human failings. So the Qur'an's prescriptivism and moral exhortation are in tension with the lack of actual Qur'anic textual prescriptions.

At first, the coherence of Arabian society in effect glossed over the gap between prescriptivism and prescription, but the transition from the marginal, lightly urbanized, relatively "mechanical" society of early Islamic Arabia to a complex, highly urban society dissolved the shared values that constituted the moral intuition of Arabs. To provide further "moral data," more information to fill the void left by the disappearance of the organic Arab culture, Muslims essentially enlarged the corpus of scripture. Added to the now-standardized Qur'anic text were anecdotes of norms and practices by exemplary members of the community, eventually almost exclusively of Muḥammad. These anecdotes, called *ḥadīth*, taken as a

4 *ṣāliḥah* pl. *ṣaliḥāt*; and in various verbal forms; the root appears 171 times.

whole, constituted the Sunnah, the exemplary norms of Muslims. One may see these as the articulation (and often invention) of norms to fill in the gaps created by such vague terms as "the good" or "good deeds." The gaps that provoked amplification through scripture also allowed the insertion of local practices and conventions. The indigenization that resulted was not only geographical and cultural, but also temporal. It was the way in which Islamic practices and values changed over time, a process Muslim jurists recognized in both their theory and their practice.

Evolution from Qur'anic to Third-Century Islamic Ethics

Qur'anic ethics was perhaps initially imperfectly understood and assimilated. It was certainly mixed with conventional norms of pre-Islamic Arabia. These norms, together with the practices of Muḥammad and of enthusiasts for the new religion, constituted Islamic ethics at the Prophet's death. The religious transformation of Islam during the two-year War of Apostasy after the Prophet's death (632–634) and the Liberation (*fatḥ*) of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Iran (634–656) must have seen a shift as dramatic as that of Judaism after the destruction of the Temple or Christianity after the conversion of Constantine. During this period the caliphs Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān reconstituted a fissiparating Islamic entity. They vindicated the truth of the Qur'anic message by subjugating much of the known world to Muslim Arabs.

Islam was now a free-standing entity. There was no Prophet to consult, nor could the Prophet consult God on behalf of the community. Muslims had to develop a practical moral epistemology, and techniques by which to discern what might be truly Islamic. The tradition preserves some accounts (perhaps authentic because contrary to later orthodoxies) about the abrogation of Prophetic practice by Abū Bakr and 'Umar to reshape Islamic practice according to contemporary conditions (see Motzki 2002). The successes of Abū Bakr in preserving "Islam" and of 'Umar in spreading Muslims, transformed Islam from a local ethnic cult to, eventually, a universal religion.[5]

The success of the "Emigrants" in conquering the Eastern Mediterranean lands and Persia was seen as a confirmation of Islam's truth. History was now twinned with Islam and Islam was understood to be efficacious in the larger world as it had been in the Arabian peninsula. This confirmation of Islam, together with the leisure and power that the Islamicate conquests had brought, led to the development of religious specialists. These were individuals who, by reason of personal piety, expertise, or lineage were believed to have insight into matters Islamic. Islam's success also gave them a task; namely, to bring human action into line with God's imperatives and so to continue the harmony between God's desires and Muslim action that, so they believed, had led to historical success. These experts elaborated the Qur'anic and praxic corpus into what became Islamic theology, law, and the ascetic spirituality that eventually was called Sufism. At first these formed three interpenetrating domains: the spiritual– ascetic, the legal–moral, and the theoretical.

5 That it was an ethnic cult at its beginning – at least in Arab understanding – is suggested by Qur'anic emphasis on the Qur'an as an Arabic document, and the Prophet as a national and ethnic figure. (Qur'an 7:157, where references to "illiteracy" should be read instead as "national." See EI2 s.v. *ummī*; Qur'an 16:103; 26:195.) Moreover, when the Arabs emerged into Syria the testimony of non-Muslims is that these earliest Muslims – describing themselves as "Emigrants [in God's way]" – refused access to Islam to non-Arabs (Hoyland 1997, 337–343). Later piety wishes to depict Islam as perfectly formed by the time of the Prophet's death.

Islamic theological ethics was concerned initially with two problems: membership in/leadership of the community, and predestination/moral responsibility. In the moral rigorism of early Islam these issues were inextricably bound together. Did moral failure mean expulsion from the community? Did moral failure disqualify one from leading the community? Was there a moral obligation to overthrow a corrupt leader? If acts were preordained by God as some passages of the Qur'an suggest, then was moral criticism possible? Was rebellion a defiance of God's providence? (Watt 1973).

In a letter attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Basrī (643–728) for the caliph 'Abd Marwan we see the beginnings of systematic thought about preordination. This develops into the theological position of Human Capacity (*qadar*), held most famously by the Mu'tazilah theological school. Al-Ḥasan worked through the issue by contextual and commonsense readings of crucial Qur'anic texts.

> God – He is exalted – has said {If you reject (*kufr*), God has no need of you, though He is not pleased with the rejection of His bondsmen; and if you acknowledge (*shukr*) He is pleased therewith for you. (39:7)} Were, "rejection" (*kufr*) what God decreed (*al-qaḍā'*) and determined (*al-qadar*), then He would have been pleased with it, as something He occasioned. God does not decree something and then be displeased with it; neither are injustice or oppression any [part] of the decree of God: but His command to do the virtuous ("the recognized" *al-ma'rūf*), and justice, and good deeds, and to be agreeable to one's kin *is* His decree.

On this question of human capacity, the response of al-Ḥasan's critics was largely pious slogans and a repudiation of the capacity of logic and precise argumentation to determine religious truth. In addition, *ḥadīth* were forged condemning the *Qadariyyah* by name. By the early 930s, scholars like Ibn Kullāb (d. ca. 854) and al-Ash'arī (d. ca. 936) had begun deploying the techniques of formal theology in defense of predestinarian positions. Eventually, for many, it became a matter of dogma that capacity is God's alone. Elaborate metaphysical constructs were created to reconcile predeterminism with human responsibility. Yet, at the level of moral sensibility, it is not clear that this dogma had any impact. Indeed, theology ceased by the twelfth century to be a significant moral science, for Muslims. They seem to have regarded things over which humans reasonably have control to be matters of moral responsibility, and those over which they did not have control to be God's decree.

We can see the early stages of another ethical tendency in a letter to the caliph 'Umar b. 'Abdal 'azīz attributed also to al-Ḥasan. There is little direct engagement with the texts of scripture in the letter, but, rather, a reflective spiritual engagement with its sentiments. This leads al-Ḥasan to an ascetic, world-renouncing perspective that devalued not only the pursuit of wealth but also any esteem for one's time in this world except as preparation for the next. It reveals an epistemology that was the very essence of later Sufism, one that valued contemplation and religious experience as sources of a religious knowledge that informed and paralleled scriptural knowledge.

> Know that reflection prompts to righteousness and acting according to righteousness; remorse over evil prompts to leaving [evil]. What passes away – though it be much – is not the equal of what abides, though seeking it be arduous. Bearing temporary pain followed by long ease is better than hastening to temporary ease that is followed by abiding pain.
>
> [The world] was presented, with its keys and its treasuries, to our Prophet, upon whom be God's blessings and peace. He did not take them, though there would have been no sin in it, but he

> scorned to accept them, though there was no impediment to doing so: He would not have been diminished a whit in God's sight. But the Prophet knew that God loathed a thing, so the Prophet loathed it; [He] belittled a thing so [the Prophet] belittled it; [God] disparaged a thing so he disparaged it.

These sentiments were not only those of marginal ascetics but were embedded in sermons, books of advice, and countless hortatory works. What is striking is that the devaluation of the world did not mean disengagement from it. The people who wrote and listened to these works participated in politics, married and had children, were employed, and lived in houses. Yet their valuation of these activities was remarkably low.

The continued engagement with the world and suspicion of radical removal from it results from a third ethical trend in early Islam. Islam's legal–moral sciences (called *fiqh*) and its ancillaries were to be the central intellectual discipline of Islam. They were the lens through which Muslims regarded virtuous and vicious acts and the instrument with which they sought to probe, categorize, and understand the good and the reprehensible. The inception of Islamic jurisprudence is seen in a letter plausibly attributed to the caliph 'Umar b. 'Abdal'azīz (r. 717–720), to whom allegedly the letter just quoted was addressed (Ibn 'Abd al-ḥakam and 'Ubayd 1927, 198 [my trans.]; see Reinhart 2001).

> The "religion of God," who sent His Book via Muḥammad, which he sent down to him, is to obey God and follow His command and avoid what He proscribed and observe His Boundaries (*ḥudūdah*)[6] and do His Duties and permit what he permits and forbid what He forbids and acknowledge His right (*ḥaqq*)[7] [to do so] and to judge according to what He has sent down in [the Book]. Whoever follows the guidance of God is well-guided and whoever impedes one from it {Has gone astray from the Path (Q2:108)}.

The task of Muslims, as they early understood it, was to determine what God had forbidden and allowed, to find his boundaries, and do his duties. While in the period of 'Umar b. 'Abdal'azīz these key terms probably had limited meanings, they opened up to the increasingly diverse world in which Muslims found themselves and incited assessment of all that confronted them.

By the time of al-Shāfi'ī (d. 820) less than one hundred years later, Islamic ethics is embedded in a nascent science of Islamic jurisprudence. The result, eventually, is a world which is sacramentalized. No act is of indifferent value: every act is either required, encouraged, permitted, discouraged, or forbidden (Reinhart 1983). Finding God's Duties (*farḍ*) is now a task for specialists with a distinct disciplinary epistemology. The motivation remains piety and apprehension of the Last Day. Yet the system is now on its way to becoming a complex casuistry that can estimate the virtues and vices of every possible human act and some that, if not impossible, are at least improbable.

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6 Later *ḥadd* (pl. *ḥudūd*) comes to be a technical term for the five crimes for which there are mandatory punishments (drunkenness, theft, adultery, slander, highway robbery). At 'Umar's time I do not think it had this restricted meaning, but meant rather the bottom-line rules of moral conduct.

7 The word means "truth," "right," but here, also, the claim that someone has on someone or something.

Conclusion

Islamic ethics originated in a complex world of various and competing norms – of other religions, Hellenistic reflection, pagan heroics, and debts of honor. The Qur'an no doubt reflects, and in many cases assumes, the existence of these norms, but refashions them in characteristic ways. As important as what the Qur'an says, is what it does not say. Those silences were challenges to Muslim scholars in the centuries to come.

Within two centuries, three characteristic approaches to ethics had appeared: a theological, speculative approach; an ascetic–spiritual approach; and a legal praxic-oriented approach. Though the legal approach developed into the "queen of the Islamic sciences," the other two did not disappear. Together, they formed a rich reservoir of possibilities and approaches that subsequent Muslims draw from and elaborate upon.

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CHAPTER 68

Islamic Ethics: Differentiations

Abdulaziz Sachedina

This entry emphasizes an inherent plurality in Islamic ethical discourse. The pluralist nature of Islamic religious discourse is inevitably bolstered by the absence of a religious institution resembling a church and an organized body of experts speaking on behalf of the entire tradition. Muslim theologians-cum-jurists belonging to different schools of thought have maintained a variety of opinions regarding human moral agency, sources of moral cognition and methods of ethical deliberations, and classifications of moral acts as required or recommended, forbidden or reprehensible. This entry will outline the main schools without going into all the subsequent variations that appeared, sometimes within a single school of ethical thought. Its essential argument is founded upon the variations in hermeneutical strategies pursued by representative Sunnī and Shīʻite theologians, to differentiate between the two main trends of ethical thought that dominate discussions about the ontology of moral action even today: (1) rationalist–objectivist and (2) theistic–subjectivist ethics. These two trends have also been a marked rationalist–traditionalist divide among Muslim scholars. Clearly, theological disputations about human freewill and predestination in relation to God's justice provided the critical evaluation of a moral act and its ascription to a human agent. Accordingly, I shall limit my analysis of differentiations to theological ethical discourse. Philosophical ethics, with its emphasis on purification of the human soul through the perfection of human character, which was taken up by Muslim philosophers and mystics, is beyond the scope of this entry.

Ethics in the sense of structured moral reasoning is a post-Qur'anic development that one studies in Muslim theology, rather than in the juridical corpus of the Sharīʻa. Some Western studies on Islamic ethics have argued that the essence of Islamic ethics should be sought in the Sharīʻa rather than Muslim theology (Reinhart 1983). Yet while the Qur'an offers normative moral guidance, it also takes seriously the cultural–historical context connected with the application of these norms in assessing moral responsibility. There is recognition of relativity in the matter of application. The Sharīʻa integrates only part of the ethical concerns connected with human conscience or intuitive ethical knowledge in its legal ordinances (Fakhry 1994a). As demonstrated below, Islamic legal theory recognizes an overlap between legal and ethical action guides without pronouncing the resolution as more than what the Sacred Lawgiver wishes humans to know, namely, moral and religious duties whose performance guarantees salvation and reward in the Hereafter.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Theological Debates Arising from the Qur'an

Islamic theological debates were shaped by the question of human agency and divine providence. These early debates had their genesis in the determination of the responsibility for the sinful behavior of those who were in power. Did they act as God's free agents or were their acts predetermined by God's overpowering will? To be sure, the Qur'an suggested a multifaceted correlation between divine predetermination and human responsibility. Inasmuch as human beings are free agents, they can reject God's guidance, although, because of their innate disposition (*fiṭra*) prompting or even urging them subtly to believe in God, they cannot find any valid excuse for this rejection. When human beings choose to reject this guidance, God denies further guidance to them (Qur'an 16:104). This denial of guidance clearly pertains to the guidance that would lead to the procurement of the desirable end, not to the initial moral guidance that is engraved in the hearts of all human beings, in the form of an innate disposition, to guide them toward the good end.

Significantly, it is at this point that theological differences among Muslim scholars become striking. These differences are rooted in two conflicting conceptions of human responsibility in the procurement of divine justice. The scripture-based discussions on human ethical responsibility were dominated by the proponents of the two major schools of Sunnī Muslim dialectical theology: Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite. Shīʿite Muslim theology shared its ethical epistemology with Muʿtazilites.

The basic Muʿtazilite thesis is that human beings, having been endowed with an innate capacity to know right and wrong, and having been endowed with free will, are responsible for their actions before a just God. Furthermore, good and evil are rational categories that can be known by intuitive reason, independent of revelation. God created the human intellect in such a way that, if unhindered by social traditions and conventions, it is capable of perceiving good and evil objectively. This is a corollary of their main thesis that God's justice depends on the objective knowledge of good and evil, as determined by reason, whether the Lawgiver pronounces it so or not. Without such objective ethical knowledge, and in the absence of any contact with a prophet or sacred scriptures, no human being can be held accountable for his or her deeds. In other words, Muʿtazilites maintained a form of rationalist objectivism (see Hourani 1971) that was further elaborated by guidance through revelation.

The Muʿtazilite standpoint was challenged by Ashʿarites who rejected the idea of natural reason as an autonomous source of religious–moral guidance. They maintained that good and evil are as God commanded them in the scripture. It is presumptuous to judge God's action. For Muʿtazilites, Ashʿarites argue, there is no way, within the bounds of ordinary logic, to explain the relationship of God's power to human actions. It is more realistic to maintain that everything that happens is the result of God's will, without explanation or justification.

However, Ashʿarites distinguished between the actions of responsible human beings and actions attributed to natural laws. Human responsibility is not the result of free choice; rather, God alone creates all actions directly. How does a human being become accountable for his or her actions? This was the source of moral quandary. If human acts are predetermined by God's will, then what is the purpose of the Day of Judgment and the final reward or punishment? Ashʿarites introduced the doctrine of "voluntary acquisition" to answer this question. In some actions, they maintained, a special quality of voluntary acquisition was superadded by God's will, thereby making the individual a voluntary agent and responsible for his or her action. Human responsibility is the result of God's will known through the revelation (the Qur'an and the Tradition, ascribed to the Prophet). This attitude of Ashʿarites to ethical

knowledge is theistic subjectivism. All ethical values are dependent upon determinations of God's will expressed in the form of revelation, which is both eternal and immutable.

Both these theological standpoints were based on the interpretation of Qur'anic passages. On the one hand, the Qur'an contains passages that would support the Mu'tazilite position, which emphasized the complete responsibility in responding to the call of both natural guidance and guidance through revelation. On the other hand, it has passages that could support the Ash'arite viewpoint, which upheld the omnipotence of God, and hence denied humans any role in responding to divine guidance (Rāzī 1938). The Qur'an allows for both human volition and divine will in the matter of accepting or rejecting faith that entailed the responsibility for procuring justice on earth.

The Nature of Islamic Ethical Discourse

When one considers the normative sources for standards of conduct and character it becomes obvious that besides scriptural sources, Muslim scholars recognized the value of decisions derived from specific human conditions as an equally valid source for social ethics. Early on, the theologian–jurists conceded that the scriptural sources could not easily cover every situation that might arise, especially when Muslim political rule required rules for urban life, commerce, and government in advanced countries. How exactly was the intellectual endeavor to be directed to discover the rationale (*'illa*) behind certain paradigm rulings provided in God's commandments, in order to formulate principles for future decisions?

The question had important implications for the administrators who were faced with the practical necessity to make justifiable legal rulings. There was a fear of reason in deriving the details of law. The fear was based on the presumption that if independent human reason could judge what is right and wrong, it could rule on what God could rightly prescribe for humans. It was admitted that although the details of the revealed law can be known through reason and aid human beings in cultivating the moral life, human intelligence was unable to discover what the reason for a particular law is, let alone demonstrate the truth of a particular assertion of the divine commandment. The divine commandments to which one must adhere if one is to achieve a specific end prescribed in the revealed law are not objectively accessible to human reason. Judgments of reason were arbitrary, as demonstrated by the fact of their contradicting each other, and reflected the personal desire of the legal expert.

One problem, then, was resolving the substantive role of reason in understanding the implicit rationale of a paradigm case and elaborating the juridical–ethical dimension of revelation as it relates to the conduct of human affairs in public and private spheres. Another problem was situating credible religious authority empowered to provide validation to the ethical–legal reasoning associated with the philosophy behind legal rulings. On the one hand, following the lead of Sunnī jurists like Shāfi'ī (d. 820) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855), Sunnī Islam located that authority in revelation. These scholars maintained the Sunnī doctrines expounded by the predominant Ash'ari Sunnī theologians. Among these doctrines was the one that maintained one could work out an entire system of Islamic law based on juridical elaboration of the scriptural sources. On the other hand, following the line of thought maintained by the Shī'ite Imams, Shī'ite Islam located that authority in the rightful successors of the Prophet. The Shī'ite Imams maintained there was an ongoing revelatory guidance available in the

expository ability of human reason in comprehending the divine revelation. It is exemplified by the solutions offered by the Shīʻite leadership.

In general, Muslim theologian–jurists paid more attention to God's creation than God's nature per se. In addition, they discussed human beings' relation to God as the Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge. They were also interested in understanding the extent of God's power and human free will as it affected the search for a right prescription for human behavior. In view of the absence of the institutionalized religious body that could provide the necessary validation of legal–moral decisions, the problem of determining the Sacred Lawgiver's intent behind juridical–ethical rulings was not an easy task. The intellectual activity related to Islamic juridical–ethical tradition can be summed up as the attempt to relate specific moral–legal rulings to the divine purposes expressed in the form of norms and rules in revelation. Given the incomplete state of knowledge about present circumstances and future contingencies, the jurists proceeded to make ethical judgments with a cautious attitude on the basis of what seemed most likely to be the case. Such ethical judgments were normally appended with a clear, pious statement that the ruling lacked certainty. Only God was knowledgeable about the true state of affairs.[1]

In due course, jurists were able to identify two methods for understanding the justification behind a legal–ethical decision. Sometimes the rationale was derived directly from the explicit statements of the Qur'an and the Tradition that set forth the purpose of legislation. At other times, human reason discovered the relationship between the ruling and the rationale. The jurists admitted and determined the substantive role of human reasoning in making valid legal or moral decisions. Moreover, human reason's role depended upon the jurists' comprehension of the nature of ethical knowledge and the means by which humans can access information about good and evil. In other words, it depended upon the way the human act was defined in terms of human ethical discernment about good and evil and the relation of the human act to God's will. Any advocacy of reason as a substantive rather than formal source for procuring moral–legal verdicts required authorization derived from revelation. All the jurist– theologians, whether Sunnī or Shīʻite, maintained that without the endorsement of revelation reason could not become an independent source of moral–legal decisions.

This attitude towards reason has its roots in the belief that God's knowledge of the circumstances and of the consequences in any situation of ethical dilemma is exhaustive and infallible. The revealed sources had provided the underlying rationale for some moral–legal rulings when declaring them obligatory or prohibited. Yet, on a number of issues, juridical rulings were expressed simply as God's commands that had to be obeyed without knowing the reasons behind them. For instance, the rationale behind the duty of seeking medical treatment is to avoid grave and irremediable harm to oneself, whereas the reason for the prohibition on taking human life is the sanctity of life as declared by the revelation. The commandments were simply part of God's prerogative as the Creator to demand unquestioning obedience. To act in a manner contrary to divine commands is to act immorally and unlawfully. The major issue in legal thought, then, was related to defining the admissibility and the parameters of human reasoning as a substantive source for legal–moral decisions.

1 The usual practice among Muslim jurists is to end their judicial opinion (*fatwā*) with a statement *allāhʻālim*, that is, "God knows best," indicating that the opinion was given on the basis of what seemed most likely to be the case, rather than claiming that this was an absolute and unrebuttable opinion, which could be derived only from the Qur'an and the Traditions.

Rationalist and Traditionalist Ethical Reasoning in the Revelation

The use of "rationalist" and "traditionalist" in this section conforms to the general identification of the two major trends in Islamic theological–ethical discourse above. Based on their cautious attitude toward reason as a substantive source for ethical–legal judgments, Muʿtazilites and Shīʿites fall into the rationalist group. In contrast, due to their emphasis on revelation, especially the Tradition, Ashʿarites fall into the traditionalist group. The process of formulating the methodology for deriving sound ethical–legal decisions was undertaken with a clear view of providing principles and rules for deriving predictable judgments in all matters of interpersonal relationships. Central to this discussion was the analytical treatment of the twin concepts of justice (usually defined as "putting something in its appropriate place") and obligation (sometimes defined as "promulgation of divine command and prohibition"). The concept of justice provided a theoretical stance on the question of human obedience to divine commands and the extent of human capacity in carrying out moral–religious obligations. The concept of obligation defined the nature of divine command and provided deontological grounds for complying with it. The commandments have reasons of their own that can be explained in terms of the function they fulfill for the good of humankind.

Gradually, these two responses emerged to meet the pressing need of providing consistent and authentic guidance in the matter of social ethics. Some prominent jurists of the tenth and eleventh centuries maintained that in deciding questions on which there was no specific guidance available from the normative sources of Islamic law and ethics, judges and lawyers had to make rational judgments independent of revelation. This was certainly the case when the law did not provide for peculiar situations. This was, obviously, the rationalist group. Other jurists disapproved of this rational method as not adequately anchored in the normative sources. They insisted that no legal or moral judgment was valid if not based on the revelation. There was no way for humanity to know the meaning of justice outside the divine revelation. In fact, the traditionalists contended, justice is nothing but carrying out the requirements of the revealed law. The revealed law, the Sharīʿa, provided the scales for justice in all those actions that were declared morally and legally obligatory. Eventually, the traditionalist thesis became the standard view held by the majority of Sunnī Muslims. Some Sunnī and the majority of the Shīʿite Muslims, on the other hand, maintained the rationalist thesis with some adjustment in conformity to their doctrine about the supreme religious authority of the Imam (see Hourani 1971; Fakhry 1994a, 1994b).

This cautious and even negative evaluation of reason in traditionalist ethics had a parallel in the systematization of juridical theory among Muslim jurists. The ethical–legal problem-resolving device was in search of a fundamental principle that could function as a template for the formulation of emerging ethical–legal decisions. The expansion of Muslim political rule beyond Arabia raised questions about the application of the rulings provided by the revelation. The jurists were quick to realize that such absolute application without considering the specific social and cultural context of these rulings was not without problems. After all, the rulings provided by the revelation emphasized specific human conditions related to custom, everyday human behavior, and ordinary language used to convey moral precepts and attitudes to life in Arabian society. Even when the moral law is wholly promulgated through divine legislation in the form of the Qur'an and the Tradition, such a law is objective because of the diversity that can be observed among human beings.

Very early on scholars of jurisprudence were led to distinguish between duties to God (ritual duties) and duties to fellow human beings (social transactions). Ritual duties were not conditioned by specific human conditions, and hence were absolutely binding. Social transactions were necessarily conditioned

by human existence in specific social and political contexts, and hence adjustable to the needs of time. It was in the latter sphere of interpersonal relations that the jurists needed to provide fresh rulings generated by changing conditions. The entire area of social ethics in Islam falls thereby under the social transaction sections of jurisprudence. However, authoritative decisions in matters of social ethics could not be derived without first determining the nature of human acts under obligation. The divine command, understood in terms of religious–moral obligation, provided the entire ethical code of conduct and a teleological view of humankind and the world. Violation of divine command, as Muslim jurists taught, is immoral on the grounds that it interferes with the pursuit of perfection that would guarantee salvation in the Hereafter. Ultimately, human salvation is directly connected with human conduct, that is, the subject matter of legal–theological ethics.

Every category of act, whether classified as incumbent, recommended, permitted, disapproved, or forbidden in the Sharīʻa, is founded upon explicit or implicit rules in the Qur'an or the Tradition. Thus, Sharīʻa, as a religious–ethical system, is theoretically able to discover the divine judgment on every category of human act in the area of "ritual duties" and "social transactions." However, Sharīʻa also investigates the revelatory sources, and the consensus of the learned, for their admission as evidence in deducing fresh cases occurring in different contexts. This part of juridical studies is concerned with legal principles or jurisprudence. Islamic jurisprudence is an inquiry into the principles of normative ethical judgments on external human acts. The philosophical aspects of ethics of action are concerned with fundamental questions about whether intellect on its own can rule things necessary, good, or evil (see Madkur 1960).

Categorizing Necessary, Good, and Evil Acts

To understand the impact of moral epistemology as worked out by the rationalist and traditionalist scholars, we need to see the way obligation or duty is defined and applied in practice. The derivation of ethical judgments (obligatory, recommended, and so on) is related to the ontology of good and evil in human acts. Ultimately, any valuation of divine or human acts is dependent upon the way relevant categories are constructed in theology first and then in law.

In Islamic ethics the categories of value terms resemble the categories of the Sharīʻa law, but their definition depends on the way human agency is perceived doctrinally. Among Ashʻarite Sunnī jurists all the Sharīʻa categories (obligatory, recommended, permitted, disapproved, and forbidden) are defined in relation to actual divine command and prohibition, the rewards and punishments by God in the next life. In contrast, among Muʻtazilite Sunnī and Shīʻite jurists, legal–ethical categories are defined in terms of their relation to whether action is possible from the agent as a result of his power to do it or as a part of his nature that is predetermined by God.

The Ashʻarī ethics roots ethical values in the commands and prohibitions of God. This was the divine command theory of ethics. An obligatory act is that which is commanded, and a prohibited act is that which is evil. The rules governing an ethical judgment are neither in the acts themselves nor in their properties. They are grounded in what God commands or prohibits. The ontological reference of an evil act is God's prohibition and not reason's intuitive judgment (Ghazzālī 1904–1907: 56–57). In contrast, Muʻtazilite ethics asserted that a command or prohibition, even by God, to do something is insufficient to make the act itself obligatory or evil. The obligatoriness or evilness is characteristic of the act as such. The ontological reference is either to an act's essence or category or to the circumstantial mode of its

occurrence. The agent is regarded morally responsible for the act as he or she caused it to come into being simply, or as knowingly and intentionally caused it to occur in a particular way. Hence, these characteristics have to be indicated by words other than just command or prohibition. Accordingly, the command or prohibition should read: "Do it, *because* it is obligatory," and "Don't do it, *because* it is evil." The commands and prohibitions that are admittedly part of the Sharīʿa possess ethical properties of their own over and above being commanded and forbidden by God (Ṭūsī 1980).

Muslim jurists define "necessary" or "prudentially necessary" in terms of the juridical category of the obligatory act from the standpoint of the self-interest of the agent.[2] An act is necessary when it is obligatory for the agent to do it if he or she is to avoid harm. It is also prudential because the act serves the practical interest of the agent. Expected harm in this life may be recognized by intellect; whereas expected harm in the next life is known only by revelation.[3] The ethical character of this concept becomes evident when one considers the objective–subjective aspects of a necessary act. An act's objective aspect is determined by the facts of the world other than the opinion of some judge or observer. This sense, this type of ethical knowledge is autonomous and self-validating, having been established by reason as necessary. On the other hand, an act's subjective aspect is determined by the opinion of some judge or observer. Reason does not determine anything morally or religiously necessary, nor are goodness and badness generic or essential qualities of action that can be known through reason. Rather, divine command and prohibition determines an act as good or bad, respectively.

The Muʿtazilite rationalist definition of "necessary" looks at the relations of praise and blame to the agent for the act. Accordingly, "necessary" as applied to an act is that for whose omission the agent deserves blame (Muẓaffar 1966, 24). For instance, when a person suffers pain because of donating a kidney, the two steps of donating a kidney and suffering of pain are connected by a relation of praise. At the same time, while the two steps are empirical facts, the relation of praise that the donor "deserves" is not so in any obvious way. "Deserving praise" suggests the appropriateness of the two successive events. This appropriateness is objective because "deserves" introduces a fact, which is truly or falsely predicated regardless of anyone's opinions. This was the doctrine firmly held by the Shīʿite legal–ethical theorists. The Ashʿarites, conversely, denied that an obligatory act was an attribute of certain types of act in itself. God's commanding of certain types of acts was itself the essential characteristic that made them obligatory.

The Ashʿarites denied the Muʿtazilite thesis that an obligatory act had an ontological reference in human reason on the basis of the observed fact that there was a disagreement among prudent and

2 There is much disagreement among theologian–jurists in the matter of the definition of *wājib*. The difficulty stems from the way an act is attributed to the agent. Those who regard a human act to be the result of human free will define it as an act whose omission deserves punishment. The term "deserves" imputes the responsibility of the omitted act entirely to the agent. On the other hand, those who regard a human act to be the result of the divine will define the *wājib* act as the one decreed by God, for the omission of which the agent is legally (*sharʿan*) censured. For these and other theological views and their analysis, see al-Juwaynī, al-Imām al-Ḥaramayn Abū al-Maʿālī ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd Allāh, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh* (Cairo: Dār al-Anār, 1400 AH/1976), Vol. 1, pp. 308–10. For the Muʿtazilite and Shīʿite views and objections, see Ṭūsī (1980, 203ff.).

3 Muslims in general believe that a true understanding of any matter related to the faith in the Hereafter is impossible without divine revelation. If we are to understand anything related to God, God himself must tell us. God tells people who he is by speaking through the prophets. His words are recorded in the books of the prophets, that is, the scriptures. Hence, in understanding God and his plans for humanity, we must rely on the Qur'an as God's revelation to humanity. As for the impending harm in the Hereafter for those who disobey God, this is known through the Qur'an.

intelligent persons regarding the obligatoriness of particular acts under varying circumstances. This observation-based rejection served as the fundamental characteristic of theistic subjectivism or voluntarism among the Sunnī jurist–theologians – more particularly, by the Sunnī law schools of Shāfiʿī and Ibn Ḥanbal. For them, an obligatory act is that for which there is a threat of punishment. A forbidden act is one whose omission is necessary, as prescribed by the revealed law.

It is important to note that the Qur'an distinguishes objective ethical concepts from God's acts of commanding and forbidding. Thus, when it says "be forward in good works," the category of "good works" is clearly founded on a universally recognizable moral good. It was only through the development of Islamic jurisprudence, and more specifically the legal categories of the Sharīʿa, that good was defined in terms of commanded and evil in terms of prohibition. Gradually, the Sharīʿa categories, such as acts of disobedience, were widened in application. They came to replace the original ethical terms like "abominable" and "detested," giving rise to ethical voluntarism (theistic subjectivism). This theory, as discussed above, equates the objective ethical categories of good and evil with God's commanding and forbidding, respectively.

The thrust of the Ashʿarite argument about an obligatory act is that the conditions that control what is obligatory in the actual world are created by the will of God. These conditions include human nature, which is completely predestined, and the human's natural ends, which are enforced by superior forces. God determines and commands the necessary acts for the natural ends of humanity. Moreover, God imposes sanctions for disobeying God's commands, which renders performance of these acts necessary if one wants to avoid God's punishment. There is no attribute that renders acts necessary for humans to perform in their own interest, other than that they are commanded by God. Accordingly, "necessary" means "necessary because God commands it" and because it is related in an essential way to the long-term interest of the agent.

The Muʿtazilites contended that certain acts of God are necessary for God because of the benefit they confer on God's creatures. For example, God must send prophets in order to inform human beings of the conditions of life to come and prepare them to do what is fundamentally right. As humans are obligated to do what is right and obligatory, so is God obligated to reward them for doing what is right and for fulfilling their moral obligations (Frank 1983, 206ff.). In contrast, the Ashʿarites did not regard as necessary that which benefits others, since there is no benefit to God in benefiting others. Since it is impossible to explain God's command in terms of any purpose or end, no reason or purpose can be evoked to explain voluntary conformity to God's command. The ultimate moral perfection of a human being is simply to obey without any expectation of reward in the next life.

Ḥasan, in general meaning "agreeable" or "fitting to an end," although translated as "good" is broader than the English "good." In relation to acts, good is "that for which the agent does not deserve blame" (Ṭūsī 1980, 207). The end or purpose of undertaking a good act may be that of the agent, other persons, or of the agent in one respect or one time, but not others. Thus, good is relative to the end specified, and what is good for John may not be so for Jack, or even for one of them in different respects or times. Thus, an irreligious person may call adultery "good" because he approves of it (Ghazzālī 1916, 100). The technical meaning of good is "whatever is fitting for any end in this life." However, the Ashʿarites have adopted the second technical meaning, namely, what is fitting only for the ends of the *next life*. The ends and the means are determined and assigned to everyone by revelation. Good can be extended to cover anything that agents are permitted to do (Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī [n.d.], 185). The Muʿtazilites, on the other hand, define good with reference to acts "for the performance of which the agent does not deserve blame."

Qabīḥ, "evil," is in many ways symmetrical with, though diametrically opposed to, good in its various meanings. Generally, the Ash'arites view evil as whatever is repugnant or inappropriate to an end, with attention to its relative rather than absolute character. But the evilness of an act is determined by divine command and not by its inherent nature that merits blame when committed (Asadābādī 1942, 9). These definitions of good and evil resemble that of "necessary." Instead of referring to what it is necessary to do for this life or the Hereafter, as in necessary, good refers simply to what is serviceable to an end, evil to what hinders attainment of an end.

Mu'tazilite belief in the autonomy of the human intellect to discern good and evil led them to object that the meaning of good in common usage is not restricted to what promotes an end, nor the meaning of evil to what hinders attainment of an end. People perform some acts on their intrinsic merits, when they cannot possibly foresee any advantage to themselves. Likewise, they avoid other acts as evil even when they can see no disadvantage to themselves. As an instance of intrinsic good sought, someone gives help and comfort to a dying person with no expectation of reward; she does it simply because it is good to help others in distress. As an instance of intrinsic evil avoided, a physician without belief in religion, and thus in no fear of punishment in the Hereafter, refuses to help a terminally ill patient to commit suicide, even under threat of execution for his refusal. Such a physician regards suicide as evil, not merely in relation to ends, but as evil in itself.

The Ash'arite belief that good and evil have no objective value offered rebuttals of these instances. They explained that the first instance could have been motivated by natural sympathy between human beings, by love of praise, or by the association of ideas which leads one to do in an abnormal situation what would serve an end in a normal one. In the case of a woman helping others in distress, one can detect a motivation based on the expectation that the patient would live and show gratitude. The second instance was explained by the agent's love of praise for not succumbing to the pressure, or by association of ideas (i.e. taking a life, however indirectly through physician-assisted suicide, is normally followed by harmful consequences). Ash'arites looked for self-interested or emotional causes for the acts mentioned, in order to avoid admitting attributes of good and evil intrinsic to the acts and acceptable or unacceptable to the rational mind regardless of personal ends. Their view of ethics is based on extrinsic relations of acts to good and evil. An act is good when it promotes human ends; moreover, it does so not by direct instrumental causation but because God has decided upon rewards for certain acts and punishment for others.

Such a view is coherent with the occasionalist theory of God's relation to the world (Hourani 1985, 143). According to this theory, all activity or development in the world is the result of God's irreversible and inscrutable decrees. A necessary connection between natural events or entities is incompatible with God's lordship or sovereignty. Part of this theory is the belief in God's command being good because it leads humans to attain their final reward. The end of an individual is the attainment of happiness, and happiness is to be found overwhelmingly in the next life. This is known from revelation. The primary means to this end are of two kinds: external acts of obedience to the revealed rules of conduct and internal cultivation of the virtues of the soul. External acts are helpful both because obedience is rewarded directly for its own sake and because these acts contribute to the acquisition of virtues. The inner state of the heart is more important than any external acts in the eyes of God and more conducive to reward. Yet none of the relations just described is causal. Acts do not cause virtues; they do not cause rewards in the next life. Even virtues do not cause rewards. In all cases, God through his grace bestows the rewards or moral progress. Again, God is the only cause and is under no obligation. Religious enlightenment consists

largely in understanding these revealed truths. The secondary means are principally knowledge and motivation. These are necessary for the effectiveness of the primary means to happiness. The mission of the prophets is designed to provide these aids, for scripture gives guidance and inspiration, both to acts of obedience and to the virtues. Finally, the Muslim community, when it is working properly, sustains the individual in various ways through its organization and leaders.

Corresponding to the primary and secondary means to happiness are two practical sciences: jurisprudence, which sets forth the principles to derive laws from the scriptural sources, and virtue ethics, which guides the formation of an agent's moral and spiritual character. Sunnī jurisprudence was founded upon the theory of ethical voluntarism. The core of the theory was that the value terms applied to action, such as "necessary," "good," and "evil," have no meanings in themselves. Accordingly, their application to action cannot be known by human reason. These categories acquire ethical meaning only when related to the commands and prohibitions in revelation. Knowledge about their application can be acquired exclusively by studying the revelatory sources. The opponents were, again, the Muʿtazilites and the Shīʿites with their objectivist rationalism. The objectivist position was the commonsense understanding of ethical terms in all or most cultures and languages. Most people think that when they describe someone as "just," "wicked," and so on, they are describing a real quality of that person (however hard to analyze), not merely some relation of obedience or disobedience to a social group or even to God. The presumption is that a common ethical language is being used, understood clearly and in the same way by the speaker and the addressed parties. Such a language could not depend on their prior acceptance of the particular scripture being delivered by the speaker. Muʿtazilite rationalism allows revelation an indispensable supplement position in determining important truths that reason unaided could not have discovered.

From the beginnings of Islamic theology Qur'anic references to the overwhelming power of God could not admit that human beings could ever determine on their own, without aid from scripture, what was right and what was wrong in the world, still less what was obligatory for God to do or not to do with his creation. The traditionalists naturally felt this way, since the Muʿtazilite claim undermined the utility of their collections of the traditions that were used as paradigm cases for moral–legal deliberations. More substantially, the Sunnī schools of law were inclined in this direction until voluntarism as a theory of jurisprudence was worked out with the most thoroughgoing logic by Shāfiʿī. Shāfiʿī insisted that the entire legal–ethical system could be derived from the revelation, that is, the Qur'an and the Tradition, without resorting to reason in the form of "sound opinion" of a jurist. On the side of theology, voluntarism with its theistic subjectivism found a champion in Ashʿarī (873–935) and his successors. In the sphere of ethics, the conservative spokesmen of Islam, who referred to themselves as "the people of tradition and the community," continued to react against Muʿtazilite rationalism. The main reason is probably that the Muʿtazilite theory was the only articulate theory that could be set in contrast to the prevailing trend of Islamic thought on ethics in theological and juristic circles.

Concluding Remarks

Muʿtazilites and Shīʿites avoid teleology by defining an act deontologically in terms of its character without reference to consequences. Although the main terms of their ethics affirmed the human ability rationally to know which acts are good and which evil, and to attain practical certainty about the means to ends, they explain "necessary," "good," and "evil" not entirely in relation to ends. "Necessary" as an

attribute of acts is defined as "that for the omission of which the agent deserves blame," "evil" as "that for doing of which the agent deserves blame," and so on. The blame can be known by any person of sound reason, as in cases of suicide and infanticide, without reference to consequences. This sharp turn from teleology to deontology in Muʿtazilite ethical theory was probably marked by the new prominence of obligation in Islamic legal–ethical thinking.

The prominence of obligation in revelation is underscored by the requirements of the Sharīʿa, the sacred law. These duties, as the Sharīʿa explains, must be performed by virtue of a contractual agreement between God and humanity. As God's creatures, human beings must serve divine purposes by obeying God's commands. In return for this obedience God promises rewards. Hence, judged on the basis of divine scales of justice provided in the Sharī'a, every human will receive what he or she deserves (Frank 1983). In such a contractual relation between God as the benefactor and human as the servant, obligation occupies a central role. The Muʿtazilites and the Shīʿites, thus, did not explain obligation wholly in terms of the interest of the subject and its good consequences. Rather, they were concerned to show the essence of a deontological perspective in ethics. Actions become obligatory because of the characteristic of "obligatoriness" in them (i.e. fidelity to promises, truthfulness, and justice).

Their central position on ethics is that a human being of sound mind can know in an immediate intuition that certain acts are good or evil prior to and without the aid of scripture. Ethical predicates refer to objectively real attributes and characteristics of actions they describe. However, ethical judgment should not be based merely on prima facie values of actions. Before arriving at a final decision, different aspects of an act should first be appraised separately, then these aspects should be weighed against each other to deduce an overall judgment. This process will lead to varying conclusions due to the varying circumstances of an act's occurrence. Ethical deliberations in certain classes of act, despite having an invariable value character, do not necessarily lend themselves to the derivation of a clear-cut final judgment. Still, it is in principle possible to derive from these absolute characteristics of a moral act a set of universal rules such that one can know the ethical value of any act in any given situation by reflecting upon the objective facts of value.

Some Sunnī Ashʿarite theologians did not deny the feature of objectivity in Muʿtazilite ethical concepts. They concentrated instead on opposing the partial and inessential feature of absoluteness in some of the rules. The main thrust of their attack is that ethical rules are grounded neither in the acts themselves nor in their rationally accessible properties. In other words, in moral cognition they turned attention to relativism versus absolutism, whereas for Muʿtazilites the issue was one of subjectivism versus objectivism. While some acts are essentially good or evil and agreed on by all people of sound mind without regard to relative conditions, Ashʿarites insisted that there could be relativistic definitions of good, evil, and so on.

This debate about moral epistemology remains contested by both Sunnī and Shīʿite scholars in their contemporary discussions about the modern project of searching for universal and absolute moral values, independent of revelation. Such a universal and autonomous claim is difficult to sustain without due emphasis on intuitive human reasoning in knowing good and evil objectively. Hence, it remains unacceptable to the majority of Sunnī jurist–theologians today. This rejection has led to epistemological crisis in juridical–ethical deliberations in matters that are beyond the scope of traditional jurisprudence. In fact, a majority of the issues related to social ethics in Muslim societies worldwide remains unresolved because of the conservative spirit that permeates juridical–ethical studies in the seminaries. Recent

scholarship to resolve this crisis (mostly undertaken by modern educated Muslims) is considered a dissident, secularist approach to social ethics in Muslim societies. Undoubtedly, nothing less than the reinstatement of reason as a substantive partner of revelation will bring back the Qur'anic ethical discourse to the center stage of religious revival among Muslims.

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CHAPTER 69

Muslim Ethical Trajectories in the Contemporary Period

Frederick Mathewson Denny

The Ethical Landscape of Islam

The ethical landscape of Islam and Muslims is a combination of mostly traditional legal, ritual, sociocultural, political, and rational customs, practices, preferences, and attitudes. Although formal ethical discourses flourished in classical Islamic philosophy, they did not inform the majority of Muslims about morality. They exhibited a brilliant ongoing intellectual tradition that occurred at elite levels. Muslims have generally depended on the Qur'an, Islam's revealed scripture, and the Ḥadīth, the reports of the Prophet Muḥammad's words and acts, for their moral and ethical guidance. The Qur'an

> is not a book of abstract ethics, but neither is it the legal document that Muslim lawyers have made it out to be. It is a work of moral admonition through and through ... If values and principles were to be derived from the entire Qur'an, it would be possible to build an ethical system that would be genuinely Quranic. (Rahman 1985, 8–9; see Fakhry 1994)

Historically, the Islamic imperium intervened with the great conquests and a system of law evolved. Although nominally based on the Qur'an and, increasingly, the Prophet Muḥammad's Sunna (the record of his teachings and example), it extended way beyond those sources in the interests of a complex state administrative and juridical apparatus. The early legists tended to derive their legal and ethical principles from extra-Quranic, general principles of equity and justice, which were difficult to apply in non-arbitrary ways. However, the principles also gave the imperial rulers great scope for a "state-made law that claimed to be sanctioned by Sharīʿa law" (Rahman 1985, 9). The early rulers seemed to have no illusions about their choice, so that the Qur'an would thenceforth function as a rectitude guide, certainly, but not as the actual juristic basis of legislation. In spite of that, the Qur'an was and continues to be of profound importance in individual, personal, and group morality apart from formal legal determinations.

The modern era has produced many Muslim thinkers and movements desiring to "go back to the Qur'an" in a general quest for the community's authentic, original faith and order in a manner reminiscent of the *sola scriptura* doctrine of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. The partnership of scripture and tradition has been at least as powerful a process in Islamic legal and political history as in Roman Catholicism, with the major difference being the former's emphasis on worldly governance and law

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

rather than the maintenance of a clerical hierarchy with a sacramental–penitential system of dispensing or withholding grace to adherents.

The classical sources of Islamic jurisprudence, at least in the majority Sunnī tradition, have been Qur'anic revelation, Prophetic Sunna as preserved in the ḥadīth literature, analogical reasoning (known as *qiyās*), and legal consensus, or *ijmāʿ*. Although the Qur'an is the supreme authority, closely followed by the Prophet's Sunna, analogical reasoning and consensus exerted great influence in defining, interpreting, and applying (or not) the contents of the two basic sources of teaching. Add to this the problem that so many of the ḥadīhs attributed to the Prophet were either outright forgeries or extremely weak as to provenance. This has been known since the science of ḥadīth came into being in order to evaluate and certify or dismiss candidate texts for the heritage of the Sunna in its literary form.

The Qur'an itself declares "in the Messenger of Allāh you have a beautiful pattern of conduct" (Qur'an 33:21). "Believe in Allāh and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet" (Qur'an 7:158). Such passages raised Muḥammad to a level such that his own charisma was perceived as having revelatory power, even though he did not claim such for himself. As the generations passed in the establishment of Islamic legal, political, and military sovereignty that was propagated through an extensive civilization, so too did the influence and prestige of Muḥammad, whether in law, spirituality, ethics, or popular piety. The range of material contained in the hundreds of thousands of ḥadīth reports that eventually accumulated is vastly wider and more detailed than the contents of the Qur'an. They reflect not so much the life and teaching of a morally upright religious visionary and reformer from the traditional tribally ruled regions of Mecca and Medina, as the complex and diverse problems and attempted remedies of a multicultural empire on a civilization-building development path. In time, Muslim political authority and religious–legal institutions extended from Arabia and the Fertile Crescent to the Atlantic in the west, India and Central Asia in the east, as well as far north and south. The figure of the Prophet Muḥammad assumed symbolic and mythical qualities far beyond the ways in which the early Muslim community regarded their revered spiritual and political hero.

In a manner similar to the ways modern Christian thought has distinguished the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith, so also Muslims have raised Muḥammad to a nearly supernatural level in popular piety. If many Christians are stirred to ask themselves when in need of moral advice, "What would Jesus do?" many more Muslims would raise a parallel query and even repair to their ḥadīth sources to discover what in fact the Prophet, as the perfect example for humankind, is reported to have done or said. Muḥammad continues perhaps to be the most frequently consulted source for practical and ethical questions that Muslims need to address.

Islam teaches that humankind is equipped with a sound constitution, called *fitra*. Although Adam and Eve sinned, God later forgave them, and by no means did they introduce a universal disability of original sin as a condition requiring redemption. Muslims are fully aware of the challenges and uncertainties of the moral life, which they believe is humankind's responsibility as servants of God. Humans are free agents under a just God; but on the Last Day, God holds them accountable for a moral and faith-centered justification of their deeds. In today's complex and closely connected world, Muslims are struggling to sustain their traditional faith and values while seeking ways to cope with the problems, perceived threats, and paradoxes of modernity, secularism, and interreligious relations. This entry focuses on three evolving ethical trajectories among Muslims today: human rights, Muslim women's rights, and progressivist initiatives in a tradition largely dominated by patriarchalist, fundamentalist, and cultural relativist attitudes, habits, and institutions.

Islam and Human Rights

Human rights are one of the most active contexts for practical ethical discourse among Muslims in the current era of globalization. It is often observed by Muslims that under Islam humans have no rights, only duties. One of the characterizations of a true Muslim is *'abd*, a "servant" or "slave" in relation to God. The best name that a parent can bestow upon a child, according to tradition, is 'Abd Allah, "Servant of Allah," or 'Abd al-Rahman, "Servant of the All-Merciful." The same Arabic root produces *'ibāda*, "service" in the sense of worship services. Like the Christian notion of *opus Dei*, "the work of God," and the Jewish *avodah* (a Semitic cognate of *'ibāda*), there is a strong sense of work, of labor in the service of God (cf. liturgy, "the work of the people"). Although the Qur'an describes the Muslim as God's "slave," it also bestows the title and privilege of being God's caliph (from Arb. *Khalīfa*) or vicegerent on earth. Humankind has a very broad scope in which to act. But there are no freedoms, let alone rights, for Muslims, apart from obligations.

There does not appear to be any basis in traditional, orthodox/orthoprax Islam – the dominant form today in this age of fundamentalist activism – for human rights in the modern Western sense, based on the individual person in a secular setting. There are, to be sure, legal rights for certain classes of persons within the Islamic system. Majid Khadduri, a leading specialist on justice in Islam (from Iraq, originally, but not a Muslim himself), has listed five important rights of Muslims. The rights are those "that Islam had recognized in the past and those which Muslim states have accepted after the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was issued" (Khadduri 1984, 235–237; see Arzt 1990). They are (1) dignity and brotherhood; (2) equality among members of the (Muslim) community regardless of race, color, and class [but not sex]; (3) respect for the honor, reputation, and family of each individual; (4) the right of each individual to be "presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law" (Article 11 of UDHR); and (5) individual freedom [in some sense, but this is a debated matter].

Concerning rights in comparison with obligations, one contemporary Muslim international relations specialist has written:

> Human rights exist only in relation to human obligations. Individuals possess certain obligations toward God, fellow humans, and nature, all of which are defined by the Shariah. When individuals meet these obligations they acquire certain rights and freedoms which are again prescribed by the Shariah. Those who do not accept these obligations have no rights, and any claims of freedom that they make upon society lack justification. (Said 1979, 92)

The differences between Islam and the West on the issue of human freedom are emphasized in Islam's position of viewing freedom as belonging to the community rather than the "anarchy of liberal individualism." Far from being opposed to the quest for workable global human rights standards and norms, "the concept of human rights must incorporate Islamic and other Third World traditions or it will continue to provoke irreconcilable quarrels" (Said 1979, 93, 96). The author has characterized the dominant Muslim view of the matter. It is a view strongly shaped by cultural relativism rather than the acceptance of universal values in a pluralistic, global context. There is clearly an urgent need for the development of mediating discourses, both heuristic and applied, in order to alleviate both cultural relativism and a widely perceived non-Muslim, secular mindset that does not respect religion in general, and particularly Islam.

Islam has always valued the collective community more than the individual person and views the latter as subordinate to the former. Individualism, in the modern Western sense and as related to human rights, is rejected by most Muslims. Bassam Tibi, an Arab Muslim scholar, writes that "rights are entitlements and are different from duties. In Islam, Muslims, as believers, have duties/*farāʿid* vis-à-vis the community/*umma*, but no individual rights in the sense of entitlements" (1994, 289). Tibi asserts a radical transformation in Islam will be necessary to endorse human rights for individuals. He sees Muslim efforts at defining human rights as biased in favor of the rights of Muslims, "in the meaning of the duties of believers," and questionable in their commitment to freedom of religion. "In their schemes Islamic authors provide a concept devoid of the substance of individual human rights." Cultural modernity, not cultural relativism, is what Tibi prescribes.

There are several notable initiatives among Muslims to specify human rights in response to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Yet these can be disquieting concerning protections for freedom of religion. This area is perhaps the most sensitive one from the Islamic standpoint. Islamic law prohibits conversion away from the religion and views it as a capital offense. Moreover, Islam views itself as the primordial religion of humankind, the "religion of unspoiled nature," according to Article 10 of the 1990 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1993, 6). Although Islamic legal prosecution of apostasy is as rare as it is unpleasant, it has some staunch proponents in extremist Muslim fundamentalism. A trend has developed whereby zealous Muslims declare a fellow Muslim to be an apostate and thus consider it lawful to take the accused's life. One Egyptian Muslim, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, who is widely regarded as "*the Islamic authority on human rights* ... issued a *Fatwā* (religious decree) in which he authorizes killing every Muslim who publicly subscribes to suspending the *sharīʿa*" (Tibi 1994, 290, n. 49; Tibi's emphasis). That decree was later used by Algerian fundamentalist fanatics to justify the killing of intellectuals.

Muslim discourses in recent years have sometimes skirted the concept of rights and instead focused on the basic "dignity" of human beings.

> All human beings form one family whose members are united by submission to God and descent from Adam. All men are equal in terms of *basic human dignity* and *basic obligations and responsibilities*, without any discrimination on the grounds of race, color, language, sex, religious belief, political affiliation, social status or other considerations. True faith is the guarantee for enhancing such dignity along the path to human perfection. (Cairo Declaration 1993, 3–4, Art. 1a; emphasis added)

Rights are abundantly referred to in the Cairo Declaration, but in every case they are linked to the Sharīʿa (i.e. God's revealed way for humankind) as the context for their interpretation and application. Regarding freedom of thought: "Everyone shall have the right to express his opinion freely in such manner as would not be contrary to the *principles of the Sharīʿah*" (10, Art. 22a; emphasis added). Or, regarding political participation: "Everyone shall have the right to participate, directly or indirectly, in the administration of his country's public affairs. He shall also have the right to assume public office *in accordance with the provisions of the Sharīʿah*" (10: Art. 23b; emphasis added). A final article states: "All the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic Sharīʿah" (10: Art. 24). The Cairo Declaration's preface affirms "fundamental rights and universal freedoms ... are an integral part of the Islamic religion ... [amounting to] binding divine commandment" (3). However, "relying on

the sharī'a to limit or dilute human rights means that the rights that are established under international law are being qualified by standards that are not recognized in international law as legitimate bases for curtailing rights" (Mayer 1998, 66).

The production of human rights declarations by international Muslim bodies is due, in part, to the perceived need for Muslim countries and organizations to get on board a global discourse in a manner that does not surrender their interests. Such activity in Muslim contexts also indicates a serious interest in universal human rights. In some cases there would be no declarations at all were it not for the language of Sharī'a referral cited above in several articles of the Cairo Declaration. The whole question of what the Sharī'a's authority, scope, and application will be in the future is somewhat open nowadays, in light of modernist reforming thought and Muslim feminist discourses. The politics of human rights, for Muslims, whether as an internal process requiring proper regard for the Sharī'a in the framing of declarations, or in universal terms where religion does not dictate – although it may agree – is a delicate, complex matter. How will Muslim majority countries provide for protection of human rights for all if the Islamic declarations they ratify leave non-Muslims and Muslim women under the ultimate regulative authority of Sharī'a law?

Muslim Women's Rights

Modern Muslim feminist reformers bent on changing the traditional patriarchal character of Islamic jurisprudence and male chauvinist cultural attitudes and practices have called for a return to the Qur'an. They see in the revealed text a much more balanced sex and gender discourse than in the later, developed legal system that relied heavily on prophetic ḥadīth of all sorts, as well as a male dominated cultural tradition of legal and ethical priorities. In other words, they view the traditionally prevailing patriarchalism as a repressive form of cultural relativism. There are significant feminist developments in Muslim countries today, although they have nothing like the power and range of such developments in the West. One problem is the perception among traditionalist Muslims – and their number is enormous – that feminist discourses in Islamic contexts amount to an invasion of godless Western ideas that will corrupt Islam and the Muslims. Muslim feminists have a rough road ahead in relation to such accusations (see Webb 2000).

A prominent Muslim feminist activist–scholar, Riffat Hassan, originally of Pakistan but now on the faculty of the University of Louisville, takes a position typical of pious Muslims who harbor suspicions concerning Western sincerity about human rights. Hassan is somewhat skeptical about universal human rights, but keeps her mind open to the possibility. She feels that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' failure to acknowledge religion as in any way a source of human rights is a "critical flaw" (Hassan 1996, 365). She also frankly acknowledges the failings and errors in the Islamic legal and theological traditions of the past that continue to haunt and hinder Muslims today. Hassan attributes these failings to patriarchalism in a manner paralleled by Jewish and Christian feminist discourses. The original, pure source of Islam – by which she means the Qur'an – is free of patriarchalism. The cumulative tradition of theology, law, and custom has been utterly dominated by males of a patriarchal mentality. Hassan discerns a number of human rights guaranteed by the Qur'an: Right to Life (6:151); Right to Respect (17:70); Right to Justice (5:8); Right to Freedom, including of religion (3:79); Right to Privacy (24:27–8, 58); Right to Protection from Slander, Backbiting, and Ridicule (49:11–12); Right to Acquire Knowledge (96:1–5); Right to Leave One's Homeland Under Oppressive Conditions (4:97–100); Right to Develop One's

Aesthetic Sensibilities and Enjoy the Bounties Created by God (7:32); Right to Sustenance (11:6); Right to Work (4:32); Right to "The Good Life" (2:229; 5:1; 17:34 et al.), and others (371–80).

Hassan acknowledges that the rights she finds in the Qur'an are not routinely honored by Muslims. She seeks to return to the Qur'an as the primary authority for Muslims in all dimensions of life. This approach she shares with most Muslim feminists. They see in the Qur'an the last best hope for change and improvement for women and all Muslims, as well. She laments the loss of freedoms that women in early Muslim times enjoyed. Hassan goes on to list egregious violations of women's human rights: murder of women by their husbands (e.g. in Pakistan) defended as "honor killings"; the expressions of sadness and disappointment at the birth of a daughter rather than a son; the marrying off of minor girls, often to much older males; the often extreme difficulty of divorce for women; the requirement that divorced women give up their sons at age 7 and their daughters at age 12 (generally); the extreme anxiety and fear caused by the constant threat of divorce; discrimination in inheritance; the putting away of women in veils and shrouds and behind "locked doors on the pretext of protecting their chastity, forgetting that according to the Qur'an confinement to their homes was not a normal way of life for chaste women but a punishment for 'unchastity'" (Hassan 1996, 363).

Riffat Hassan is a courageous woman who is faithful to her religion to the point of fighting for the restoration of what she believes to be its fundamental ethical principles, free of cultural relativism, particularly regarding human rights for all. It is questionable how free she would be to express herself in her native Pakistan. But her words and writings make their way across the globe, as she is an oft-quoted thinker.

If substantial numbers of Muslims returned to the Qur'an's admittedly more balanced and egalitarian teachings on relations between the sexes and their more nearly equal roles in public life, the conditions for women could substantially improve. But some thinkers who sympathize with Muslim feminists express reservations about the possibility of purely Quranically based reform, because the juristic traditions are so entrenched and authoritative. Clearly, the question of women's rights remains a pressing trajectory in Islamic thought and life.

From Fundamentalist to Progressivist Muslim Ethical Trajectories

This entry has not included a survey of conservative, let alone fundamentalist, Muslim thinking on ethics or theology in the contemporary era. If it had, such influential figures as Hasan al-Bannā' (d. 1949), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood; the Egyptian literary scholar and extremist fundamentalist reformer Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966); the Pakistani journalist Mawlana Abu-l-A'la al-Mawdudi (d. 1979); and the charismatic Iranian Shi'ite revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini (d. 1989), among others, would have been included. Sayyid Qutb, for example, characterized most of contemporary humanity, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, as steeped in *jāhiliyyah*, the "ignorant barbarism" that had plagued pre-Islamic Arabia before the coming of Islam. Qutb's views, particularly as disseminated in his polemical tract *Milestones*, continue to inspire and motivate a broad range of Muslim activists and movements, including their most extreme and violent fringes. Qutb called for a revival of Islam by having a "vanguard ... set out with this determination [of bringing total submission to Allāh] and then keep going, marching through the vast ocean of *jāhiliyyah* which encompasses the entire world" (Qutb 1990, 8–9). His words were prophetic. Sayyid Qutb has arguably been the most forceful articulator of extremist political Islam of the past half century.

Progressive and modernist thinkers in Islamic religious, ethical, and cultural discourse have also appeared, although they have attracted widespread media attention only recently. One of the leading exponents of what many Muslims increasingly prefer to characterize as a progressivist (rather than "modernist" or "liberal") approach to understanding Islamic religion and behavior is the Iranian philosopher and scientist Abdolkarim Soroush. He has sparked considerable controversy in his country through his criticism of a government run by clergy. He is a graduate of a respected theological school and qualified to belong to Iran's clerical guild. Soroush was also a staunch supporter of the Iranian Islamic revolution of the late 1970s. Later, he came to view the rule of Iran by mullahs as an inherent Islamic conflict of interest on ethical grounds. He has been writing and lecturing for some years on ethics, freedom, reason's role in responsible Islamic life, tolerance, governance, doctrine, and virtue. His views, expressed without apology for the criticism they engender, are attracting significant numbers of thoughtful Muslims who feel that their religion has for some time now been hijacked by extremists, terrorists, Wahhabi fundamentalists, and, in his native Iran, power hungry clerical government leaders and their minions.

Soroush alarms Muslim conservatives, particularly those who would subject all human rights to Sharīʿa standards. He claims:

> A religion that is oblivious to human rights (including the need of humanity for freedom and justice) is not tenable in the modern world. In other words, religion needs to be right not only logically, but also ethically ... Simply put, we cannot evade rational, moral, and extra-religious principles and reasoning about human rights, myopically focusing on nothing but the primary texts and maxims of religion in formulating our jurisprudential edicts. (Soroush 2000, 128)

The final remark clearly sets Soroush apart from the conservative, scripturalist legal and ethical discourses that dominate Muslim religious ideologies today, whether in the Sunnī or Shiʿite worlds. Soroush's respectable following in Iran may come as a surprise to Westerners. It is a welcome trend in a nation that wants to participate in the larger world and half of whose population was not born when the revolution occurred.

Soroush views ethics as the "groundwork of religion and life" and thus inherently "delightful." He sees a

> kind of sanctity in ethics that places it above analysis, experimentation, and reduction ... Ethics seems to entail its own "indeterminacy" theorem. As the accuracy of one side increases, the generality of the other decreases. This lack of determinacy is the enigma of enigmas. It reveals not only that ethics is not an exact science but also that it will never be. Even if we follow the lead of the Muʿtazilite school of thought in designating good and evil as natural and objective categories, deriving ought from is, and establishing commonsensical moral maxims as self-evident, *a priori* precepts devoid of cultural relativity and contingency, we still have failed to shed even a sliver of light on the problem of the "indeterminacy" of morality or on the nature of rights, justice, fairness, power, and freedom. (Soroush 2000, 105ff.)

The Muʿtazilite rationalist theologians of the golden age of Islamic civilization in Baghdad called themselves the "People of Justice and [divine] Unity." They dominated the Abbasid caliphal court of al-Ma'mūn (d. 833) in the ninth century and headed an inquisition (*miḥna*) in defense of their doctrinal

views that lasted for fifteen years (833–848). In a manner that would be imitated by other theologians in later centuries, including Christians such as Thomas Aquinas, the Muʿtazilites averred that God can be known through reason. Where the Muʿtazilites exercised a rationalism unique to their movement was in ethical discourse (see Gimaret 1992). Reason alone enables humans to determine what is good or evil. The Qur'an confirms what reason dictates, in many cases, but it also provides guidance on what humankind's obligations are under God. The duties of prayer, almsgiving, and so forth are indeed clearly commanded and regulated by the revealed text. There is a great deal of flexibility by which humans may determine ethically sound alternatives among the countless ambiguous and indeterminate choices that arise in life beyond ritual obligations.

Soroush operates in the general framework of ethical discourse that the Muʿtazilites developed in classical times. The Shiʿites have, in fact, continued to cultivate Muʿtazilite-style theological and ethical discourses. Soroush's rational basis as a Shi'ite thinker is not out of the ordinary. But his independence and boldness go far beyond academicism and addressing traditional theological and moral topics. He is not interested in Muʿtazilism per se, but in what Muʿtazilites and other rationally committed believers, whether Muslim or not, have been about wherever they may be found. He insists that one "may not employ reason to attest to the truth of one's opinions, without leaving the door open to its fault-finding critique. The attempt to enjoy the sweet affirmation of reason without tasting its bitter reproach is pure self-delusion" (Soroush 2000, 154).

In his essay "Tolerance and Governance: A Discourse on Religion and Democracy," Soroush argues that only free, democratic societies can provide the environment for the full exercise of reason in a synergistic relationship to faith. Here he is evidently referring to totalitarian Muslim nations and societies. "Religious despotism is most intransigent because a religious despot views his rule not only as his right but as his duty. Only a religious democracy that secures and shelters faith can be secure and sheltered from self-righteous and anti-religious rule" (Soroush 2000, 154; see also Vakilli 2002).

Conclusion

This entry has charted trajectories in Islamic ethics from fundamentalist to progressive, and through debates about human rights, cultural relativism, and feminism in Islam. These trajectories are obvious forces in the current world. Yet we should conclude this discussion by pointing to an important insight. Soroush contends that much of what is awry in contemporary Islamic theological, ethical, social, and political discourse relates to the mistaken sense that being a Muslim essentially means adopting and defending a particular identity.

> I think one of the greatest theoretical plagues of the Islamic world, in general, is that people are gradually coming to understand Islam as an identity rather than a truth ... So, I believe that the Islam of identity should yield to the Islam of truth. The latter can coexist with other truths; the former, however, is, by its very nature, belligerent and bellicose. It is the Islam of war, not the Islam of peace. Two identities would fight each other, while two truths would cooperate. (Soroush 2000, 24)

Were Abdolkarim Soroush simply an academic voice speaking from the ivory tower, his views would perhaps be noticed, but essentially disregarded, by most Muslims. The fact that he is also a Muslim

public intellectual, however controversial, in Iran and beyond in the Islamic world, suggests that progressivist Islamic theological and ethical discourses are on a rising trajectory.

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4 Buddhism

CHAPTER 70

Buddhist Ethics?

John Ross Carter[†]

Situation Prior to System

Ethics, as a discipline in Western philosophy, is a second order reflection on morals. "Buddhist ethics" would refer to a second order reflection on issues of morality, which issues have to do with first order questions and circumstances. Yet first order questions arise from a kind of *zero level* of intuitive awareness, that is, an immediate apprehension of the circumstance of a particular moral case, and one's response mindful of living well, of religious living. The zero level is intuitive awareness, the starting point for subsequent reflection. It is more non-reflective or less deliberate than first order questions about what to do.

A quest for an understanding of this zero level of intuitive awareness is basic to any adequate account of what might be called Buddhist ethics. I will return to the notion of zero level later by introducing two important contributions made by Theravāda Buddhists – a profound notion of awareness and a complementary sense of self-censure together with a corporate sense of mutual respect – and a contribution from Jōdo-Shinshū involving salvific awareness and a sense of indebtedness. Scholars have drawn attention to "systems building" in ethical considerations within the philosophical heritage of the West. Such systems building might appear, on the one hand, to comprehend a disparate subject, covering centuries and cultures. On the other hand, finding a conceptual system of sorts might be the result of projecting a pattern, a network, schematized grid, upon the subject. The point of a persuasive ethical theory is its applicability in providing rational norms, for ethical decision making, to an evermore inclusive group of people. And the cogency of the rational system is that it provides for commonality in moral discourses relevant for all moral agents regardless of soteriological orientations, ultimates, or engagement with transcendence.

Buddhists have developed systems, too, but of a different order. Any heritage presented to posterity as a path to enlightenment will have its guideposts. A tradition perpetuated through chanted texts in verse and prose will tend to develop mnemonic systems. And in a large textual tradition considered basic for determining the intention of the Buddha, commentarial and exegetical systems for structuring the teachings variously will arise. One thinks of the impressive Abhidhamma literature. One of the oldest continuing religious institutions known to us today, the Sangha, would be expected to have developed systems of rules and regulations for appropriate and supportive communal religious living. So, Buddhists are not unfamiliar with systems. But these systems were built and maintained in order to indicate a life pattern proclaimed to be soteriologically efficacious. They have been formulated and maintained in

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Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

order to provide orientation for one's response in becoming engaged with transcendence. Generally, throughout Buddhist history, the systems that have appeared are founded on a fundamental affirmation: the human mind, having become freed from confusion infused by ego assertion, can achieve clarity in perception and knowledge of proper action, entirely attuned to what is fitting, and grounded on the abiding presence of salvific truth.

All of the above suggests the need for an approach, even perspective, that would lead one to consider Buddhist ethics without searching for a general normatively governing first principle or a systematic rational theory. How might one do so? We might look to virtuous persons as models for how to live. A person who seeks to pattern his or her life either directly upon, or by analogy with, persons whose virtue is determined by the cumulative experience and wisdom of the tradition, can provide us with an example of how that tradition coheres, how manners become supportive, and how analogy can be morally instructive. And we learn this without reflecting on a coherent general system of ethics. But when we turn to a study of persons living in another religious tradition, in another culture, or in another time, we become aware, quickly, that an enormous shifting complex of ideas, habits, customs, outlooks, orientations, manners, local histories, and the like, confront us. How does one spot in another person a virtuous quality worthy of emulation?

"Virtue ethics" stemming from Aristotle and his notion of *eudaimon*, which has rightly become interpreted as "human flourishing" rather than "happiness" and is best understood to mean "becoming genuinely human," did not hinge on rational argumentation deduced from a system, but was the result of watching and observing, learning from a virtuous person. If Aristotle had known Sanskrit, surely he would have utilized, in this context, *kalyāṇamitra*.[1] The constructive and supportive assistance provided for one by another person of noble bearing is also communicated in the Theravāda tradition by a standard compound, "voice of another" (*parataghosa*), a timely and well warranted word which helps one to live well (Hardy 1962, 8). There is something of a pattern here, of course, a kind of system, but in a secondary sense. Articulating the position requires systematic construction. Living it requires sensitive receptivity, engaged attentiveness, awareness of what one might call the moral moment, as well as awareness of what one can become. This, in the case of Aristotle and in the Buddhist, too, is at the foundation of the religious life.[2]

From among many strands in this magnificent Buddhist tradition I will consider two that are rarely addressed together: the Theravāda and the Jōdo-Shinshū. There is a theoretical model that arises from this consideration that best fits Buddhist thought and practice, the individual components of which are not entirely unknown in current discussions of ethics in the West. We can call this an *intuitional particularistic virtue ethic*. The "particularism" involved in this account reflects the inadequate applicability of uniform rationalistic "systems" and maintains the distinctiveness of moral situations. The "intuitional" addition indicates attention to that zero level mentioned above. The "virtue ethic" component suggests a commitment to cultivate an enhanced character.

1 A person of impressively alluring qualities, such as having faith, being well-learned, generous, virtuous, and wise, who becomes one's friend, leading one into an enhanced quality of life through rebuke, or admonition, or instruction while consistently maintaining the quality of being a marvelous exemplar.

2 The Japanese have distinguished *dōtoku*, "morality, morals," better "virtue" or "excellence" (*toku*) of the way (*dō* [cf. *tao*/*dao*]), and *rinri*, "ethics, morals, a code of conduct." The former is religious; the latter, more recent, more like current Anglo-American notions of "ethics."

Awareness

Intuitional particularism is not merely subjective in the sense of originating from an individual's whimsical opinion or off-hand reaction. It is generated by and grounded in a much broader context of salvific truth: dharma/dhamma in its highest and most comprehensive sense. We can now trace this kind of intuitional particularistic virtue ethic in two traditions.

Theravāda

The Theravāda tradition has preserved a magnificent account of a salvific transformation involving a cluster of interrelated concepts concerning one's coming to know, to understand, to realize, to perceive, to "come upon," to attain, to awaken, to be aware, to have discriminative knowledge, to apprehend.[3] And there is that great salvific realization translated roughly as "salvific insight-wisdom" in both the customary (*lokiyapaññā*) and world-transcending (*lokuttarapaññā*) dimensions. We have here an *intuitional particularism* that is grounded in a soteriological worldview: be aware of the way things have come to be. One reads, in the Chapter on Awareness (*appamāda-vaggo*) of the *Dhammapada*, "The path to the Deathless is awareness; Unawareness, the path of death ... Having known this distinctly, Those who are wise in awareness, Rejoice in awareness" (*Dhammapada*, vv. 21–22). The Commentary (*Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*) provides a significant gloss, " 'Awareness [*appamādo*]' Now this [awareness] illumines a massive meaning, spans a massive content; for the entire Word of the Buddha included in the three *piṭakas* taken up and given articulation, boils down to the word 'awareness' only." And, further, the Commentary says, "Now this [awareness] is in essence 'not being bereft of mindfulness [*sati*]'; it is [just another] name for constantly occurring mindfulness [*niccam upaṭṭihitāya satiyā*]" (pp. 109–110). "The Old Commentary of the *Dhammapada* (with Glossary)" (*Dhammapada pūrāṇa sannaya granthipada [vivaraṇa sahita]* fourteenth century), adds, "Awareness, which is 'not being bereft of mindfulness,' with regard to the sphere of qualities of good conduct, is the fundamental cause for all wholesome dharmas and for the benefit of oneself and the benefit of others, pertaining to this world and the next" (p. 431).

This focus on awareness or mindfulness (*appamāda* and *sati*) reflects a dimension of the dynamic core of Theravāda Buddhist thought. It is entirely applicable to human activities ranging from social interaction to quiet meditation, from resolving conflicts between persons to calming the flurry of one's mental activities. Given a moral situation demanding a response, being aware of what has been done and is going on, both generally and particularly, responding in a way that is beneficial for one and for others, and also understanding the causal sequences that have given rise to this or that particular situation, puts one in a position to reflect with insight on the proper course of action. This reflection is not in a conceptual vacuum, devoid of supportive or informative structures provided by a particular cultural context. It is not uninfluenced by the wisdom of a cumulative religious tradition and the example of persons of noble bearing. The importance of the reliability of cognitive processes is emphasized by the prevalence of the key Pali terms already noted. One is not cut adrift, as it were, or left to one's own wits to come up with an appropriate response in a given circumstance.

3 Consider our terms above: *yonisomanasikāra*, *yathābhutañāna*, and also *avabujati*, *avabodha*, *avabodhati*, *avagacchati*, *adhigacchati*, *vijānati*, *bujjhati*; indeed, *buddha*, *bodhi*, *appamāda*, and *sati*, to mention but a few.

Closely associated with this notion of awareness (*appamāda*) or mindfulness (*sati*) and providing a central dimension of human self-understanding at the core of Buddhist sensitivities about how to act, arising from the zero level, are notions which are considered "two truly supportive qualities that are guardians of the world" (*dve dhammā lokapālakā*). The two are a sense of "shame" (*hiri*) and a sense of "blame" (*ottappa*). The "shame" in this case has to do with modesty based on a natural valuing of oneself, one's basic sense of self-worth, even respect for oneself (*attagārava*). One would refrain from what is detrimental (*pāpa*) because such behavior is embarrassing, leads to one's being ashamed, is self-incriminating, is simply that which one would not bring oneself to do. The sense of "blame" arises from an awareness of others, a valuing of others, respecting others (*paragārava*) in the sense that their opinions matter. Both of these dimensions, personal-and-also-social, alive dynamically, cooperate in leading one not to do what is detrimental (Warren 1950, ch. 4, para. 142, p. 393).

So one discerns "ethical" parameters, if not quite a formal systematic pattern. One notes the importance of recognizing interdependency (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and the life setting which is impermanent (*anicca*), awry (*dukkha*), without enduring substantiality (*anattā*). Knowing what persons have done for one (*kataññu*) is an important variable. The perception of how matters have come to be as they are (*yathābhutañāna*) and thinking carefully about the given circumstance (*yonisomanasikāra*) provide sure foundations for acting with insight. Appropriating the admirable dispositions (*brahmavihāra*) of friendliness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*) which have arisen in the contemplative life, one contributes to one's own quality of life and benefits others. And these parameters, as well as the paradigms provided by noble persons (*kalyaṇamitta*), are available for one in the context of cultural mores and manners, of one's own sense of what is personally and socially appropriate (*hiri* and *ottappa*). Uppermost and foundational for all of this are unobtrusive awareness (*appamāda*) and mindfulness (*sati*). Insofar as one's actions are in accord with those parameters, one acts morally. The response is intuitive *within* the scope of these parameters. Combining some or all of these parameters with the almost limitless particular circumstances that might arise leads to a multiplicity of possibilities and a variety of analytic interpretations. Yet an act is right to the degree that it is in accord with dharma/dhamma in the deepest and widest and highest sense: from what is fitting, as culturally determined, to what is righteous, in the sense of just, and to what is explicitly taught in the religious tradition, to salvific truth.

Jōdo-Shinshū

We turn now to Jōdo-Shinshū, in Japan, and Shinran (1173–1262). It should be kept in mind that this movement is, so to speak, on the other side of China from India and the Theravāda. The Buddhist cumulative tradition moved from North India, through Central Asia, through China, with all the associated vicissitudes of history, cultural inter-impingements, and creative intellectual responses, and subsequently into Japan's cultural matrix. It did so centuries before Shinran was enabled to grace humanity with profound insights.

Jōdo-Shinshū notions might be more adequately understood in light of parallel Theravāda ideas. For example, there is the great Jōdo-Shinshū term *shinjin*, which the majority of English-writing interpreters have unhappily translated as "faith." The term actually means the arising of a pure, genuine, authentic heart/mind. It is the mind of Amida Buddha given to one in a salvific instance when the utterance of praise for Amida (*nembutsu*) arises without any calculation (*hakarai*) whatsoever in a person of faith.

The soteriological force of this notion seems entirely similar to what Theravāda Buddhists have known in "world-transcending insight-wisdom" (*lokuttarapaññā*) upon the arising of the soteriological path (*magga*) (Carter 1987). Shinran urged that one avoid calculation (*hakarai*), wondering all the while whether such was possible. Surely, he maintained, overcoming calculation could not be the result of one's own deliberate effort. We always have some ulterior motive, some subtle self-oriented agenda determining our actions. So, of course, the arising of *shinjin* is not the immediate result of *our* actions. A Theravāda Buddhist might begin to understand the qualities of a person who lives and acts without "calculation," in a manner the older tradition knew as without "self-estimation" (*mana*).

Shinjin, an awareness suggestive of zero-level immediate consciousness, is a very difficult notion to try to put into ethical analysis. But inferring that the notion is much too subjective to provide a basis for understanding the way things are would be amiss. Nothing is more personal, it seems, than *shinjin*; yet because *shinjin* is the mind of Amida Buddha, nothing is more expressive of the truth of the way things really are. Persons in whom *shinjin* has not arisen would turn again to the notion of analogy for a procedure by means of which to determine how to act well. The presence of *shinjin* yields a quality of character entirely admirable and symbolizes a spontaneity of compassion in the life of a person completely consonant with the order of compassionate reality in the world. Acting in consonance with this personal quality and salvific reality is moral.

Another near zero-level category among Jōdo-Shinshū Buddhists is *button*. It means standing in a relationship of indebtedness to Amida Buddha and also to Shakyamuni Buddha for what has been done for one by them (compare *kataññu*). The sense of indebtedness, communicated in the notion of *on*, is also at the core of Japanese sensibilities about what is involved in human relationships. There are other key terms indicating contextuality of interpretation of one's life setting in particular circumstances: that one has taken refuge (*kimyō*, *kie*; compare the Theravāda notion of *saraṇa*), that one has entrusted one's life (*tanomu, makaseru*) to compassionate reality, and that one is capable of authentically understanding, really hearing, the salvific efficacy in the order of reality, metaphorically communicated as the call of Amida. All of these notions are integral in the key concept of *shinjin*. In Japan the Buddhist tradition has not forgotten the twin dimensions of becoming engaged with the fundamentally real and of humanity at its comprehensive best; of wisdom (*hannya* and also *chie*, compare *prajñā*, *paññā*) and compassion (*jihi*, compare *karuṇā*).

In What Sense "Buddhist Ethics"?

Where does this bring us in our consideration of "Buddhist ethics"? There appears to be no clear-cut system gaining prominence. Within the cumulative tradition one can infer a deontological (from the Greek, *déon*, what is necessary, proper, right) scheme, that is, acting in accord with what is fitting, proper, and right, acting from a sense of duty. One surely could so interpret actions in light of dharma/dhamma, that is, acting both from and in accord with dharma/dhamma. This deontological dimension can be seen in the monastic community and the commitment to obey rules of the discipline (*vinaya*). One can also readily find themes that indicate a teleological structure, a focus on the consequences of one's actions (*kammavipāka*/*kammaphala*) or in the soteriological efficacy of dharma/dhamma yielding to the arising of Nirvāṇa/Nibbāna. In a given circumstance, a Buddhist might well lean toward one or the other of these orientations in determining how to act, or might find his or her motivation arising from varying degrees of awareness of these orientations. Further, the quality of cultivating virtue, becoming fully

human, is also present for Buddhists as a framework for moral action. One is to act in such a way as to become a virtuous person imaged by the paradigm of the Buddha, leading saintly figures of the past, and persons of virtuous quality living today (*kalyāṇamitra*). All these orientations (duties, consequences, awareness, and paradigms of virtue) can be present at the moment of decision, and each to varying degrees. And there can be occasions, surely, when these categories of ethical analysis do not clearly arise.

It is at this point that terms addressing the importance of being aware, of having the capacity of analyzing the situation at hand, lead one to insist on the significance of *intuitional particularism* in "Buddhist ethics." The emphasis placed on understanding the particular context, how it has come to be, in what sense it has arisen with ramifications for other issues, not in subjective isolationism but in the supportive context of a person engaged with a received tradition, enables one to explore moral responses without subscribing to a normative general theory or system, to respond to the particular case with moral integrity. Key in a consideration of Buddhist ethics is a recognition of the priority of a person's capacity to apprehend the given situation, the causal processes giving rise to a particular circumstance, and, simultaneously, to sense a grounding in a received tradition, both religious and cultural. This *capacity* and this *sense* do not at all bind the person into a scheme or system or theoretical rubric primarily so that he or she can know how to act in a morally praiseworthy way, but to enable that person to live freely and well as a genuine human being, that is, to live religiously.

Comparative religious ethics needs somehow to move to an understanding of a zero level as the ground from which persons begin their reflection on responses in circumstances that can then be considered moral. Care must be taken not to separate a study of ethics from an understanding of religious living. When we focus on categories developed in an intellectual heritage not arising from the religious worldview of the persons whose actions are being considered, we run the risk of developing systems while not understanding persons. Stated more strongly, "ethics" itself must begin with awareness of the forces from which it arises, the lives of religious persons.

The zero level, the area of presuppositions, assumptions, and basic frames of reference, is the level at which one would want to work. At that level, Buddhists offer a view of humanity that is at ease with an intuitional response to the wisdom of the cumulative religious tradition and the cultural context at large. One finds an ideal orientation to living well that is founded on awareness and leads to the formation of persons. This clarifies the importance of intuitional particularism in describing Buddhist ethics. But our focus on the zero level has also led us further – and deeper – to foundational thinking about who we are as moral human beings. Some thinkers stress human freedom and the importance of autonomy in decision making as the crucial foundation of ethics. We have seen how Buddhists propose a foundation for moral action – awareness – that allows for the exercise of freedom, even the necessity for autonomy, but that offers an orientation in which autonomy is neither primary nor an end in itself. A decision-making orientation that seeks rational and defensible foundations for ethical choices seems to stress the formation of systems. When awareness is foundational, emphasis is placed on the formation of the person, and hence our emphasis on the presence of a component of virtue ethics. In the former case, the check on human behavior is rational consistency. In the latter case, a pointer is provided by the wisdom of tradition and the example of noble persons.

Persons have averred, remarkably, that when one is truly aware, when awareness or mindfulness fully arises, one *will* act well. From this point of view, one acts best when one acts with the wisdom and compassion that reflect reality, when one does not calculate or engage in the kind of self-estimation that centripetally focuses on ego-centeredness, when one acts with awareness of propriety and of what is

fitting in community, when one avoids "clinging to views" (*diṭṭhupādāna*), or seeking defensible rationales, or being driven by adherence to a system of thought. Awareness is foundational and dynamic. The fundamental affirmation is not primarily that human beings are autonomous. Rather, human beings are capable of this awareness, ever immediate, ever in process.

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CHAPTER 71

Origins of Buddhist Ethics

Damien Keown

Buddhism was founded in northeast India by Siddhārtha Gautama (ca. 490–ca. 410 BCE), who gained enlightenment at the age of 35 and was thereafter known by the honorific title of Buddha ("awakened one"). Buddhism spread rapidly from India to other parts of Asia, but this entry is concerned only with the first few centuries of Buddhism in India, a period extending down to about 250 BCE. The form of Buddhism which most resembles this early period is Theravāda Buddhism, which is today predominant in South Asia, particularly in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand. The Theravāda school regards itself as the orthodox custodian of the Buddha's teachings preserved intact from ancient times.

In Buddhism there is no central authority on matters of doctrine and ethics. The order of monks (*sangha*) instituted by the Buddha is regarded by most Buddhists as the legitimate interpreter of the Buddha's teachings. Although there are national organizations there is no one body which represents the many different monastic communities worldwide. The question of whether a common moral core can be found among the diverse Buddhist schools of Asia is a question upon which scholars are presently divided. Buddhists of all schools, however, seek the same goal – nirvāna – a state of spiritual and moral perfection which it is claimed can be attained by any human being who lives in accordance with Buddhist teachings.

Buddhism does not believe in a Supreme Being or creator god and its precepts and ethical teachings are seen not as divine commands, but as rational principles which, if followed, will promote the welfare of oneself and others. It may therefore be regarded as a form of virtue ethics sharing many features with Aristotle's notion of the good life as one devoted to the cultivation of virtue and culminating in a condition of happiness or flourishing (*eudaimonia*) (see Keown 2001).

The Buddha

In one sense the origin of Buddhist moral teachings is easy to define. In common with all other beliefs and practices characterized as "Buddhist," they stem from the oral teachings of a single historical individual, Siddhārtha Gautama. According to the traditional accounts of his life, Siddhārtha, the Buddha-to-be, was a prince who renounced his kingdom at the age of 29 to become a religious mendicant. His quest was for a solution to the suffering (*dukkha*) inherent in human life, and six years after leaving home, at the age of 35, he declared that he had attained the goal of spiritual awakening known as nirvāna. From that time he devoted the remaining 35 years of his life to traveling around the towns

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

and villages of northeast India disseminating his teachings. A large mendicant community grew up around him, and semi-permanent residences in the form of monastic institutions (*vihāras*) became established. The Buddha died at the age of 80, and appointed no successor, stating that his followers should rely on his teachings as their guide. Without their leader, the Buddha's followers did not remain united for long, and in the centuries following the Buddha's death many sects and schools arose. Several of these preserved their own records of the Buddha's teachings, such that variant canons came into being. The only one of these canons to have survived intact is the canon of the Theravāda school, composed in the Pali language and known accordingly as the Pali canon. This canon was originally transmitted orally, but was reduced to writing around 70 BCE in Sri Lanka.

The Pali canon consists of three divisions, the most important of which contains the Discourses (*sutta*) of the Buddha. The second is the Monastic Rule (*vinaya*), which is a code of behavior for those who have taken monastic vows. It is likely that this reached its final form about a century after the Buddha's enlightenment, or around 350 BCE. The third division, the Scholastic Treatises (*abhidhamma*), contains material of interest for ethics, mainly from a psychological perspective, although its relevance is sometimes disguised by a terse analytical style. This is the latest portion of the canon and can be dated to approximately 250 BCE. The discussion of ethics in this entry is based primarily upon the material contained in the first division of this canon, the Discourses.

The Indian Religious Background

Although stemming from a single historical individual, Buddhist moral teachings were not formulated in a vacuum. The Buddha lived towards the end of the Vedic period, the name given to the first phase of Indian religion, encompassing the period of a thousand years or so down to 500 BCE. At this time the prevailing religious orthodoxy was brahmanism, the ancestor of what is commonly known in the West as Hinduism. The brahmanical phase of Vedic religion takes its name from the dominance enjoyed by the brahman or hereditary priestly caste. It was characterized by the performance of lavish and complex rituals, often sponsored by the king or wealthy patrons. In parallel with this, however, other less formal and more individualistic religious practices – notably those involving ascetic and yogic techniques – were being explored. Further influences on Buddhism came by way of unorthodox religious movements such as Jainism, and the teachings of numerous itinerant philosophers (*samaṇas*), including skeptics, determinists, and nihilists, many of whom denied the reality of moral choice. Such teachings were criticized by the Buddha, believing as he did in free will and holding that individuals inevitably suffer the consequences of their moral acts.

Dharma

A concept of fundamental importance deriving from the pan-Indian pre-Buddhist heritage is dharma. The word has many meanings and nuances, but the underlying idea is of a universal law which determines both the material and moral evolution of the universe. Every aspect of life is regulated by dharma: the physical laws which regulate the rising of the sun, the succession of the seasons, the movement of the constellations; and also the moral laws which regulate the operation of karma or moral retribution (see below), define what is right and wrong, and determine the duties and responsibilities of every

member of society. By extension, dharma also means the corpus of Buddhist teachings (since they are thought to be grounded in the nature of things), the practice of the Buddhist Path, and the spiritual realization made possible by the practice of the Path. Living in accordance with dharma and implementing its requirements is said to lead to happiness, fulfillment, and salvation; neglecting or transgressing against it is said to lead to endless suffering in the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*).

Dharma is neither caused by nor under the control of a supreme being. Even the gods (who may be thought of as akin to the angels of Christianity) are subject to its laws. Dharma may be translated as "natural law," a term which captures both its important meanings, namely as the principle of order and regularity seen in the behavior of natural phenomena, and also the idea of a universal moral law whose requirements have been discovered (not invented) by enlightened beings such as the Buddha. In Buddhist thought morality is woven into the very fabric of reality and moral goodness is seen as a natural quality which must be progressively cultivated by each individual if he or she is to achieve the *summum bonum* of nirvāna. In the Buddhist view, ethics and metaphysics dovetail to form a single whole, and morality forms part of the nature of things in a way that cannot be accounted for by ethical theories such as subjectivism, relativism, or consequentialism.

Karma

Common to Buddhism and all major Indian traditions is the belief in karma, the doctrine that moral actions inevitably have repercussions on the one who performs them. Moral action is a unique class of action in that it has two distinctive effects: first, it is soteriologically transformative and modifies the spiritual status of the one who performs it; and second, it determines the good and bad fortune which a person experiences in life. Although a number of the Buddha's contemporaries denied that moral action in itself had any intrinsic significance, the Buddha rejected this idea and emphasized that the moral life was integral to the quest for salvation. The saints of early Buddhism display the highest standards of moral conduct in their lives, as did the Buddha himself, and the goal of nirvāna is inconceivable for one whose behavior is not morally perfect.

Rebirth

Closely associated with the doctrine of karma is belief in rebirth. In terms of this belief, which appears in the later Vedic period several centuries before the Buddha, the higher forms of life (such as gods, human beings, and animals) migrate from one existence to another in accordance with their moral behavior in each existence. Good conduct is rewarded by rebirth in more auspicious circumstances. The long course of an individual existence might be visualized as an upwards or downwards spiral extending over eons of time. The fact that the same living being might appear at one time as a human being and at another as an animal means that Buddhism is much more ready than Western traditions to accord moral status to non-human life forms.

In this formative period Buddhism thus refined its moral teachings by including and rejecting elements from both the orthodox and unorthodox branches of Indian religion. Continuity with the orthodox tradition can be seen in the common notion of a cosmic moral order (dharma) and belief in moral retribution and rebirth (karma). A new direction was taken by (1) the rejection of animal sacrifice, which was contrary to the ideal of non-violence or respect for life (*ahiṃsā*) emphasized in Buddhism and other

non-orthodox traditions (especially Jainism); (2) Buddhism's rejection of the complex and pervasive web of brahmanical ritual which it regarded as stultifying and mechanical; and (3) the Buddha's dislike of the caste system, which he saw as elevating birth over personal moral integrity. These factors establish the broad parameters within which early Buddhist ethical teachings were developed.

Early Texts on Ethics

In the Discourses (the first of the three divisions of the Pali canon), the Buddha's moral teachings are set out in a straightforward way. The Buddha is reported as teaching (S.v.353f), for example, that you should not inflict on another what you yourself find unpleasant (the Buddhist version of the "Golden Rule"); that wrong actions are those which intend harm to any being; that one should repay the kindness of beings who in the past may have been relatives or friends (S.ii. 189f); and that one should be mindful at all times of the effect one's actions might have on others. The style is a cross between the Christian gospels and the Socratic dialogues. Parables and metaphors are often used to get the point across. Ethical themes appear repeatedly throughout the Discourses, yet certain Discourses are particularly significant for their moral content. The *Discourse on Brahmā's Net* (*Brahmajāla Sutta*) contains long lists of moral precepts and points of etiquette, and may be regarded as the source of many subsequent preceptual codes. Part of this discourse takes the form of a eulogy of the Buddha's conduct in which individual aspects of his behavior are assembled into lists which collectively define the conduct of a perfect mendicant, and by extension that of the perfect human being.

A text which accords well with the Western belief in individualism is the *Kālāma Sutta* (A.i.188). The Buddha counsels against accepting doctrines purely on the authority of tradition. Each individual is advised to consider carefully what he hears and test it against his own experience, not being afraid to reject any teachings found deficient in practice. We can imagine the Buddha doing the same thing, founding the new religion of Buddhism as a result of his rejection of the rigidity of brahmanical orthodoxy. It should not be thought, however, that the Buddha is commending a "free for all' approach to ethics or promoting autonomy to the position of supreme moral principle. On the contrary, it is clear he believes that all who reflect rightly will come to the very same conclusions about right and wrong. The Buddha is not here saying "Make your own truth" but "Make the truth your own" (Collins, quoted in Gombrich 1987, 72).

The *Discourse to Sigāla* (*Sigālaka Sutta*) is of special importance for lay ethics, and is often described as a Monastic Rule for householders. This text explains the duties of a lay householder towards six groups of people: parents, teachers, wives and children, friends, employees and servants, and religious practitioners. Important for its emphasis on the cultivation of a loving attitude (*mettā*) is the *Discourse on Loving-kindness* (*Metta Sutta*). There is also a very popular and well-known Buddhist text known as the *Dhammapada* which in a single verse sums up the whole of Buddhism. This verse reads: "To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to purify one's mind – this is the teaching of the Buddhas" (*Dhammapada* v.183). This verse makes clear the central place of morality in Buddhism. Buddhist teachings are essentially about living a virtuous life and purifying one's mind, by which is meant developing the intellectual virtue of understanding. Another early text, the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*, similarly compares morality and wisdom to two hands that wash one another, indicating that these two qualities go together and are indispensable in the quest for enlightenment.

Basic Themes

The Four Noble Truths

As well as giving general moral guidance of this kind, the Buddha formulated doctrine systematically in four propositions known as the Four Noble Truths:

1 Suffering (*dukkha*) is inherent in life.
2 Suffering is caused by craving (*taṇhā*).
3 There can be an end to suffering (this is the state known as nirvāna).
4 The way to attain nirvāna is through a structured plan of life known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Four Noble Truths are sometimes compared to the diagnosis and remedy provided by a physician. The first step is to diagnose the condition; the next is to investigate the causes of the complaint; the third step is to determine whether a cure is available; and fourth and finally comes the question of deciding on the appropriate treatment. Sometimes medical treatment just involves taking a pill, but increasingly physicians are becoming aware that many of the problems from which their patients suffer cannot be cured by repeated prescriptions. They are due more to lifestyle problems than anything else. In these cases the cure involves the patient taking action to change his way of life; for example, by taking more exercise, avoiding stressful situations, giving up smoking, making changes to diet, and so forth. This is the kind of lifestyle change required by the Fourth Noble Truth. It does not offer a quick fix or instant cure, but calls upon people to live well, in the sense of leading a saner, more moderate and balanced life. This approach to life is what is known in Buddhism as the Middle Way.

The Middle Way

The Middle Way (which only superficially resembles Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean) is essentially the principle of neither too much, nor too little. Neither total indulgence on the one hand, nor complete abstinence on the other. This principle derives from the Buddha's own experience in his life, first as a pampered prince, and later, as a homeless mendicant practicing austerities in the forest for six years. Neither of these extremes worked. He eventually renounced them in favor of a more moderate and balanced way of life. Once he did this he attained enlightenment. This *via media* is given specific content in the Fourth Noble Truth.

The Fourth Noble Truth shows the way to happiness, fulfillment, and human flourishing in the form of a path with eight components, known as the Noble Eightfold Path. The eight factors of the Path are:

1 Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)
2 Right Resolve (*sammā-sankappa*)
3 Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*)
4 Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*)
5 Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)
6 Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*)
7 Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)
8 Right Meditation (*sammā-samādhi*)

Right View means first the acceptance of Buddhist teachings and later their experiential confirmation. Right Resolve means making a serious commitment to developing right attitudes. Right Speech means telling the truth and speaking in a thoughtful and sensitive way at the appropriate time. Right Action means abstaining from wrongful bodily behavior such as killing, stealing, inappropriate sexual conduct, telling lies, and taking alcohol or drugs. Right Livelihood means not engaging in an occupation which causes harm to others. Right Effort means gaining control of one's thoughts and cultivating positive and wholesome states of mind. Right Meditation means developing deep levels of mental calm through various techniques which concentrate the mind and integrate the personality.

The eight factors of the path fall into three categories: Morality (*Sīla*), Meditation (*Samādhi*), and Wisdom (*Paññā*). The first two items (Right View and Right Resolve) promote Wisdom. The last three (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Meditation) cultivate mental calm. The middle three (Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood) ensure correct moral conduct. This threefold categorization gives us a quick sense of the shape of the "good life" from a Buddhist perspective. It tells us that the life of virtue involves personal development in these three areas. First, one must be moral and live in accordance with Buddhist ethical precepts. A moral person, according to Buddhism, will be calm, confident, trustworthy, and open, with nothing to fear and without guilty secrets to hide. This condition is conducive to the next phase of the path which is Meditation. Buddhists see meditation as a technique which can be harnessed to accelerate spiritual progress. It has the effect of changing moral sentiments, for example by making one more compassionate and sensitive to the needs of others, and also of concentrating the mind. The final area for development is the faculty of understanding, usually translated as "wisdom." This involves a deep and penetrating insight into the true nature of the human condition, into human nature and its potential for fulfillment in the state of nirvāna.

Precepts

Morality (*Sīla*) in the Eightfold Path and elsewhere includes the notion of things to be done, and things to be avoided. The things to be avoided are enumerated in various lists of precepts, of which there are five main sets:

1 The Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*)
2 The Eight Precepts (*aṭṭhaṅga-sīla*)
3 The Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*)
4 The Ten Good Paths of Action (*dasa-kusala-kamma-patha*)
5 The Monastic Disciplinary Code (*pātimokkha*)

The best known of these codes is the Five Precepts for laymen. The Five Precepts, mentioned earlier as the fourth component of the Noble Eightfold Path, prohibit (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual immorality, (4) lying, and (5) taking intoxicants. The nucleus of Buddhist morality may be found in the first four (which Buddhism shares with Jainism). These are then supplemented by more rigorous precepts according to the status of the practitioner or to suit particular ceremonial occasions. The precept against taking intoxicants, for example, is thought to be particularly applicable to layfolk, and the Eight and Ten precepts, which supplement the basic five with additional restrictions such as on the time when meals may be taken (as well as requiring complete abstention from sexual relations), are commonly adopted as additional commitments on holy days (*uposatha*). The Monastic Disciplinary Code (*pātimokkha*) is a set of 227 rules (the exact number varies between schools) which set out in detail the regulations governing

the monastic life of monks. Nuns were obliged to follow a greater number of rules, reflecting the Buddha's initial reluctance to allow women to be ordained.

The various formulations of precepts may be regarded as a combination of moral precepts with additional practices designed to cultivate restraint and self-discipline. The large number of monastic rules requires vigilance and mindfulness at all times, as well as ensuring standardization and conformity within monastic communities. Disputes and disagreements are thereby kept to a minimum and the Order presents itself as a moral microcosm for the world at large. Early Buddhist society was conceived of as an integrated fourfold group comprising monks (*bhikkhu*), nuns (*bhikkhuṇī*), and pious laymen (*upāsaka*) and laywomen (*upāsikā*). The lay and monastic "wings" of this community ideally serve one another: the laity provide material support to the monastics (*bhikkhu-sangha*), and the latter in return provide religious teachings and guidance (see Chakravarti 1987).

Virtues

Although the precepts are of great importance in Buddhist morality, there is more to the Buddhist moral life than following rules. Rules must also be followed for the right reasons and with the correct motivation. It is here that the role of the virtues becomes important. Buddhist morality as a whole may be likened to a coin with two faces: on one side are the precepts and on the other the virtues. The precepts, in fact, may be thought of simply as a list of things which a virtuous person will never do.

Early sources emphasize the importance of cultivating correct dispositions and habits so that moral conduct is the natural and spontaneous manifestation of internalized and properly integrated beliefs and values, rather than simple conformity to external rules. Many formulations of the precepts make this perfectly clear. The precept against taking life, for example, is sometimes found in the following form: "Laying aside the club and the sword he dwells compassionate and kind to all living things" (D.i.4). Abstention from taking life is the natural result of a compassionate identification with living things. It is a constraint imposed contrary to natural inclination. To arrive at such an integrated state is not easy, and involves a profound transformation of an intellectual and moral kind. To observe the first precept perfectly requires a profound understanding of the metaphysical relationship between living things coupled with an unswerving disposition of universal benevolence and compassion. Few people are capable of either of these things. Yet by respecting the precept they habituate themselves to the condition of one who is, and in so doing take a step closer to enlightenment.

The virtues, as Aristotle points out, are about what is difficult for people. The task of the virtues is to counteract negative dispositions (or vices) such as pride and selfishness. The lengthy lists of virtues and vices which appear in later literature are extrapolated from a key cluster of three virtues and their opposing vices. The three Buddhist Cardinal Virtues are Unselfishness (*alobha*), Benevolence (*adosa*), and Understanding (*amoha*). Benevolence is an attitude of good will to all living creatures. Unselfishness means the absence of that selfish desire which taints all moral behavior by allocating a privileged status to one's own needs. Understanding is knowledge of human nature and human good as expressed in basic doctrines such as the Four Noble Truths.

Meditation

As we have seen, meditation (*Samādhi*) is the second component of the Eightfold Path, and it plays an important role in the cultivation of the virtues. Of particular importance is a group of four meditational

dispositions known as the four Sublime States (*Brahmā-vihāra*): Love (*mettā*), Compassion (*karuṇā*), Gladness for Others (*muditā*), and Equanimity (*upekkhā*). Detailed guidance is provided in Buddhist literature as to the way in which these dispositions can be cultivated and deepened. In the cultivation of love, for instance, after first of all developing positive feelings towards oneself, the disposition is slowly extended to an ever-increasing circle of friends and relations, the local community, and finally the world at large. Through this practice the mind becomes free of anger, hostility, and resentment and other negative traits which are common sources of immoral action.

The same method is applied to the second and third Sublime States. Compassion is directed towards all who are experiencing misfortune, with the aspiration that their suffering may soon cease. Gladness is for those in good fortune with the wish that their good fortune should remain and increase. When the first three have been developed, the practice of equanimity can begin. The importance of equanimity is that it ensures that none of the other dispositions are allowed to predominate. There is a danger for the moral life in allowing any disposition, however virtuous in itself, to become dominant. It is sometimes claimed, for example, that so long as one acts with a compassionate motive no wrong can be done. This is not the Buddhist view. The role of equanimity is to ensure that moral judgments are not distorted by an imbalance between dispositions leading to an overemphasis on any one of them.

Nirvāna

As noted, the aim of all Buddhists is to attain nirvāna. There are different views as to what nirvāna means. The tradition recognizes two kinds of nirvāna: (1) the kind attained in the course of a lifetime and (2) the kind attained by an enlightened person at death. In this discussion we are concerned only with the former.

There has been a tendency to understand nirvāna primarily in intellectual terms as the gaining of mystical knowledge. On this view it has sometimes been thought that in the experience of awakening (*bodhi*) an enlightened being "transcends" moral values and passes "beyond good and evil." It can be seen from the Buddha's conduct, however, that he personally did no such thing, nor did he anywhere express the view that it would be appropriate for others to do so. The only sense in which the Buddha passed "beyond good and evil" was in not having to pause to deliberate between them: he instinctively knew the right course. Nevertheless, the well-known Parable of the Raft (M.i.134f) is often read as supporting the view that morality is of a temporary and provisional nature. It is supposedly a "means to an end" and something ultimately to be discarded like a raft after one has crossed the stream.

This overly intellectualized view of nirvāna results from misunderstanding the relationship between the three components of the Eightfold Path – Morality, Meditation, and Wisdom – and seeing the Path to Enlightenment as a kind of ladder or staircase that one ascends step by step. The problem with the ladder metaphor is that it implies that as one makes progress towards nirvāna, the lower rungs are passed over and left behind. Certain parts of the Path are deemed higher and therefore more important than others. In fact, this is not the case. There is no point at which morality is left behind. On the contrary, one becomes increasingly moral the closer one comes to nirvāna. It is more helpful to picture Morality, Meditation, and Wisdom as forming three sides of a triangle, wherein each side is connected to the others. The three together brace and mutually support one another. This conveys better the sense that morality forms an intrinsic part of the architecture of the enlightened consciousness. If the Buddhist understanding of nirvāna incorporates moral perfection in the way suggested, ethics becomes integral to

the final goal. Understood in this way, nirvāna as *summum bonum* is an inclusive final end. The path that leads to it is nothing other than the gradual cultivation and manifestation of the virtues which constitute the end.

Summary

We may summarize the key features of Buddhist ethics in the earliest period as follows:

1 The arrival of Buddhism is characterized by both continuity and change. Buddhism takes from brahmanism the concepts of dharma and karma, but rejects ritual sacrifice and the caste system.
2 The Buddha taught a humanistic ethics emphasizing non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), benevolence, and the search for self-perfection (nirvāna) in the three areas of Morality (*Sīla*), Meditation (*Samādhi*), and Wisdom (*Paññā*).
3 Moderation in the form of the concept of the Middle Way becomes an important action-guiding principle.
4 Buddhism has no central authority competent to pronounce on moral issues. Individuals must decide for themselves after consulting the scriptures, seeking the advice of teachers, and meditating on all aspects of the matter in question. However, the precepts are at all times to be respected.

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CHAPTER 72

Cultural Differentiation in Buddhist Ethics

Thomas P. Kasulis

This entry explores differentiations in "Buddhist ethics." In using the term "Buddhist ethics," we are speaking of the ethics not of *Buddhism*, but of *Buddhists*. It is not as if Buddhism were an abstract entity transcending both culture and the people who identify themselves as Buddhist. Without Buddhist people, there would be no Buddhism, not to mention Buddhist ethics. This idea – that there are no "religions," only "religious peoples" – may seem obvious, but its implications are critical for understanding both the nature of religious ethics in general and the character of Buddhist ethics in particular. Seldom (if ever) is ethics the domain of religion alone. Buddhism is part, but only part, of the ethical lives of people from radically different cultures, languages, and ethnicities. The dynamic between cultural identity and religious identity in the Buddhist moral agent is the main concern of this entry.

Given the premise that persons negotiate both their religious and cultural identities in developing their ethical positions, three corollaries will affect our ensuing discussion. First, moral agency, however much it might be imbued with religious or cultural ideologies, always lies in human choice. People – not "-isms" – decide not only *whether* to live a life religiously or ethically, but also *how* to do so within the parameters of tradition. Second, in analyzing Buddhists rather than Buddhism, it is obvious that Buddhist ethics is articulated in a multitude of languages today, not just the "canonical" languages of ancient Buddhist texts: Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, and Chinese. The "Buddhist tradition" is more than what Buddhism was in the past. Tradition involves a way of living in the present with attention to the way the religious life has been lived previously. In such an understanding, tradition is always being lived and negotiated in the *present*. The third corollary relates to what makes a person a "Buddhist." For simplicity's sake, we can stipulate that people are "Buddhist" when they say without deception, at least in some contexts, "I am a Buddhist." Yet, being a Buddhist is never *exhaustive* of anyone's self-attributed identity. In other contexts, those same people might identify themselves differently: "I am Chinese" or "I am Sinhalese"; "I am a woman" or "I am a man"; "I am a teacher" or "I am a carpenter"; and so forth. Those cultural identities are lived out alongside Buddhist identities. And they often interact in influencing the character of Buddhist ethics in any local context.

Our analysis of Buddhist ethics across traditions proceeds in two stages. First, we will consider a general orientation Buddhism brings to the understanding of self and agency that differs from common Western assumptions, and therefore needs special treatment if we are to understand Buddhist ethics on its own terms. The second stage of our analysis will consider some cultural differences in how Buddhist ethics has been conceived and practiced over time in four global regions. Such a sampling, however limited, will shed some light on the variety in Buddhist ethics and how that variety might have a bearing on the project of comparative ethics.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Buddhism on Self and Agency

Allowing for some cultural variations, all Buddhist traditions accept the basic tenet of "no-I" (*anātman*). The doctrine originated, as the name suggests, in opposition to a traditional Indian (Hindu) idea of *ātman*. The latter holds that behind the ordinary world – the world of change and diversity (*māyā*) – lies the true ground of reality: eternal, distinctionless, and absolute (*brahman*). This *brahman* was often identified with the true self, a persisting, changeless soul (*ātman*) that is never the object of experience, but makes experience possible ("that which sees but is never seen" or "that which knows but is never known," and so forth) (see Kasulis 1997). The crucial point for ethics is how the Buddhist view differs not only from Hindu assumptions, but from many modern Western assumptions as well.

Perhaps the easiest way to distinguish the Buddhist model of self from the dominant Western one is to discuss the two in terms of an "intimacy" model built on internal relations, as contrasted with an "external integrity" model built on external relations. An external integrity orientation understands moral agency in terms of how the self autonomously forms external relations to "others," whether the others are people or things. (See Figure 72.1, wherein *a* is the self and *b*–*i* various "others.") Such ethical systems commonly develop rules or principles for how "I" should develop the external relational ties (the *R*s in the diagram). External integrity orientations often universalize those principles, generalizing how *R* should be constituted regardless of who the self or other may be: the situation's uniqueness is subordinated to the nature of the relation. For example, an ethics might state "I" should treat the "others" as if I were they. Because of its tendency to universalize, external integrity requires respect for the "rights" of others.

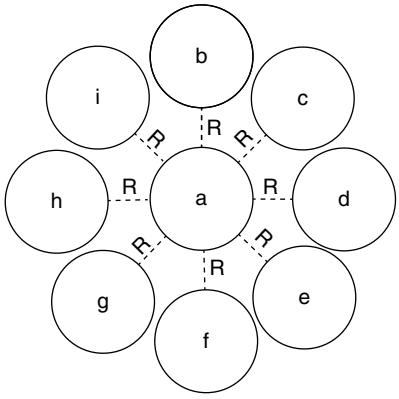

Figure 72.1 The self of external integrity

Buddhism, in contrast, favors intimacy over such external integrity by analyzing the self as internally related to others: others are *inherently* part of me. I do not connect with them by forging ethical relations. Ethics derives from my understanding the relations that are *already* part of me (see Figure 72.2). Because I (the *a* in the diagram) am internally connected with others, there is no principle or rule necessary for connecting with them.

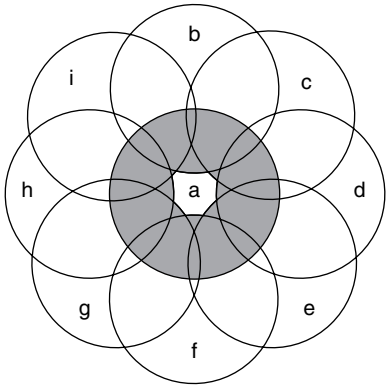

Figure 72.2 The self of intimacy

Buddhism takes the intimacy orientation further. According to the *anātman* doctrine, there is *no* aspect of "I" (not even the unshaded small part preserved in Figure 72.2) that is not conditioned or not interconnected with at least something else (see Figure 72.3). My "self" is completely interdependent and in no way independent. "I" do not exist, even theoretically, as an isolated agent choosing my connections to the world (as both Figures 72.1 and 72.2 allow). Ethics for Buddhism is not a matter of establishing external relations, but instead of recognizing inherent interrelations. This difference leads to a distinctive interpretation of agency.

In an external integrity orientation, the agent autonomously formulates and performs relations with others. To be moral, the agent must analyze the circumstances (a factual or "is" determination) and make a response according to some value (a normative or "ought" decision). That normative decision may be made in various ways and may involve, to cite three common options, a calculus of benefits and harms (as in utilitarianism), an imaginative act of putting oneself in the other's shoes (as in the Golden Rule), or a more legalistic analysis of applying a general rule of goodness or fairness to the particular case (as in Kant's categorical imperative).

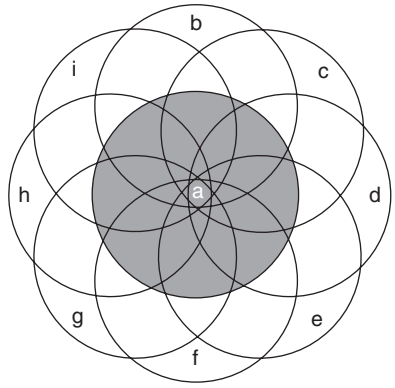

Figure 72.3 The Buddhist self

The idea of agency derived from Buddhism's not-I theory is less intuitive to many modern Westerners. In the Buddhist model, what is to be known and what ought to be done are much less sharply distinguished. For Buddhists, knowing the other and knowing myself are not fully discrete activities. If I know who I truly am (an "is" issue), I will realize my interdependent relations with others as they "should" be (an "ought" issue). That is, I will articulate myself as part of an interdependent responsive system, instead of as an independent agent creating moral connections with others.

Let us summarize these two contrasting ideas of agency. The external integrity orientation says I am moral when I transcend myself by tempering self-interest, whereas Buddhist's intimacy orientation says I am moral when I am most truly my self. The two positions are not as opposed as they might at first seem, however. For external integrity, the self is independent of circumstances and stands alone and independent. In effect, without forming any external relations, the self is just an isolated "I," an "ego." Moral responsibility transcends this ego, taking one beyond the individual to the collective. Through moral education I can learn to form relations making me "more than myself" or becoming capable of "thinking about something or someone other than myself." In contrast, the Buddhist model starts with a view of self that is *anātman*, a no-I. This no-I must be fathomed for moral responsiveness to arise. To know and be myself – in the fullest Buddhist sense – is to recognize the interdependencies constituting all I am.

Because of the difference in how "self" is understood, Buddhist moral education is aimed not at getting beyond self-interest, but at delving more deeply into oneself. As the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen Master Dōgen expressed it:

> To learn by modeling yourself after the way of the buddhas is to learn by modeling yourself after yourself. To learn by modeling yourself after yourself is to forget yourself. To forget yourself is to be authenticated by all phenomena. (From *Shōbōgenzō, "Genjōkōan"*)

Dōgen suggests the Buddhist acts as a moral agent by being responsive within the conflux of conditioning factors. Importantly, some of those phenomena are cultural. To be yourself and to be a morally responsive agent, you must recognize that you are inherently part of a cultural system. This takes us into the issue of cultural difference. How do the specifics of cultural conditions affect Buddhist ethical thinking and behavior?

Cultural Variety in Buddhist Ethics

For the comparative purposes of this entry, we will look at four geographical areas in relation to the development of Buddhist ethics: India (especially as home to early Buddhism), Southeast Asia (as the center of Theravāda Buddhism), Northeast Asia (especially Chinese and Japanese Mahāyāna Buddhism), and the United States (especially the communities with membership drawing mainly from people without ethnic ties to Buddhist cultures). With such a broad sweep, we will have little opportunity for detailed analysis, but our focus is to compare and contrast the interplay between Buddhist and cultural identities in the way Buddhist ethical issues have been addressed.

Since we will be analyzing the role of cultural conditions in the formation of Buddhist ethics, let us begin with how Buddhists generally understand the relation between conditionedness and ethics. With the dominance of the external integrity view of agency in the modern West, the tendency there is to think of conditions as external factors operating on the self: "*I* am conditioned by my culture or society," for example. The main Western question is whether there is any autonomous aspect of the self *not* so conditioned (hence, the debate between behavioral determinism and freedom of choice). This set of issues is quite alien to Buddhism, wherein conditions are understood to be *within* the system of interrelations defining me. Hence, conditioning is both self-conditioning and being conditioned by surrounding factors.

As an analogy, think of an athlete in training. To succeed, the athlete must be willing to be conditioned (must be "coachable") and must have a coach who can create the right environment for learning. Similarly, Buddhist moral training involves an openness to changing one's own negative habits in response to the mentor's guidance. It is significant that the normative term in early Buddhism literally means "skillful" (*kuśala*) rather than "good." Buddhist moral development is, then, a matter of retraining that deepens one's awareness of interdependence and conditionedness. Then the improvement of conditions may be directed either inwardly or outwardly. For example, suppose I am in a noisy environment where I find it difficult to concentrate. It would be "skillful" for me either (a) to train myself to focus better or (b) to change the environment so it is not as noisy. If I do either, the environment becomes less distracting. From the Buddhist standpoint, one can become more skillful (more "moral") by transforming either one's psychological or one's environmental conditions. In this light, let us turn to how Buddhists in different cultural contexts developed variations in ethics.

Buddhist Ethics in India

For its personal training methods, Indian Buddhism borrowed extensively from (Hindu-related) practices prominent in the culture 25 centuries ago: meditation, dietary control, abstention from harming others, control of sexual activity, avoidance of intoxicants, and so forth. There were two key areas in which Buddhists diverged, however.

First, Buddhists generally rejected the common Upanishadic idea that reality is illusory (*māyā*). For Buddhism, the human predicament derives from delusion, not illusion. Reality shows itself as it is (Buddhists designated it with terms like "suchness" or "thatness"), but unenlightened persons add to that appearance delusions arising from their desires for how they would prefer reality to be (something unchanging belonging to an eternal "me"). Buddhism consequently reconstrued the purpose of religious praxis from seeing *through* or *beyond* the world of flux, to seeing *into* it without the addition of any

delusional projections about permanence. The Buddhist strategy for discovering the true nature of self and things was, therefore, to examine coolly the arising and decaying of phenomena. Only then can one discover there is no entity free from flux. Rather than emphasizing meditative practices leading to trance experiences of oneness, early Buddhist meditation emphasized attentiveness to processes of change (the flow of one's own breathing, the visualization of bodily decay, the awareness of the psychological patterns supporting ideas of "mine" or "ego," etc.). The goal was an introspective sensitivity to the formation of attachments and a therapeutic for eradicating the cravings behind them. The therapeutic was originally formulated in terms of the Noble Eightfold Path and involved the effort to reprogram the three domains of human activity: thought, word, and deed. From this standpoint, personal ethics amounted to the reform of one's own character, the deprogramming of unskillful, delusional tendencies in behavior or attitude. If one could eradicate ego-centered desire, morality (in the Western sense as defined above) would take care of itself.

The second divergence from common Indian assumptions of the era relates to social ethics. By the Buddha's time, Indian society increasingly exemplified a social stratification according to caste or class. The society supported a hierarchical system in which an elite brahmanic or priestly caste had oversight of both scholarship and religious ritual. People were born into their castes and social mobility was very limited or impossible. As suggested by texts like the *Bhagavad Gītā* it was assumed that the dharma (at this point primarily meaning moral or social "duty") varied according to caste and gender. Because of their belief in karma and rebirth, Indians assumed that a person was born into a caste because of proclivities carried over from previous lifetimes. Social improvement was often construed as living this lifetime properly and being reborn into a higher caste in one's next lifetime.

Indian Buddhism rejected the caste system. In developing its theory of praxis, the early Buddhists maintained that since the causes of delusion are the same in everyone, the praxis to eliminate them should be essentially the same as well. Class and gender should not matter. Yet the early Buddhists recognized that the conditions leading to delusions are not only fixed within personal habitualized psychological patterns of behavior, but also reinforced in institutionalized forms throughout society. Thus, social conditions have to be addressed as well.

The early Buddhists responded not by trying to change Indian society as much as by trying to form an alternative, utopian community within India. Thus was born Buddhist monasticism. Monks and nuns had separate communities. (They were separate, but not really equal – patriarchal cultural assumptions still subordinated the order of nuns to that of monks.) Many monastics remained itinerant (following the tradition of holy seekers in pre-Buddhist India), but the long monsoon seasons were a time for even them to live together in larger communities. Eventually, some of these became centers of study as well as meditative practice. As a society separate from secular laws, the monastic communities developed their own system of moral guidelines and internal laws. This added a layer of social behavior and sanctions that went beyond the basic precepts and guidelines for personal training contained in such formulations as the Noble Eightfold Path. Within the monasteries and nunneries, one could follow a strict regimen for self-examination and training aimed at eliminating ego-centered attitudes and behavior.

As Buddhism grew in popularity, the role of the laity needed clarification. The monastic centers typically depended on local villagers for material support and the question arose about the responsibility of religious orders toward those lay patrons. Different models developed in India as Buddhist clergy assumed an increasing role in educating and training the laity in the fundamentals of doctrine and practice. The two major branches of Buddhism that emerged – Theravāda and Mahāyāna – had somewhat

different approaches to the clergy–laity interface. Those differences sometimes affected the tenor of Buddhist ethics in different locales. Since the Theravāda traditions tended to dominate in Southeast Asia and the Mahāyāna in Northeast Asia, we discuss those differences within those cultural contexts. Before leaving the discussion of India, though, one further development is noteworthy. It is an example of a Buddhist social ethic at work in modern times.

Buddhism became a major religious presence in India (to the point of becoming the state religion under King Aśoka in the third century BCE). Yet it eventually died out after the incursion of Islam in the early centuries of the second millennium CE. Buddhism has enjoyed a small revival since India's independence in 1947, however. In particular, many Dalit ("untouchables" in the classical Hindu caste system) converted to Buddhism. The major figure in this movement was himself a Dalit, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, an Indian government leader and attorney with doctorates from both Columbia University and the University of London. Ambedkar believed that to improve the plight of the Dalit, two kinds of changes were needed. First, the legal system had to prohibit all forms of discrimination against them. Under his legal and legislative leadership, that was accomplished rather soon after national independence. He came to realize by the mid-1950s, however, that a psychological problem remained. The Dalit needed to develop a sense of self-esteem, something difficult to do as long as they identified themselves vis-à-vis the traditional Hindu caste system. So, he converted to Buddhism and led a movement resulting in the conversion of millions of others. This exemplifies a typically Buddhist analysis of the link between spirituality and social action.

Theravāda Buddhist Ethics in Southeast Asia

With the exception of Vietnam, which was influenced more by Buddhism from China, the Southeast Asian countries (including Sri Lanka) were introduced to Buddhism via India, starting mainly around the time of the Indian Buddhist King Aśoka. Most Buddhist doctrines and institutional monastic structures found in India were carried over into these other countries and developed further there within the eventually dominant Theravāda branch of Buddhism. In terms of personal moral development, the goal was, once again, disengaging the habitual responses arising from desire and egocentrism. The needed therapeutic was considered so extensive, however, that it would take a multitude of lifetimes before one could complete the program. Until then one had to settle for gradual karmic progress from one lifetime to the next. Given this belief, it was assumed that those who come into this world with proclivities leading them to pursue the monastic life were more advanced on the path than those who chose a layperson's life. (Since the institutions for nuns eventually died out, this also meant that women could not become monastics and that, by definition, no woman could be as spiritually advanced as a male monk.) This system of beliefs resulted in a rather sharp bifurcation between monks and laity corresponding to a different set of behavioral norms for the two groups.

As compared with East Asian Mahāyāna clergy, the monks from Theravāda countries take upon themselves a more restrictive rule of life (strict celibacy, a dietary restriction forbidding eating after noontime, a vow of complete poverty). Monks leave their families and become monastics in hopes of making best use of their excellent conditions within this rebirth. The underlying goal of their precepts, rules, and vows is to bring about detachment – the proof of *anātman* and the prelude to nirvāṇa. The monks depend on the generosity of the laypeople for their sustenance and the laity's charity brings them merit toward their own future rebirths. In gratitude, the monks take care of the laypeople's basic spiritual

needs: preaching the basic doctrines of the Buddha, performing rituals in the villages, and supervising lay retreats during the monsoon season (even the king of Thailand has participated in such retreats). The purpose is to influence society by aiding in the spiritual development of the laity. Although laypersons may lack the monks' opportunity to develop to their fullest spiritually, they can begin to understand the nature of desire or attachment and thereby make progress. Although no one but an enlightened being can be perfectly "moral" or "skillful," the Theravādin assumption is that by creating the right kind of interdependencies between monks and laity, both groups will grow spiritually and set the basis for a moral society.

In practice the dual-layered social structure runs the peril of becoming elitist in a way comparable to the caste system Buddhism originally rejected. The Theravādin institutions may reinforce patriarchy (women by birth *must* be laypersons because there is no longer a monastic option) and the idea that the majority of society's members (the laity) should do physical labor so that the minority (the clergy) do not have to. The emphasis on detachment, understandable within the Buddhist account of the dangers of desire, can also disconnect the monks from the plight of the disadvantaged. Detachment can become a way of ignoring social interdependencies. In the past few decades, responding in part to the change in conditions brought by the influence of communism, Christianity, and the Buddhist conversions of the Dalit in India, a new social ethic called "Engaged Buddhism" has developed in Theravāda countries. Clergy and laity cooperate in programs to help the needy in society and to preserve the natural environment. As an example of the latter, Thai monks sometimes "ordain" trees in the rainforest as fellow monks. Because killing a monk is one of the most heinous offenses in Buddhism, the hope is that this ritual action will cause the timber workers to desist and the rainforest will be spared.

In one sense, Engaged Buddhism is a new modality for social action in Southeast Asia. Yet its rationale is consistent with the ancient principle that Buddhists – clergy and laity alike – need to change external as well as psychological conditions that arise from and support unskillful patterns of behavior.

East Asian Buddhist Ethics

Buddhism's rival in China was not Hinduism, but Confucianism and Daoism. The two indigenous Chinese religions emphasized harmony as the primary spiritual value. Confucianism tended to focus most on social harmony and Daoism on harmony with nature. Neither held to a theory of rebirth or the karmic carry-over from one lifetime to the next. Nor was there in China a religious-based caste system determined by birth. Chinese Confucianism did advocate a kind of social hierarchy, but it was based in the basic relations such as parent–child, elder–younger, and ruler–subject. Furthermore, elite positions in the government bureaucracy were, at least in theory, related not to aristocratic birth, but to performance in a civil service exam. When Buddhism entered China there was no immediate need to change the social order or pose an alternative to the status quo as there had been vis-à-vis India's caste system. The assumption was that a social system conditioned by Confucian values need not obstruct skillful Buddhist praxis on the personal level. Even the monastic establishments in East Asia were not as separated from the secular communities as they had been in India. East Asian Buddhist institutions often openly sought imperial support and monks sometimes served as court officials.

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that Mahāyāna Buddhism took hold most firmly in China and in the surrounding regions like Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. The differences between Mahāyāna and Theravāda are numerous, but here the focus is only on the relevance to ethics. In this regard, three

contrasts are most important. First, Mahāyāna deemphasizes the sharp distinction between clergy and laity. According to most Mahāyāna schools, every person – clergy or laity, male or female, educated or uneducated – has the capacity to become fully enlightened in this lifetime. Second, following on the idea that reality appears as it is without illusion, Mahāyānists emphasized that the only difference between the real world and the delusional world is how we look at it. Ignorance arises not from being tricked by false appearances, but from making distorting human projections. Therefore, reasoned the Mahāyānists, the ordinary world (sa sāra) and the world of enlightenment (nirvāṇa) are fundamentally the same. Whereas the early and Theravāda Buddhist formulations understood enlightenment as the movement from sa sāra to nirvāṇa, the Mahāyānists claimed there was no place to go to or to move from. For East Asians, steeped in Confucian and Daoist ideas, it was reassuring that Mahāyāna Buddhism presented an ideal of enlightenment that could be lived in the world of ordinary social and natural phenomena.

Third, Mahāyāna Buddhism emphasizes a more collective, rather than individual, understanding of the process of enlightenment. Along with a (somewhat less stringent) set of vows and precepts resembling those used by Theravāda monks and laity, the Mahāyānists added a new one, giving it special prominence – the bodhisattva vow. This vow promises to put the ultimate spiritual progress of others ahead of one's own. One will not allow oneself to achieve full enlightenment until everyone else is also ready to do so. In contrast with Theravādins, Mahāyānists envision a situation in which people achieve full enlightenment not one by one over many eons, but rather all at once at some future moment. In this respect, the external conditions supporting delusion took on a special focus in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The traditional Mahāyāna formulation is that the wisdom of enlightenment cannot be separated from the compassion of enlightenment. To know the anguish of others is to feel that anguish as one's own. Alternatively, to have wisdom is to engage, not escape, the suffering of ordinary existence. Here we see a clear application of the Buddhist notion of agency based in internal relations.

Given Confucian and Daoist cultural influences, the Chinese Buddhists understood the saṃsāra–nirvāṇa dynamic as a call to use compassion and wisdom to harmonize ordinary and enlightened activity. The Indian Buddhist assumption was that impermanence is the nature of reality and because it runs counter to our desires for permanence, we delude ourselves into thinking of it as other than it is. The Buddha's message was understood to be the resigned acceptance of that impermanence through the elimination of all attachments. The East Asian Buddhist understanding was different. The East Asians (reflecting Confucian and Daoist assumptions) generally understood the Buddha's message as not being detached from the world of flux, but instead as being in *harmony* with it. In fact, in Japan, the idea of "impermanence" (*mujō*) assumed a positive aesthetic value as the *appreciation* of evanescence. According to this interpretation, the sadness at, say, the passing of the short-lived cherry blossoms was considered an enlightened sensitivity as long as it was not accompanied by a *desire* for permanence, a wish that the cherry blossoms would never die.

Because the East Asian Buddhist goal was now to be more fully in touch with the world, enlightenment came to be viewed as living fully in the everyday. The East Asian Buddhists placed special emphasis on Mahāyāna metaphors for seeing the whole in the individual thing ("all worlds in one moment of thought"; "each jewel at each nexus in Indra's net of reality reflects every other"). This blended with an indigenous valorization of spontaneity and naturalness associated mainly with Daoism. In the development of personal ethics, the shift was away from detachment to "openness" (the Mahāyāna Buddhist idea of "emptiness" as filtered through the Daoist emphasis on "non-being" as the source of being). Ethically, this meant an emphasis on responsiveness rather than following fixed rules of behavior.

The Mahāyāna precepts tended more toward a minimal set of self-imposed restrictions that would generate the compassion–wisdom necessary to change how one sees and behaves in the world.

Following the Mahāyānist inclination, East Asian Buddhists generally assumed no significant spiritual difference between monastics and laity. All people are inherently enlightened insofar as saṃsāra is nirvāṇa. The problem is that people do not realize this fact and act accordingly. The vows and precepts for clergy and laity were quite close (outside special rules related to harmonious living within monastic confines). Although the monastic communities still looked to the laity and the court for patronage and support, they became more self-sufficient than their Southeast Asian counterparts. The goal of Buddhism remained the same – the realization of *anātman* – but in East Asia this tended to be glossed as a harmonization with the impermanent world, instead of a cool detachment from it.

Many forms of East Asian Buddhism (Zen being the clearest example) thereby developed a situational approach to ethics. Because saṃsāra and nirvāṇa were considered indistinguishable on some level, the emphasis became not so much what one did or did not do, but *how* one did it. The same act done by one person in one situation might be "unskillful," but by another in a different situation "skillful." The "heart-and-mind" of the agent is the determining factor. In a famous Zen story the master finds his disciples squabbling over the ownership of a cat. So he challenges the students in a Zen dialogue. Dismayed at their response, he kills the cat to shock his students out of their petty possessiveness. By ordinary Buddhist standards, the master's action would be criticized as harming a sentient being. In this case, however, the Zen tradition focuses on the master's enlightened intent. Given such examples, it is not surprising that even the martial arts sometimes flourished within the confines of East Asian Buddhist temples. In Japan especially, any activity – arranging flowers, wielding a sword, shooting an arrow, writing calligraphically, or preparing and serving tea – could be a way to show one's harmony with the world as it is and engaging it with a "buddha mind-heart." To sum up this contrast: whereas early and Theravāda Buddhism often saw a close connection between ethics and epistemology, in many cases East Asian Buddhism related ethics to aesthetics instead.

Because of its emphasis on compassion, a socially "engaged Buddhism" has appeared within the Mahāyāna East Asian tradition at various points in its history. During the 1960s many Vietnamese monks actively opposed the war. Some even self-immolated themselves as a form of protest. The act of suicide was understood to have negative karmic effects on their personal rebirths. Yet the monks believed the social conditions for spiritual development were so endangered by warfare that they made the sacrifice as an expression of their bodhisattva vow. In China during the sixth and seventh centuries, the Third Period School of Buddhism developed a treasury of funds to help the needy. In seventh-century Japan one of the first major temples, Shitennō-ji, included a public hospital as part of its complex. In the early ninth century Kūkai's temple in Kyoto operated a public school for children of all classes, girls as well as boys.

In recent decades, however, there has been criticism in East Asia about the actual practices of Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially in light of the new social conscience developing around the Engaged Buddhism movement. In Japan, for example, there is an originally scholarly movement called "Critical Buddhism." The Critical Buddhists note that despite the emphasis on compassion in Mahāyāna Buddhism, its overall record of social ethics has been quite poor. They criticize the Mahāyāna perspective as heretical because it places its moral emphasis on *how* something is done instead of *what* is done. They also claim that in saying that the world-as-it-is is already nirvāṇa (or that everyone is already somehow enlightened), Mahāyāna Buddhists have tolerated the status quo even when including conditions of social injustice.

The Critical Buddhism movement in Japan is in some ways also a response to what is happening in our fourth region for this study: contemporary North America.

Buddhist Ethics in the United States

Buddhist communities in the United States can be divided into two groups that have had (at least until recently) relatively little interaction with each other. The first group originated from Asian immigrants who came to the United States from Buddhist countries. One such group is the Buddhist Churches of America, established on the west coast of North America about a century ago by Shin Buddhist immigrants from Japan. In general, the immigrational groups brought Buddhism to the United States as part of their members' ethnic identities. They became for the most part cultural–religious enclaves within a pluralistic American society, reflecting the general range of educational and class backgrounds as other US ethnic groups. In this respect they functioned much like European immigrants such as Russian Americans who brought Russian Orthodox Christianity to the United States. The immigrant Asian Buddhists did little to convert Americans of different ethnicities.

The second kind of American Buddhist, our primary focus in this discussion, originated with Americans of non-Asian ancestry who "converted" to Buddhism. Typically, the groups coalesced around a Buddhist missionary teacher. The most popular of these groups belong to the Zen, Theravāda, and Tibetan traditions. The members come from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. We can call these groups "adoptive" rather than "immigrational." Two striking characteristics of the adoptive Buddhist groups are relevant to the development of American Buddhist ethics. First, because of their educational background and the way they (or their parents) first encountered Buddhism, they often have a comparative religious perspective. Aware of the strong tradition of social ethics in the Abrahamic religious traditions dominant in US culture, they have looked for a parallel in Buddhism. Often disappointed in their search, the question arose for them of "how can our Buddhist perspective inform our moral position vis-à-vis the social and environmental issues of today?" In many cases, they brought this question to their teachers from Asia, and, in so doing, stirred within them a heightened urgency to answer the same question. For example, American Zen communities (with the support of American adoptive Zen Buddhists like the poet Gary Snyder) built on the Japanese religio-aesthetic views of nature to foster ecological concerns. In turn, some ideas and projects from American Zen Buddhism began to influence Zen Buddhist scholars and teachers in Japan. This process resulted in the founding of centers for environmental studies within some Zen Buddhist universities. Meanwhile, engaged Buddhist practices from Asia (in part influenced by issues of modernization, including an awareness of Christian and communist ideals of social justice and responsibility) became a focus for scholarship and ethical thinking among Buddhists in the United States. Because so many issues of social and environmental ethics are global in nature and because of the rapid exchange of information through technology, this cross-fertilization across Buddhist communities is becoming the rule rather than the exception.

This brings us to the second striking feature related to Buddhist ethics in the United States. Buddhism's identity as a single religion with global manifestations was in part a construction by the West. Two centuries ago, for example, Buddhists in Thailand felt no strong connection to Buddhists in, say, Japan. It was partly the nineteenth-century Westerners' attempt to understand Buddhism that led to the historical and philological studies revealing how the various Buddhist traditions evolved out of each other. Only since the mid-twentieth century do we find pan-Buddhist associations such as the World Fellowship of

Buddhists and the World Buddhist Sangha Council. In the United States, though, collaboration among adoptive Buddhist groups (unlike immigrational groups, at least until recently) has occurred on a regular basis for some time. The assumption seems to be that since all the groups are "Buddhist," they share basic values. This is perhaps more obvious to the adoptive rather than immigrational Buddhists because their Buddhism is not as intermixed with ethnic and cultural differences. This situation encourages within the United States the possible development of a generic Buddhist ethics, one that crosses the lines among the varied traditions.

An interesting result of this generic Buddhist ethic arising within the United States is that it interfaces with American cultural expectations about what religious ethics or social ethics is supposed to accomplish. As suggested earlier, those expectations often derive more from an external integrity orientation that uses concepts like "autonomy," "rights," "moral responsibility," and so forth. For the most part Buddhism has historically used concepts derived more from a cultural orientation of intimacy, however. Will American Buddhist ethics successfully formulate Buddhism anew, using external integrity terms? Or will it try to change the dominant American conceptual map of ethics by shifting it to an intimacy orientation in tune with classical Buddhist terminology? American Buddhists have multiple identities – they are both Buddhist and American. How they negotiate that dual identity will be a new chapter in the interface between culture and Buddhist ethics.

Buddhist Ethics as the Ethics of Buddhists

In summarizing, it is tempting to think of Buddhism as adapting its ethics to local cultural conditions, maintaining along the way certain core values. This phrasing is not, however, a particularly *Buddhist* one. The wording reifies and essentializes "Buddhism" into a discrete system that adapts to its external environment. It makes Buddhism seem an independent agent, as if Buddhism were acted upon by culture and responds to it in return. Such an interpretation makes the relation between culture and Buddhism external rather than internal.

As suggested at the outset, Buddhists not Buddhism are what differ from one culture to the next. This is not because Buddhists are the effects of their social, cultural, and physical conditions, but rather because they *are* those conditions. Yet those conditions do not constitute some mindless mechanism. Rather, the interdependent processes are more like a conscious self-regulating, even self-healing system. The Buddha's Four Noble Truths were formulated in the medical progression of symptom, diagnosis, prognosis, therapy. He apparently understood his message as a kind of self-awareness leading to self-healing. Let us pursue this analogy between Buddhism and medicine a bit further.

Medical research suggests that the self-healing processes of the human body work best if the person is sensitive to somatic experience. If a person thinks about a particular part of the body, for example, the blood flow and temperature of that area shifts slightly. This can aid healing. The interdependent somatic processes signal injury or malfunction through tingling, pain, burning, itching, and so forth. If people are aware of these signals, they can respond to them while the problems are mild. If they repress or ignore the information, however, the conditions will often worsen. Where is the agency here? It is the body, but the body as including self-consciousness. The more the whole body (including the mind) is self-aware, the better it self-heals.

Let us apply this medical analogy to the Buddhist person as a system of interdependent, self-aware, and self-regulating processes. Viewed in this light, the point of Buddhist ethics is to make one more self-aware and self-responsive – more "skillful." Buddhists try to be aware of the "signals" of distress indicating the need for healing. Some may seem internal (the persistence of attachments, the desire for permanence, the preservation of a sense of ego) and some may seem external (the problems inherent in the caste system, economic inequality, gender prejudice, ecological degeneration). By being alert to the signals, the complex of conditions has a better chance to heal itself. To heighten this sensitivity, Buddhists have developed various techniques of praxis, principles of self-discipline, and reminders for how to keep the spiritual therapy on track.

Spiritual illnesses arise within certain conditions: cultural, social, personal, physical. Like physical illnesses, though, they often differ from one locale to another. So we should not expect Sri Lankan Buddhism to be any more like Mongolian Buddhism than we would expect Sri Lankan medicine to be like Mongolian medicine. The conditions are different and so different therapies develop. If we focus on the difference in the illness, we will find great variety. But if we focus on the goal of health, the differences tend to disappear. If in India Buddhist therapy connected more with epistemology and in Japan more with aesthetics, we can see those as different therapeutic strategies to treat the distress signals of different environments. But the goal of the therapies – the basic insight of self, world, and "skillful" agency – remains basically consistent across the variations.

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CHAPTER 73

Buddhist Ethics: Trajectories

Charles Hallisey

Varied Trajectories

Over the past centuries, Buddhists have both been caught in and embraced the global processes of colonialism, modernity, and globalization. Each of these processes has changed how Buddhists apprehend the world. As a result, each has left a profound imprint on Buddhist moral experience, values, and practice. Moreover, each process sets in motion relatively novel trajectories that continue to shape Buddhist moral thought and practice, from metaethics to normative ethics to applied ethics. A critical appreciation of the generative presence of these trajectories is essential to any understanding of modern Buddhist ethics as a form of religious ethics. Put differently, these generative forces provoke new and different conceptions of "ethics" and human persons from traditional Buddhist ethics. They also enable thinkers to reclaim aspects of past teaching in novel ways. A range of responses to these large-scale dynamics has given rise to versions of ethics now seen in the Buddhist world. Understanding these responses is the subject of this entry.

Some of these new trajectories are relatively easy to spot. They are the result of Buddhist encounters with ideas and values whose origins lie historically outside of the Buddhist world. This is the case with Buddhist acceptance of the modern concept of historicity and the notion of human rights. It is also true of Buddhist responses to contemporary challenges that are without precedent in history, as is the case with global environmental degradation. Other new trajectories are harder to perceive. These are shaped by shared assumptions and institutions that broadly structure otherwise diverse understandings of human life and our place in the world: assumptions of historicity, culture, and society; institutions like courts, state-supported education, and markets.

These trajectories come together to form what are seemingly ethical creoles in which the moral vocabulary may be Buddhist but the ethical syntax stems from the increasingly common habitus of the modern world. Conversely, the moral vocabulary of an "ethical creole" may be modern but the ethical syntax stems from traditional Buddhist values and practices. Prawet Wasi, a Thai Buddhist activist, gives an example of the first kind of ethical creole. Buddhism, he insists, must have a centrally visible role in development. The traditional Buddhist notions of *sīla* (self-discipline of behavior through morality), *samādhi* (the cultivation of mental self-discipline in meditation), and *paññā* (a wise understanding of the nature of human nature and the world) are central to human development. Yet on closer examination his understanding of perfect development is inflected more by middle-class and urban values than by the Buddhist ideas and

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

ideals found in Thai villages, the ostensible object of national development (van Esterik 2000, 81). Payutto, a Thai monk and among the most significant contemporary Buddhist thinkers, gives an example of the second kind of ethical creole. His reflections on political and social freedom, celebrated in Thailand as much as anywhere else in the world, are embedded in a moral framework that culminates in a freedom from oneself, from one's own desires and ignorance. This freedom from oneself is, for Payutto, nirvāna, the *summum bonum* of Buddhism. Nirvāna, as ultimate freedom, is the standard by which all other instances of human freedom are to be judged. Unlike much modern Western ethics, where freedom is a given *sine qua non* of morality, freedom here is a condition to be striven for. "The process by which to achieve freedom (and peace and happiness) is called development (*bhāvanā*) [a traditional Buddhist term for meditation and other forms of mental culture], and in Buddhism, as far as man is concerned, development is synonymous with education (*sikkhā*) [a traditional Buddhist term for training in discipline, particularly used for monastic precepts]" (Payutto 1990, 37).

This entry explores the "trajectories" in Buddhist ethics attentive to the complex interaction of these large-scale processes and mindful of the emergence of ethical creoles in varied contexts. It is important to grasp just how "modern" current Buddhist ethics has become. Hopefully, in this way, something of the vitality as well as the moral challenges facing "Buddhists" around the world will become evident.

Large-Scale Processes

When we try to bring large-scale processes like colonialism, modernity, and globalization into view and consider their significance for the understanding of modern Buddhist ethics, it is critical to avoid the common tendency to delimit their presence only to particular spheres of thought and practice in particular times and places. The importance of avoiding this tendency can be illustrated by considering, first, the continuing impact of colonialism on Buddhist ethics.

Colonialism

Colonialism affected the whole world – colonizers, colonized, and those who were neither – not just in different ways, but in unequal ways as well. Even those communities that were outside any specific colonial political economy were shaped by colonialism's way of ordering the world and its justification of that world order by emphasizing human difference and structures of value based on that difference. Modern colonialism cannot be delimited to a period that is now firmly in the past. Its values, possibilities, and constraints continue to shape the moral thought and practice of all humans, even while the political economy of colonialism has overtly given way to a world order constituted with the foundational notion of the nation. All of these generalizations apply to every part of the Buddhist world, from Central Asia to Southeast Asia to East Asia, just as much as they apply to any other part of the world.

Of course, for some Buddhists who were colonized, like those in Sri Lanka and Cambodia, the general legacy of colonialism makes them part of the "third world." But Buddhists were not only colonized. Some Buddhists colonized others (like the Japanese in Korea), some were "independent" (like the Thai) throughout the colonial period, and these have their own specific legacies of colonialism just as much as those Buddhist communities which were colonized. Whatever their colonial status historically, Buddhist communities all share a common heritage from colonialism. The various modes in which contemporary Buddhists

apprehend themselves as *Buddhist* generally stem from the global processes of colonialism that began in the sixteenth century. Indeed, some argue persuasively that the very notion of Buddhism is primarily a colonial product. It goes without saying that Buddhists did have a range of indigenous terms for self-ascription in precolonial times. Yet the cultural syntax that ordered human difference in colonial times was vastly different from anything before and left an indelible mark on all Buddhist terms of self-ascription.

It is only in the colonial period that Buddhists became capable of distinguishing themselves from other humans using the categories of culture and religion. Neither the modern notion of culture nor religion was known in precolonial Asia. One aspect of this colonial legacy that makes "religion" one of the primary ways of "othering" humans is the still-common impulse to define Buddhism by what makes it *different* from other religions rather than by what constitutes Buddhism. Students of religion too often assume that difference itself is the key rationale for the study of anything Buddhist. They are on the lookout for what is uniquely "Buddhist." This is an academic issue, but it is not only that. The colonial assumptions of human difference remain a key element of nationalisms in the postcolonial world. "The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity, but rather on a *difference* with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern West" (Chatterjee 1993, 5). Religion loomed large in Asian nationalisms precisely because "the European criticism of Indian [or Chinese or Khmer, or whatever] tradition as barbaric had focused to a large extent on religious beliefs and practices, especially those relating to the treatment of women" (Chatterjee 1993, 9).

Colonialism, modernity, and globalization are big words with even bigger referents. The large-scale processes named by these terms appear increasingly complex as they are investigated more concretely and theorized more adequately. They seem to elude adequate definition. Only the simplest delineation can be stipulated for each of these processes. The definitions provided must necessarily be suggestive and open-ended. Moreover, these delineations are focused on the topics of morality and ethics, understanding the distinction between the two to be that between first and second order phenomena. "Ethics" is thinking and talking about the values, ideas, and practices of morality.

Modernity

Modernity occupies the central place among the three, since colonialism and globalization are defined in conjunction to modernity. Although our understanding of the origins, history, and future of modernity is becoming increasingly open to doubt and tentativeness, the general contours of modernity remain sufficiently conventionalized. By "modernity" is meant a theoretical vision of human nature determined by a constellation of ideas about the individual as a free and discrete agent who, in cooperation with others, is able to transcend the constraints of inherited conditions (especially "culture," "society," and "religion") and is able to construct new "life-worlds" of meaning and well-being.

This constellation of ideas is everywhere apparent in the Buddhist world today. One sees them clearly even in the references to Prawet Wasi and Payutto above. We can also see them in the comments of Daisaku Ikeda, president of Soka Gakkai International, a new Buddhist movement that emerged in postwar Japan, about anecdotes from the biographies of the Buddha. These anecdotes "illustrate an important point in Buddhism, the fact that it does not seek to create any fixed image of the ideal man or demand that everyone attempt to conform to one particular stereotype. Rather it encourages its adherents, while embracing a certain sense of mission, to give full play to their individual abilities and characteristics" (Ikeda 1996, 97).

In modernity, a human being is a self-creating and self-governing individual, and this gives ethics a special pride of place in modernity's vision of a person. Ethics was the primal site of human freedom: a person chooses to be responsible for the kind of life she chooses to lead; a "moral agent" takes responsibility for guiding and regulating her own behavior. Everywhere in the contemporary Buddhist world there is a routine acceptance of modernity's vision of the human, and especially its vision of the importance of ethics. Comparison with the Buddhist past makes this clear, especially in so far as major strands of premodern Buddhist ethics often included starkly probative visions of human capacities: ignorant and riven with desires, we can never be other than beings of "blind passion and karmic evil" (a self-ascription of Shinran's, the great Pure Land thinker from thirteenth-century Japan). On this more classical vision, human beings are constitutionally incapable of constructing life-worlds of meaning and well-being for themselves. The "modern" idea about persons and moral agents, arising out of a large-scale process, is then the condition for the kind of ethical creole seen in the words of Ikeda and others, as well as the very importance of "ethics" in contemporary Buddhist thought and practice.

The inflections of modernity in contemporary Buddhist ethics are partially obscured by the legacy of colonialism. This obscuration occurs in many ways, but generally all to the same effect. Buddhism is posited as apart from the modern, making the manner in which Buddhists articulate a modern ethics more problematic. For example, Prawet Wasi's advocacy of development is an acceptance of the universal vision of modernity that leaves the Thai Buddhist community outside modernity. "Development" is the process by which men and women in certain communities become capable of the ethical self-creation and self-regulation so central to modernity's vision of the moral agent. When Buddhism is constructed as apart from the modern, then the Buddhist past, with all of its ethical and cultural resources, must be measured by the standards of modernity and sometimes transcended en route to the modern. This is seen in the contemporary Tibetan poet Dhondup Gyal's poem, "Waterfall of Youth":

> The thousand brilliant accomplishments of the past
> cannot serve today's purpose,
> yesterday's salty water cannot quench today's thirsts,
> the withered body of history is lifeless
> without the soul of today,
> the pulse of progress will not beat,
> the blood of progress will not flow. (Gyal 2000)

Communities which are "not yet modern" were defined as such in the world-ordering vision of colonialism as part of its justification of the inevitability of colonial regimes and their beneficence in initiating the processes of technological, social, and cultural development.

Colonial critiques of Buddhist communities were often couched in moral terms. These were deeply felt – they stung – and their force was often internalized, sometimes emerging in advocacy for new forms of morality among Buddhists. The early twentieth-century Sri Lankan Buddhist activist Anagarika Dharmapala wrote a handbook of moral behavior for Buddhist laypeople that became quite popular and influential. Actually, it was a condemnation of what was accepted in the moral communities of rural Buddhists in colonial Sri Lanka.

> In some instances [in Dharmapala's handbook] Western norms are directly advocated as, for example, eating with fork and spoon and using toilet paper before water during ablutions ... Some

> points do not conflict with tradition, but by and large Protestant and Western norms have been assimilated as pure and ideal Buddhist norms. Sociologically viewed, Dharmapala's social reform provided a value system to a new class, an emerging bourgeoisie. In many non-Western nations, nineteenth-century Western values, generally Victorian, have been assimilated into the fabric of indigenous bourgeois society ...
>
> The Sri Lanka case is especially striking since the new value system was articulated into a powerful ethic of this-worldly asceticism. (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988, 12)

The example of Dharmapala makes it clear that colonialism's manner of establishing differences among communities changed the way in which Buddhists imagined themselves. This is true to the degree that they were always aware of the condemnatory gaze of Europeans. Buddhist life-worlds and moral communities have been created since the time of colonialism by Buddhists and non-Buddhists as they encountered each other in contexts of critique, governance, and resistance.

One important trajectory of modern Buddhist thought stemming from colonialism is deeply defensive. It is part of an inherited response to colonial accusations of the inherent inadequacy of Buddhist thought, practice, and experience in the context of modernity. The shadow of this defensiveness is pervasive, and helps one to understand many features of contemporary Buddhist ethics, such as the routine contrast between Buddhist ethics and vaguely theistic ethics. This contrast is obviously apologetic. It is a way of aligning Buddhist ethics more closely with the secular ethics of the modern West and thereby making Buddhist ethics less susceptible to anticipated criticism of "religion."

This apologetic can be seen in comments by Payutto. One should note especially the claims for systematic rationality, heroic autonomy, freedom, objectivity, and universality in Buddhist ethics. All of these ideas are cardinal features of the self-understanding of modernity, and they are supposedly absent in theistic forms of ethics. Payutto's comments clearly resonate with standard critiques, and also the oversights, of theistically grounded ethics made by European Enlightenment thinkers.

> The moral code of Buddhism must be understood as a rational, integrated system of ethics so that the Buddhist practitioner can correctly proceed along the Path. In general, the code of ethics for theistic religions amounts to divine commandments or expressions of divine purpose, which are all separate and different ... *Sīla*, or the Buddhist system of ethics, is a universal set of objective principles established in accordance with natural truths ... Good and bad, right and wrong, blame and blamelessness all exist; you must be willing to accept these for what they are depending on your actions. You must be brave enough to accept that you are right or wrong according to the facts present, not according to your own inclinations.

There are several good things about the commandments of theistic religions. And yet problems remain that render theistic ethics untenable in the contemporary world.

> The determination of what is right and wrong, true and untrue has been clearly designated so that if a person believes and is loyal, the positive results of proper behavior are quick and effective. But a problem subsequently arises: in a rationalistic and positivistic age, what can be done to maintain people's beliefs in these commandments? And in the long run, how will people adhering to different faiths be able to live together? And if belief depends on loyalty to commandments, how will people achieve the freedom necessary to attain true wisdom? (Payutto 1995, 249–250)

Colonialism set in motion a dynamic set of images of communities and cultures and thereby helped to spread the "modern" vision of the human. These were used by individuals to establish their own identity as members of a community (e.g. "I am Thai, and as such, I am a free man, because Thailand was never colonized"). The conjunction of modern ideas and colonial processes helps to back "creole" moral identities that characterize much of contemporary Buddhist ethics as "different" than Western religious ethics, but also surprisingly compatible with "modern" ethics.

Globalization

Globalization, the accelerated flow of goods, peoples, images, and ideologies through circuits of economic and cultural interdependence, has intensified the dynamism of the colonial system of images. It has also generated new images that circulate in advertising, tourism, and university classrooms. In other words, globalization has intensified the impact of the "gaze of others," knowledge through images, setting in motion a "process of doubling" in the Buddhist world (Lopez 1998, 200). This process of doubling builds on but goes beyond the assimilation of European moral values and practices in the colonial world. It is a process of internal self-critique fostered not by defensiveness towards the anticipated critiques of non-Buddhists. Here, self-critique is fostered by measuring oneself against an image of "Buddhism," an image that is free-floating and thus apparently true. So, for example, "young lay Tibetans growing up in India ... criticize Tibetan monks for not living up to the image of Tibetan Buddhism they have read about in English" (Lopez 1998, 201). The process of doubling does not only occur with images created by non-Buddhists, as one might be inclined to suppose from this Tibetan instance. We see in Thailand and Japan, for example, shifting presentations of images for local consumption that claim to find and display the essence of Thainess (*khwampen Thai*) or Japaneseness (*Nihonji*) (see van Esterik 2000; Morris 2000; Ivy 1995).

The process of doubling is particularly powerful in Buddhist morality and ethics. Globalization consistently spreads an image of Buddhism as a religion grounded in compassion, one which is "above all a religion of reason dedicated to bringing an end to suffering. [A religion which] is strongly ethical and is devoted to non-violence, and as such is a vehicle for social reform" (Lopez 1998, 185). In Buddhist communities shaped by globalization, ethics inevitably becomes second order reflection on Buddhist morality as mediated by these images, not on the values and moral practices of actual Buddhist communities. Common aspects of Buddhist moral life that remain outside these images, such as relations between teachers and students, relations between parents and children, sorcery, and exorcism are thus frequently omitted from consideration in contemporary Buddhist ethics. In this way, globalization continues modern and colonial processes with greater scope, spread, and speed, thereby shaping trajectories in contemporary Buddhist ethics.

The sets of images about particular Buddhist communities (e.g. Thailand as "the land of smiles," victimized Tibet), about Buddhism in general (e.g. an advertisement that promises that "you can reach business nirvāna" if you use a certain computer program), and about modern ethical ideas (e.g. human rights) that circulate globally are far more fluid and malleable than those systems of ideas, values, and practices that are generally denoted with notions of culture or systematic religious thought. The significance of these sets of images cannot be overemphasized for any understanding of contemporary Buddhist ethics. Accounts of contemporary Buddhist ethics that turn only to culture or systematic thought cannot adequately account

for the cacophony of contemporary Buddhist ethical discourse. It is a cacophony because statements are sometimes made in particular ways more to gain the sympathetic attention of those far away, much like the placards in English that can be routinely seen on television reports of demonstrations in places like Beijing or Baghdad, than as an articulation of a systematic and stable ethical position.

Vincanne Adams has noted this in accounts of imprisonment and torture made by Tibetan nuns in a film by Ellen Bruno, *Satya: A Prayer for the Enemy*:

> Heard by activists outside of Tibet, these accounts [of imprisonment and torture] are interpreted as utterances of suffering, not simply of the sort that can bring spiritual salvation, but of the sort that can bring about a political revolution. Suffering in this latter sense is about creating a space of shared meaning between Buddhist and non-Buddhist, Tibetan and Tibetan refugee, Tibetan and foreign activist, Tibetan refugee and foreign activist. Suffering has to be made into something that for non-Tibetans and Tibetans alike can transform the religious into the political by the fact that it results from a presumed universally shared understanding. Suffering is asked to speak in the language of the one who is perceived as being able to alleviate it. Thus the nuns respond to the Western filmmaker, and in their voices we perceive both something that is produced by the Western gaze and some things that may be contrary to it. (Adams 2002, 389)

What "is produced by the Western gaze" and what "may be contrary to it" are equally Buddhist in contemporary Buddhist ethics, even if they are not equally Buddhist in terms of the history of Buddhist ethical thought. It is also important to take note of the ethical resonance of the notion of suffering. *Dukkha* (suffering, dis-ease, dissatisfaction) is a generative element in the Buddhist moral vision. Finally, it is important to take note of the site of moral discourse. Bruno's film was made for viewing in non-Tibetan communities. All of this is related to the impact of global processes on Buddhist ethics. This takes one deeper into the kind of "creole ethics" presently found among contemporary Buddhist communities and thinkers and thereby clarifies the important changes that virtually define various trajectories in "Buddhist ethics."

Defining Changes

One of the biggest changes in contemporary Buddhist ethics is the shift to new sites for the production of moral and ethical discourse. In the premodern Buddhist world, ethics was a product of monastic culture. It bore the imprint of the particular disciplinary and pedagogical practices that structured monastic life in different Buddhist communities. Like other areas of intellectual life, ethical thought was pursued and embedded in social patterns organized around person-to-person relationships of spiritual guidance with particular teachers. The practices of devotion and respect that displayed these relationships contextualized and organized a thinker's relationship with the intellectual and systematic content of the *dharma*, including ethics.

In the modern world, the site of ethics is no longer exclusively monastic. Ethics are taught and studied in state-sponsored schools and universities, disseminated in books, newspapers, and pamphlets, and in the mission statements of NGOs. This expansion of the sites in which Buddhist ethics are encountered and appropriated has introduced a marked ethical change. The mechanisms of print culture encourage

an experience of horizontal anonymity between individuals, on the model of the experience of citizens of a nation, rather than the more personalized but more hierarchical dependence that is typical of premodern relationships between monastic teachers and students. In short, the practices of modern print culture require and reinforce the "modern" ethical understanding of a person as an autonomous and capable individual agent. And this shapes, as we have seen, trajectories in contemporary Buddhism about the very subject of ethical discourse and the importance of "ethics" in Buddhist life.

Aside from shifts in how to understand the human person, there is one other change that helps to define the ethics of contemporary Buddhism. It is a shift in the "cosmological" frameworks for understanding the status of moral practices. In general, contemporary Buddhist ethics has made a turn to embracing a thin form of moral realism that is more foundational than what was seen in premodern Buddhist ethics. In the latter, the cosmological framework for morality was located in the structures of *karma* and rebirth. These structures were "real" in a significant way. It was generally thought that denial of *karma* and its fruits in various realms of rebirth (heavens, titans, humans, animals, ghosts, and hells) would put one outside the Buddhist fold. Insofar as the structures of rebirth could be said to represent "real" features of the world, premodern Buddhist ethics represented a form of moral realism. Yet this kind of moral realism was both more robust and more tempered than presently found. That was due to the importance in traditional Buddhist thought of the common notion of "two truths." One angle of vision on the world represents the way things really are, an ultimate truth. The other offers conventional truth, based on practical efficacy and shared assumptions between the users of accepted categories of thought, discourse, and evaluation. For example, a person from the perspective of ultimate truth is insubstantial and impermanent, best described as an aggregate of impersonal elements and forces. This "person" is profoundly unlike the modern Western idea. And yet, a person from the perspective of conventional truth is a discrete entity that exists and acts in space and across time. This "person" is much more like the modern vision of a moral agent. The difference between the two perspectives on a "person" is close to the difference between saying "I am hungry" (which would be a conventional description) and "There is an abundance of acids irritating the lining of the stomach" (a description from the perspective of ultimate truth). Both statements describe the same state of affairs, yet they can warrant very different ethical judgments. In premodern Buddhist thought, "morality" and "ethics" in the modern sense, along with a modern vision of persons, were within the realm of conventional truth. It was explicitly denied that moral claims could be persuasive or even understandable if expressed in ultimate rather than conventional terms.

Not surprisingly, accounts of rebirth in various realms, while the very stuff of premodern Buddhist ethics, were vulnerable to modern critiques of religion. They represented a bid for a robust but tempered moral realism that could not be sustained in the face of scientific accounts of the world. Buddhist ethics were quickly "demythologized" in response to these critiques of Buddhist cosmology. The bid for moral realism was now made by a turn to accounts of the world that use the categories of ultimate truth. This had the effect of truncating the Buddhist vision while seemingly extending its insights into the modern world. In particular, the concept of "co-dependent origination" was made to sustain a "realistic" ethics. Traditionally, this doctrine was used in relatively limited ways to explain the presence of a person in time and space using strictly impersonal categories. In contemporary Buddhism it has assumed "seemingly magnetic" powers that affect all areas of Buddhist ethics (Keown 2000, 78, n. 46).

For example, the Dalai Lama makes it clear in his *Ethics for the New Millennium* that the moral realism of co-dependent origination gives a prudential moral imperative. It is in our own interests to be moral and this moral realism gives guidance on how we should live.

> When we come to see that everything we perceive and experience arises as a result of an indefinite series of interrelated causes and conditions, our whole perspective changes. We begin to see that the universe we inhabit can be understood in terms of a living organism where each cell works in balanced cooperation with every other cell to sustain the whole. If then, just one of these cells is harmed, as when disease strikes, that balance is harmed and there is danger to the whole. This, in turn, suggests, that our individual well-being is intimately connected both with that of all others and with the environment within which we live ... Such an understanding of reality as suggested by this concept of dependent origination also presents us with a significant challenge. It presents us to see things and events less in terms of black and white and more in terms of complex interlinking of relationships, which are hard to pin down. (Dalai Lama 1999, 4)

The change in cosmological outlook, and so the kind of moral realism endorsed, when linked to shifts in ideas about persons arising within new sites of moral discourse, goes a long way in helping us understand trajectories in Buddhist ethics. It enables us to see the possibility of Buddhists constructing differing creole identities that continue and yet also revise traditional Buddhist beliefs, practices, and outlooks.

Realism and Situationalism

We see in the comments of the Dalai Lama a final feature of contemporary Buddhist ethics, at once traditional and also modern. The principles of normative ethics are theoretically obvious (they include the well-being of others in relationship with oneself), but they are particularly hard to discern in practical terms. The (ultimate) nature of the human and natural world makes it impossible to specify particular moral norms that would be universally applicable in all instances. Interestingly enough, the moral realism of traditional Buddhist metaethics as the real backing for a contemporary ethics yields an acceptance of situational ethics in the area of normative ethics. It reduplicates in a novel way some of the same insights as the classical "two truths." And, further, this move also allows contemporary Buddhist ethicists to accept the insights of historical and cultural relativism in describing morality without rejecting the objectivity and universalism of moral realism as seen in the Buddha's teachings. In this respect, we see Buddhist ethicists finding a way to allow for moral disagreements without insisting that one point of view must be wrong, as is often the case in ethical positions that are morally realistic. We also see how a classical tradition can locate within its own resources means to respond to the large-scale processes now shaping human life on this planet.

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5 Indian Religions

CHAPTER 74

Hindu Ethics?

Roy W. Perrett

Is There Hindu Moral Theory?

Is there such a thing as Hindu ethics? Is the category of ethics appropriate to the moral thought of the Hindu religious tradition? Obviously enough, the answers to these questions depend very much on what we mean by "ethics". One very broad characterization might be something like this: ethics is a set of substantive proposals concerning how to live, how to act, or what sort of person to be. In this sense there certainly is Hindu ethics, with a large variety of texts in Sanskrit and other Indian languages setting forth various such proposals (see Holdrege 1991).

But ethics is also often taken to be a branch of philosophy, and hence a body of theoretical discourse centrally concerned with analysis and justification. There certainly exists a highly articulated Hindu philosophical tradition, but is there Hindu ethics in the philosophical sense of that term (i.e. a body of developed moral theory)? The answer is not so clear, for although classical Indian philosophy is incredibly rich in rigorous and extended discussions of topics in epistemology, logics, and metaphysics, comparable discussions in philosophical ethics do not abound. Hence, too, the relative paucity of extended contemporary studies of Hindu moral philosophy (see Maitra 1956; Hiriyanna 1975; Perrett 1998).

Some have seen this lacuna in the otherwise enormous Indian philosophical literature as implying that "morality, its origins and its expression in various commands and interdictions, was taken too much for granted to be discussed" (Hopkins 1924, 88). But this is not quite right. The classical Indian philosophers obviously had a great deal to say about ethics insofar as they vigorously discussed topics like the ends of life and the relation of virtuous action to those ends.

Others have suggested the gap in the literature does not point to the Indians' indifference to ethics, but just to their indifference to ethical theory of a certain universalistic sort. Max Weber's views have been influential in this connection:

> There was no universally valid ethic, but only a strict status compartmentalization of private and social ethic, disregarding the few absolute and general ritualistic prohibitions (particularly the killing of cows). This was of great moment. The doctrine of *karma* deduced from the principle of compensation for previous deeds of the world, not only explained the caste organization but the rank order of divine, human and animal beings of all degrees. Hence it provided for the coexistence of different ethical codes for different status groups which not only differed widely but were often in sharp conflict ... [Men] were as unlike as man and animal. (Weber 1958, 144)

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

More recently, A. K. Ramanujan has often been cited as claiming such particularism to be a characteristic "Indian way of thinking":

> One has only to read Manu after a bit of Kant to be struck by the former's extraordinary lack of universality. He seems to have no clear notion of a universal *human* nature from which one can deduce ethical decrees like "Man shall not kill," or "Man shall not tell an untruth." One is aware of no notion of a "state," no unitary law of all men ... To be moral, for Manu, is to particularize ... I think cultures (may be said to) have overall tendencies ... to *idealize*, and think in terms of, either the context-free or the context-sensitive kind of rules ... In cultures like India's, the context-sensitive kind of rule is the preferred formulation. (Ramanujan 1989, 45–7)

All of this might too hastily suggest a picture of Hindu ethics as a variety of anti-theoretical particularism, prefiguring certain trends in contemporary Western ethics. On such a view, the absence of a developed Hindu moral theory not only fails to show that there is no Hindu ethics, but it may very well also show that the Hindu ethicists deliberately eschewed universalistic theory because they better understood the radically particularistic nature of ethics than have most Western ethicists.

Such a picture of Hindu ethics as particularistic anti-theory, however, is unconvincing. First, if the Indian philosophers really were anti-theorists about ethics, this clearly had nothing to do with any principled general objection to the construction of universalistic philosophical theories: witness the growth of the intricate edifice of classical Indian epistemological theory (*pramāṇavāda*). Second, the classical Hindu ethicists did recognize the existence of some kinds of universal moral rules: the *dharmaśāstrins* explicitly distinguished the particular duties of one's caste and stage in life (*varṇāśrama-dharma*) from the universal duties (*sādhāraṇa-dharma*) incumbent on all, regardless of age or occupation. Third, the classification of Hindu ethics as particularist unhappily saddles Hindu moral philosophers with the problem of how to make coherent the often inconsistent deliverances of commonsense moral judgments on particular cases – especially since in other domains Indian philosophers have been just as reluctant to accept contradictions as have their Western counterparts.

A third position is that Hindu thinking on *dharma* does indeed provide a moral theory, but one of a uniquely pluralistic sort:

> Part of it is a theory of moral rules, part of it a theory of virtues, another part communitarian, and added to all these, there is a layer of Kantian-like duty for duty's sake sub-serving a transcendent goal of *mokṣa*, where ethics transcends itself. (Mohanty 2000, 122)

There are difficulties, however, with this way of representing Hindu moral theory. First, it can all too readily be taken to suggest that Hindu moral theory is just an uneasy – and probably unstable – patchwork of parts of various more familiar Western moral theories. Second, it is exegetically implausible to represent the corpus of Indian writings on ethics, scattered over a variety of sources and genres, as constituting a single synthetic moral theory.

Is there a better picture of Hindu ethics available, one that does justice to its special theoretical character while also acknowledging the relative thinness of the moral theory actually developed by the Indians – its thinness, that is, when compared to paradigms like Western moral theory or classical Indian *pramāṇavāda*? I think so, but providing it requires the use of a rather different map of the territory of ethics than that which has become the standard one.

Two Maps of Ethics

A familiar Western map of ethics divides the territory up into two basic approaches: non-normative and normative. Non-normative approaches, on the one hand, include both descriptive ethics and metaethics. Metaethical theories are either cognitivist or non-cognitivist. Cognitivist theories are either naturalist or non-naturalist. Normative approaches, on the other hand, divide into normative ethics and applied ethics. Normative ethics then divides into teleological and deontological theories. The main teleological theories are egoism, consequentialism (including utilitarianism), and virtue ethics.

Such a map would not have the currency it does if it failed to capture any of the territory. Hence, it is at least prima facie embarrassing to find that there exists nothing identifiable as Hindu ethics which can be located comfortably on this map. Nor is it enough just to plead that Hindu ethics is *sui generis*, for then we still need to supply a better map of the territory of ethics: one on which Hindu ethics can be located, together with all the other theories already captured on the standard map. Fortunately for the cause of Hindu ethics, however, some recent work in Western moral theory not only supports the claim that the standard map of ethics is inadequate as a complete representation of the logical space of the possible theories, but also offers a more promising rival map (see Kagan 1992, 1998; Donagan 1977).

First, the rival map suggests that the distinction between metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics is arguably better understood as roughly marking positions on a continuum, rather than sharp lines of division. Just as we cannot articulate substantive moral claims in applied ethics without reference to the sorts of more fundamental claims about the content of morality traditionally counted as part of normative ethics, so too we cannot articulate these more fundamental normative claims without reference to second order claims about the very nature of morality. Metaethics and normative ethics, then, are not as independent of each other as is often claimed.

Second, the new map of ethics suggests that when we consider the structure of normative ethics it is fruitful to distinguish between normative *factors* and normative *foundations*. For example, when considering a particular act, we typically seek to articulate both the various factors relevant to determining the moral status of that act and the foundational devices that generate and explain the favored list of normatively relevant factors.

A normative factor is one relevant to determining moral status and most moral theorists favor admitting a variety of them – including outcomes, constraints, special obligations, options, and so on. More controversial is exactly how these various factors interact and how they are to be weighted relative to each other in the event of conflict. To get a grip on the notion of a normative factor, imagine a situation where I take a boat to rescue someone who is drowning. Clearly, saving a life is a good outcome and this factor is relevant to the moral evaluation of my deed. But many think this may not be the only morally relevant factor here. Suppose, for instance, the boat belongs to someone else and so to rescue the drowning person I have to steal the boat. Should someone else's property rights constrain my rescue attempt? Or suppose the drowning person is my daughter. Do I then have a special obligation, stronger than my obligation to save a stranger? And so on. In both Western and Indian ethics there are a number of alternative theories about the morally relevant factors and their interaction.

The foundational theories are supposed to help us with these issues by offering mechanisms that purport to generate and thus explain the list of normatively relevant factors. Of course, some ethicists are *non-foundationalists*, holding that there is no further explanation possible at the foundational level of

the normative factors and their interaction principles. *Foundationalists*, on the other hand, deny this and offer competing theories that seek to justify their choice of a factoral list. (Note, however, that the ethical foundationalist is not necessarily committed to the thesis that the foundational level theories are *epistemically* prior to, or more basic than, the factoral level theories. Epistemically speaking, it might well be that neither level is more fundamental than the other.)

Foundational theories may be either teleological or deontological. Teleological theories explain the significance of the factors in terms of their significance for the good, either the individual good or the overall good. Examples of such teleological foundational theories include egoism, virtue ethics, and consequentialism. Deontological theories deny that the ultimate basis of ethics lies in terms of some central good or goods, except for that agreement they differ about the details of their positive foundational accounts. Examples of deontological foundational theories include contractarianism, universalizability theory, ideal observer theory, and reflection theories.

It is important to realize that the choice of a theory about the morally relevant factors can be relatively independent of the choice of a foundational theory. This point is not always well appreciated. Two people might well agree, for instance, about the list of normative factors, but disagree about the correct foundational theory. Whereas it is too often assumed that a foundational theory uniquely generates a particular list of factors, in fact two rival foundational theories might well generate the same list of factors. For example, admitting the moral relevance of factors in addition to outcomes does not preclude all of these factors being given a purely consequentialist explanation at the foundational level. On the other hand, two people might well agree on the correctness of a given foundational theory and yet disagree about which factors are generated by that theory. For example, many consequentialists have too hastily assumed that consequentialism as a foundational theory commits us to the (relatively unpopular) view that outcomes are the only morally relevant factors. But in fact one can quite consistently be a consequentialist at the foundational level without being a consequentialist at the factoral level.

The distinction between theories of normative factors and foundational theories, then, fruitfully enriches the logical space that ethical theories occupy: there are far more theoretical possibilities than has usually been thought. But there are still two further foundational issues a complete normative theory has to address.

The first issue is the problem of whether to embrace *monism* or *pluralism* at the foundational level. A pluralist at the factoral level holds that more than one normative factor has weight in its own right. This does not, however, preclude there being a single foundational theory that justifies and explains this plurality of factors. Someone who believes there is such a single foundational theory is a foundational monist. In contrast, a pluralist at the foundational level holds that the different factors are grounded in different foundational devices.

There are two ways this might be done. One is right to insist that that there is an ultimate and irreducible pluralism at the foundations of normative ethics. The other is a bit more exotic: a foundational pluralism which also admits of the possibility of *multilayering*. The idea here is that there may be at a deeper foundational level still some single foundational theory that grounds and explains the plurality of more superficial foundational theories. There are many structural possibilities along these lines that are still to be explored fully. For example, egoism might be invoked to support contractarianism, which in turn might generate the factoral level; or the ideal observer might support universalizability. Nor is there any obvious reason why we must stop with a single deeper foundational layer: perhaps the multilayering goes much deeper than that. Indeed, using this notion of multilayering, perhaps we can combine

elements of both monism and pluralism at the foundational level and construct a foundational theory which has several layers containing more than one component account, with pluralism at one level grounded in monism at a deeper level. The theoretical possibilities in this area are surely much richer than has usually been appreciated.

Second, a complete foundational theory needs to address the issue of *evaluative focal points*. Rival theories in normative ethics have often disagreed as to what kinds of objects provide the *primary* evaluative focal point. Thus the familiar debate between act-and rule-consequentialists: are acts to be the primary evaluative focal point, with rules evaluated in a secondary or derivative way, or should it be the other way around. But acts and rules do not exhaust the list of plausible primary evaluative focal points. Other possibilities include motives, institutions, norms, character traits, and intentions. Taking each of these we can construct a variant of any given foundational approach. The choice of focal point will then significantly influence what is generated at the factoral level. Once again, ethicists have done relatively little independent investigation of the evaluative focal points, as opposed to promoting rival foundational theories which already incorporate choices about focal points. An exception is recent work by virtue theorists, where significant intramural differences of opinion at the foundational and factoral levels have not been able to obscure a fundamental point of agreement: that it is virtues, rather than acts or rules, that ought to be our primary evaluative focal point.

To sum up then. On this new map of ethics we can think of normative ethics as having two major levels: the foundational and the factoral. At the foundational level we can then further subdivide the concerns of ethical theory into two: the choice of foundational devices and the choice of focal points. Taken together, these latter two generate the favored list of normative factors. Ideally, a complete moral theory will include all three components and give an account of their interconnections. It will also take a stand on the foundational monism/pluralism issue.

Implications

Suppose that a complete moral theory ought to include all of these components. Is there such a fully developed Hindu moral theory? The answer is clear: there exists no credible Indian candidate for such an exalted role. But equally there is no credible Western candidate for such an exalted role. Even the most fully articulated Western moral theories fail to address all of the ethical territory represented on the new map of ethics. Of course, some Western moral theorists have explored some parts of that territory in considerably more systematic detail than have any of their Indian counterparts: this is what gave rise to the impression that there was no Hindu moral theory. But arguably most Western ethical theories effectively confine themselves to less than the three areas a complete theory is supposed to discuss.

Thinking of the usual standard Western normative theories as incomplete moral theories from which there is nevertheless something to be learned helps us to understand better the limits and achievements of Hindu moral theory. It is not that the Hindus have developed a uniquely pluralistic, synthetic moral theory, scattered over a variety of sources and genres. Rather, what the Hindu moralists have done is much like what their Western counterparts have done: they have investigated different regions of the moral map, with their different sorts of normative investigations often proceeding independently of one another, and they have managed at best to develop only significantly incomplete normative theories (notwithstanding the interest of these fragments).

Of course, sometimes the Indian theories happen to be weak in precisely the areas that the Western theories are strongest: hence the Western valorization of Western foundational theory and metaethics. In reality the Hindu moral theorists have done some very good work centered on factoral and focal issues: see, for instance, the rich discussions of the normative factors, foci, and their interactions to be found in the *dharmaśāstra* and *arthaśāstra* texts, or in the epic narratives of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. Moreover, in some areas the Hindus have arguably done pioneering work as yet unmatched by their Western counterparts: for instance, whereas the issue of multilayered foundational pluralism has been largely unexplored in Western ethics, the Hindu discussions of the nature of the *puruṣārthas* and their relationships to one another are remarkably suggestive in this respect.

On this theoretical map of the territory of ethics, much of the fine-grained detail has yet to be filled in. Using this map, however, we can successfully capture what both Western and Hindu ethicists have done and what they have as yet failed to do. In other words, we have an attractive representation of ethics which allows us to view both Western and Indian moral philosophers as importantly engaged in common activity aimed at the same regulative goal: contributing to the construction of an ideally complete moral theory. In this sense, then, there most definitely is Hindu ethics.

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CHAPTER 75

Origins of Hindu Ethics

Anne E. Monius†

Focusing on the classical model of the ideal human life as it emerges from the texts of Hinduism's religious elites by the turn of the common era, this entry examines the origins and fundamentals of Hindu ethics, phrased here as the inquiry into the nature of dharma, a moral, social, and cosmological "order" that lies at the heart of traditional Hindu thinking about the moral life. In the complex of Hindu religious traditions that tend to emphasize orthopraxy over orthodoxy, where "what a Hindu does in relation to his or her social standing and context is far more important than what a Hindu thinks" (Flood 1994, 69), dharma suggests something other than an ethics of general and abstract principle, of rationally derived universal law and application.

The Ritual Beginnings

For those accustomed to the Euro-American discipline of moral philosophy, the effort to understand Hindu ethics begins in an unlikely place: with the sacrificial ritual traditions of the most ancient and authoritative of Hindu texts, the Vedas. The Vedas, literally texts of "knowledge," combine myth, poetry, and sacrificial injunction. They are complex and voluminous works whose oral composition spans more than a millennium, from the hymns of the Rig Veda, composed perhaps in the second millennium BCE, to the more speculative sections known as the Upaniṣads, datable roughly to the eighth through sixth centuries BCE. Hindu tradition assumes the Vedas to be eternal and authorless. It refers to the entire textual corpus as *śruti*, "that which has been heard": truths about the nature of reality received by great sages of a far distant age. Composed in a religious language known as Sanskrit (literally "perfected" language), the Vedas have remained, until the advent of modern Euro-American Indology, the provenance of a class of religious specialists known as the brahmans. Recognition of the supreme authority of the Vedas has served as one of the strongest measures of Hindu identity in the great diversity of Indian religiosity.

The Vedas – and all texts to be considered in this entry on origins – represent only the perspectives of an elite priestly class. The voices of women, the lowest social classes, and other marginal groups are largely silent until the modern period. Although the full practice of Vedic sacrifice survives only in a few isolated communities in modern India, and generations of non-brahmans and non-Hindus have arisen to challenge the brahmanic model of the ideal human life, the traditions of moral inquiry to be discussed below remain central to all Hindu moral reflection to the present day.

† Deceased.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

In the Vedic world of *yajña*, "sacrifice," performed by brahmans for their wealthy patrons, dharma, derived from a verbal root meaning "to uphold," significantly occurs most often in the plural. Found more than sixty times in the Rig Veda alone, dharma and its derivatives signal ritual acts properly performed by brahman virtuosos to rejuvenate and reinvigorate universal order. Correctly enacted sacrificial rites are critical to the well-being of the cosmos, for the world is not an independent or objective reality. Universal order is *constructed* by the ritual performance (Halbfass 1988, 314–316). As the "Hymn to the Primeval Man" (Rig Veda X.90) demonstrates, dharmas as rites of sacrifice serve to create and order the entire world, from the heavens above to the very fabric of Hindu society: the social classes or castes, elsewhere termed *varṇas* or "colors":

> The Primeval Man had a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet ...
> When the gods performed a sacrifice with the Primeval Man as the oblation, spring was the clarified butter, summer the fuel, and autumn the offering ...
> From that sacrifice, offered entirely, the drops of clarified butter came together; [that] made all the animals: those of the air, those of the forest, and those of the village ...
> His mouth was the brahman; his arms made the ruler; that which was his thigh was the merchant; the servant was born from his feet ...
> With [this] sacrifice, the gods sacrificed to the sacrifice; these were the first sacrificial acts [dharmas] ...

As these primordial rites of sacrifice first constitute cosmic order, so, in turn, must the members of the priestly caste maintain that order: "these were the first sacrificial acts [dharmas]" to be enacted again and again by the priestly community.

The vision of the moral life that emerges from the large and complex body of the Vedas is thus highly performative, tied to the structured ritual actions of the sacrifices that fashion and maintain the world. The human being's moral challenge – particularly that of the brahman male – is to conform to one's place in that tightly woven, hierarchical world. To find one's place and so conform to the obligations and rhythms of the planets, the forces of nature, the world of animals and plants, and the intricate web of society is to participate actively in an aesthetic whole, enacting the sacrifice that both sustains that whole and ties one to a specific position therein. In the Vedic conception of dharma, the "intermeshing of natural and normative is taken for granted" (Chatterjee 1986, 178). The proper ordering of the universe and human society emerges both from the raw stuff of the world itself (the body of the Primeval Man) and from the human ritual activity that shapes and sustains that matter. To be moral, to act rightly, is to realize actively one's place in the ritually constituted cosmos.

The cult of ritual sacrifice dominated by brahman officiants no longer survives apart from a few isolated instances, and perhaps has not existed in any significant way since the demise of royal patronage by powerful medieval Hindu kings. Yet these most ancient views on dharma remain central to later developments in Hindu ethics. In the voluminous Vedic texts that incorporate many centuries of gradual change in practice and thought, dharma also emerges as an important term in the singular. If the plural signifies the multiplicity of ritual acts necessary to constructing and maintaining universal order, the more abstract singular term implies the result of such ritually creative activity, the established norm to which the individual should conform to the best of his ability: the brahman to perform sacrifice; the warrior to rule; the merchant to trade and till the soil; the servant class to labor wherever necessary.

While dharma as a "totality of binding norms" (Halbfass 1988, 314) becomes increasingly the focus of ethical inquiry, the creative activity of the ritual is never fully lost in Hindu understandings of the term. Dharma is not a natural law or objective truth but the result of human activities, denoting a "reciprocity" between cosmogony and ethics, human action and natural events (Halbfass 1988, 318). Just as the ritual-performative aspects of Vedic dharma remain constant, so, too, does the notion of multiple dharmas. In the classic model of ideal human behavior discussed below, dharma is constituted by an emphatically plural set of behavioral codes. While moral order is singular and cosmic, its constituent parts are plural and particular.

An Alternative Vedic Ethics of Withdrawal and Transcendence

Before turning directly to the development of the classic orthodox model of Hindu dharma, brief mention of diversity within the Vedic tradition itself must first be made. There exists within the Vedic corpus, in the latter portions known collectively as the Upaniṣads, a rejection of ritual that will be taken seriously by all brahmanical moral theorists to come. Where this turn from ritual to more philosophical speculation on the nature of reality originates is unclear. Whatever their source, the teachings of the Upaniṣads discard the world of ritual in favor of a new goal: *mokṣa*, literally "release," an ultimate freedom from a vision of human life in which the soul suffers endless rebirths and redeaths (termed *saṃsāra*). *Mokṣa* is to be achieved, according to the Upaniṣads, not by the performance of highly patterned ritual activities, but by withdrawing from the world of ritual, and from the world of human activity in general, to contemplate the true nature of self and world through meditation. "For dangerous are these boats of sacrifice ... / The foolish who praise [them as] the highest / indeed go again to old age and death" (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.7).

This vision of the human condition mired in the miseries of endless reincarnation demands a reworking of a number of earlier Vedic concepts, stripping them of their original ritual connotations and imbuing each with a new sensibility. One such lexical transformation lies in the redefinition of karma. While karma (from a verb meaning "to do"), in the ritual injunctions of the Vedas, refers to the performance of the ritual act, karma acquires a more abstract, ethicized set of meanings in the Upaniṣads, signaling not just action but the ongoing, cumulative moral fruits of that action across many lifetimes. Reconceived as the ethical repercussions of human deeds, karma guides the human soul through its succession of rebirths: "As one does, as one conducts oneself, thus he becomes ... One becomes virtuous through virtuous action, wicked by wrong action" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.5). Since it is karmic activity that keeps human beings trapped in the realm of rebirth, the path to liberation lies in the complete cessation of all such activity, accompanied by meditative austerities meant to generate the Upaniṣadic equivalent of the heat of the sacrificial fire, *tapas*, an internal "heat" that is powerfully transformative. The quest for liberating knowledge replaces sacrificial ritual as the central activity of human beings. It lies not in the realm of the gods or the heavens, but in the experiential awareness of the underlying ontological unity of the world, expressed in terms of the identity of Self (Ātman) and highest Reality (Brahman).

The moral life is to be found in the pursuit of the knowledge of Brahman and Ātman, superseding the life of ritual performance embraced in other parts of the scriptural corpus. The paradigmatic life of the sage – restrained in activity, detached from sensory participation in the world, meditating on an object of

knowledge that lies beyond the human capacities for language and description – embraces an ethics of restraint and austerity. As the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (3.3.9) declares:

> Know that the Self is the owner of a chariot, and the body is the chariot itself; know that reason is the charioteer and that mind, indeed, is the reins ...
> The man whose charioteer is discernment and who reins in his mind, he reaches the end of [his] journey ...

The Upaniṣadic focus on the individual's quest for liberating knowledge of the ultimate identity of Self and Reality survives in the form envisioned by the ancients no more than do the sacrificial traditions embraced by the more ritually oriented portions of the Vedic corpus. Yet, like the performative ethics described above, this ethics of renunciation and transcendence plays a critical role in all Hindu formulations of the ideal life. It is the intertwining of these two Vedic moral visions – that of ritual activity and that of renunciation – that generates the most powerful and enduring orthodox Hindu model of the ideal human life.

An Ethics of Human Particularity

The two models of human behavior outlined in the Vedas do not remain forever at odds. Among the earliest layers of brahmanic commentary on the Vedas, the *Dharmasūtras*, literally "Short Texts on the Nature of Dharma," focus on the ideal life of the priestly householder, one in which "the ritual, the moral, and the social constitute ... a continuum" (Olivelle 1999, xxxviii). Citing the ritual injunctions of the Vedas as the primary source of dharma, the *sūtra* literature applies the performance of public rituals to the everyday activities of the brahman householder. While the texts repeatedly sing the praises of the householder, the possibility also exists of living one's life in service to the guru or teacher of Vedic tradition, in forest retreat, or in the state of full renunciation (see Olivelle 1993). There also emerges from the *sūtra*s a clear vision of distinct pursuits suitable to human life, the *puruṣārtha*s or "goals of man." These include not only dharma or moral behavior but also *artha*, the pursuit of wealth and power, and *kāma*, literally "lust," the pursuit of the pleasures of love and family (later authors will add *mokṣa* as a fourth and final goal of human life).

The *sūtra* literature expresses a vision of the moral life firmly rooted in the brahman householder's ritual activities directed toward the gods, the ancestors, and the cosmos writ large. Yet here dharma also begins to grow into a vision of the moral life that is both performative and intentional, an ethic of worldly works and inner cultivation of a particular frame of mind and heart. Dharma implies not only ritual propriety, but also morality in a wider sense, the cultivation of virtues deemed generally beneficial.

The older Vedic notion of rites done for worldly – or even universal – gain is superseded in the *sūtra*s by a focus on cultivating proper intention, proper frame of mind, while at work in the world as a brahman householder. As Āpastamba notes, "Let him not follow the Laws for the sake of worldly benefits, for then the Laws produce no fruit at harvest time" (1.20.1–2, in Olivelle 1999, 31). While dharma remains rooted in the ultimate authority of the Vedas, Āpastamba and other *sūtra* authors also cite commentaries on the Vedas (*smṛti*, literally "that which is remembered"), the conduct of those learned in the Vedas, and accepted custom. The uncertainty of dharma, the difficulties in determining the proper path of conduct

for the brahman male householder amid the messiness of human life, obviously weigh heavily on the minds of the *sūtra* authors as each struggles to discern a wider system of human ethics amid a contested array of opinions and customs.

These *sūtra* themes are consolidated and elaborated upon in the large body of important texts known as *Dharmaśāstra*s, extended treatises on the nature of moral life. The most important of these in Hindu history is the *Manusmṛti* or *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, often translated into English as "The Laws of Manu" (Doniger and Smith 1991). Manu attempts to claim a certain universality absent in the individual *sūtra*s that remain tied to specific Vedic schools and to expand the themes outlined above to include not only rules of conduct (*ācāra*) and expiatory rites (*prāyaścitta*) but the administration of law, both criminal and civil (*vyavahāra*). Attributed to a figure, Manu, about whom nothing is known, and datable roughly to the turn of the common era or earlier (Doniger and Smith 1991, xvii), the Laws of Manu are comprised of 2,685 Sanskrit metrical verses, composed by and for the members of the brahman priestly elite. The focus of the text lies in constructing an all-encompassing model for human moral behavior: *varṇāśramadharma*, literally an "ethics of life stage and social caste," a moral vision based on innate differences among human beings. Beginning with large metaphysical claims about the authority of his vision of dharma, Manu then focuses on the specific duties and obligations of the three upper or "twice-born" castes, with occasional references to lower social groups, including women. Particular attention is paid to the conducting of life-cycle rituals known as the *saṃskāra*s, rites of transformation meant to create and shape the moral human being. The four life choices of the male Brahmin found in the *sūtra* literature, now significantly rearranged as successive life "stages" (*āśrama*), organize the central portion of the text. Manu then moves on to discuss the duties of kings and the administration of justice.

The Laws of Manu consist of long and often mind-numbing lists of prohibitions and exhortations to eat certain foods, mix with certain people, and avoid all others. Such lists, to the modern Western eye, seem random, confusing, and completely confining. Consider, for example, what Manu has to say about urination:

> He should not urinate on a path, on ashes, in a cowshed, on ploughed [land], in water, on a funeral pyre, and not on a mountain ...
> He should never discharge urine or feces while facing the wind, fire, a priest, the sun, or water ...
> In the daytime he should discharge urine and feces facing north, at night facing south, and during morning and evening twilight as during the day.
> [Urination] on fire, at the sun, or at the moon ... destroys [one's] intelligence (4.45–52)

Despite such impossible lists of rules, the Laws of Manu also betray a quintessentially realistic view of human fallibility. In the context above, Manu recognizes that one cannot always control the circumstances of nature's call. As in nearly every situation, he provides an escape clause of sorts, a statement about the possibilities of violating all the carefully articulated laws "in extremity" (*āpad*): "The twice-born [male], when fearing injury, should do it facing whichever way, / whether it be in shade or darkness, at night or during the day" (4.51). Manu also builds on the rites of expiation outlined in the earlier *Dharmasūtra* literature, allowing for the ritual correction of any mistakes.

Keeping in mind these escape clauses of expiatory rite and extremity, we now turn to the central focus of Manu's work. The model of *varṇāśramadharma*, the morality of social class and life-stage, brings

together those two competing Vedic visions of morality: the life of active ritual participation in, no less construction of, the world and that of complete renunciation of ritual and society. The model of *varṇāśramadharma* rests on the assumption of qualitative human difference, of particularities of substance, space, time, and circumstance. In Manu's world of class and life-stage, there can be no concept of universal human nature or rights; Manu refers repeatedly to the innate tendencies and activities of each social class. The hallmark of social and moral order for Manu lies in the ever-vigilant separation of distinct groups of people and earthly things. There is a general appreciation in the *Laws of Manu* for universal values such as non-injury to living beings (*ahiṃsā*): "non-injury, truth, not stealing, purity, and control of the senses ... is the concise dharma of the four classes" (10.63). Yet the substance of ethical discussion focuses on the particular duties of those specifically located in the social and universal order. Dharma is sensitive to context: "to be moral, for Manu, is to particularize" (Ramanujan 1989, 45).

The particularities of human nature, as well as the moral codes of behavior that govern each, are arranged not horizontally in the dharma of caste and life-stage, but vertically. In this text written by and for brahman priests, the brahmans enjoy the preeminent position over the warrior, the merchant, and the servant. This hierarchy of particularity and the separation among peoples and things is marked in Manu by what he terms "purity" (*śuddha*) and "impurity" or "pollution" (*aśuddha*). These are almost substantive qualities that are contagious, transmitted through contact or close proximity. All things in the world possess a purity factor that is both fixed and relative. Brahmans are pure, warriors less so, merchants even less so. Yet what is polluting for the brahman – a particular food, contact with a particular person – might be quite purifying for the lowly servant. The priestly caste's presence at the apex of the social order is due to its collective purity. The bulk of Manu's text aims to maintain that very purity from the polluting dangers of the world and of other social classes that surround the brahman. Purity is not an entirely natural state, however. It is carefully constructed and maintained through a lifetime of ritual observances. The brahman's capacity for purification rests in Manu's cosmogony, in the fact that priests issue forth from the mouth, the purest part of the Primeval Man who gave birth to the universe (1.92–94). Manu's rites of expiation are essentially rites of purification, cleansing the self of moral "dirt" accrued through contact with the substantively/ethically "unclean."

Yet this ethics of particularity, of difference and hierarchy, does not necessarily imply inter-class hatred or distrust. Manu's treatment of women is a good case in point. On the one hand, women of any class are dangerously impure and polluting, largely because their bodies are prone to excreting more polluting liquids than their male counterparts. Women are also dangerous to the brahman male in search of sensual restraint. Due to the dangers they pose to men seeking lives of self-control, women must never be allowed independence of thought or circumstance: "[Her] father protects [her] in childhood; [her] husband protects [her] in youth; / and [her] son protects [her] in old age" (9.3). Yet, for all the sexual dangers women pose, the horrifying impurity of their menses and the bodily excretions of childbirth, Manu is also constant in his exhortations to respect and honor women for their invaluable place in the order of the world. Although women are barred from Vedic recitation, for example, their presence is deemed critical to the success of any ritual performance: "Where women are honored, there the gods rejoice; / but where they are not honored, there all rituals are without fruit" (3.56).

In addition to the particularities of substance that govern the dharma of *varṇa* or social class, dharma is also shaped by qualities of time. In the largest, most universal of senses, the Hindu cosmos endlessly cycles through four great ages that tend toward moral entropy. In the first, dharma as order both moral and cosmic stands complete; *adharma*, disorder, is entirely unknown. Through each successive stage, dharma grows increasingly diminished (Manu 1.79–86). The dharmic duties of men are different in each

age, and human beings now live in the most morally decrepit of eras, when perfect morality, perfect sacrifice, perfect anything is utterly impossible. Not only is dharma difficult to discern, but, even when located in this most amoral and blackest of cosmic eras, it can be but partially revealed.

The individual – at least of the three upper or "twice-born" classes – is also subject to temporal particularity. The stages of one's life demand that different moral codes be followed. In a brilliant interpretive move that weaves together the world-embracing and world-renouncing strands of Vedic thought, Manu presents the ideal human life as one of four discrete stages or *āśrama*s. An upper-class male's life ideally begins with the stage of celibate studenthood, serving his teacher while learning the Vedic texts and traditions of ritual performance. Following mastery of the Vedas, the student ritually departs from his teacher, marries, and enters into what remains for Manu the most important of the life-stages. The householder actively performs Vedic rites and meets his three debts to the Vedic sages, the deities, and the ancestors. In the life of the brahman householder, one pursues the first three of the human goals: dharma, power, and sensual happiness. This emphasis on the life of the actively engaged householder, accounting for the bulk of Manu's text, implies a moral vision focused not only on acting correctly but also on living well, in the bosom of family, prosperity, and meaningful daily activity.

After the priestly householder has fulfilled his ritual and reproductive debts to ancestors, gods, and sages, he may turn over all his property to his sons and retreat from the world. There, "alone, he should contemplate continually in solitude on what is beneficial to the Self; / for alone, [so] contemplating, he approaches the highest good" (Manu 4.258). By making the life of ritual dharma a prerequisite for pursuit of the fourth human goal of ultimate liberation, Manu incorporates the Upaniṣadic quest for *mokṣa* into the final two stages of human life: the forest-dweller who gradually withdraws from society and severs all social ties, and the full renunciant who single-mindedly pursues self-knowledge. By realizing the ultimate identity of Self and Reality, Manu writes, "he who sees the Self in all living beings through the Self / achieves equanimity toward all and approaches Reality, the highest step" (12.125). The call for the householder to engage actively in his world, maintaining the course of the planets and the order of society through ritual performance, becomes repugnant to the man who seeks release in the final stages of his life. The dharma of a single man at one point in his life utterly contradicts his dharma at another.

Manu's incorporation of the Upaniṣadic call to reject the life of ritual activity that earlier portions of the Vedas enjoin does not stop with his arrangement of the *āśrama*s or life stages. The Laws of Manu also use the Upaniṣadic language of *tapas* or "inner heat" generated by self-restraint and austerities to describe the attitude with which a priestly householder ought to approach Vedic recitation and rite. An ethic of self-restraint and sensory control should guide the priestly householder, long before he heads for the forest in search of spiritual liberation. Inner heat, sustained through single-minded focus upon the Vedas, ensures both the success of the rites and placement on the path to liberation.

While the Laws of Manu attend consistently to the karmic principles of future reward or debt based on the moral seeds sown in this life, emphasis is repeatedly placed on the cultivation of proper moral attitude while carrying out the behaviors appropriate to one's particular place in space and time. The necessity of seeking to do what is right – even if failing to fulfill each and every rule of conduct – seems, in fact, to govern much of what Manu has to say about dharma. The virtues of self-restraint, sensory control, and concern for the well-being of others constitute the good intentions necessary for the life of ritual and meditative contemplation to bear its desired fruit. In a cosmic age in which dharma is broken, the intention to act according to social position and life-stage serves as a moral compass point by which all behavior should be guided.

According to Manu's model of *varṇāśramadharma* and its ethics of particularity, the moral life lies first of all in realizing the specifics of one's existence in terms of social class and life-stage and of the innate capabilities and tendencies that each implies, as well as one's place vis-à-vis specific qualities of space and time. One must act in accordance with moral and cosmic order, pursuing and preserving a state of purity as far as is humanly possible, performing rituals if one is a priest, ruling wisely if one is a king, and so on. Yet this "acting in accordance" is difficult to determine, much less maintain, in the face of ever-changing human and natural circumstances. The measure of a man's moral aptitude lies in his ability to maneuver productively in the complex web of human relationships that constitute the social order and in the ever-changing facets of the cosmos that constitute the universal order. In the often tangled mess that is human life, the struggle lies in meeting the demands of one's own position, rather than attempting to live according to another's (Manu 10.97). Important throughout is the cultivation of moral intention. Most significant is the intention to act in preservation of the social/human order, for even dharma remains subservient to preserving the intricate web of relations that constitute human society: "[one should abandon] even dharma if it ends in unhappiness and causes people anger" (Manu 4.176). This ethics of particularity is, on the one hand, fixed. The brahman priest should not do the work of the servant, at least not while the sun is shining, peace reigns in the land, and there exists no circumstance in extremity. On the other hand, it is also thoroughly relational, thoroughly flexible, speaking to the particularities of space, time, and specific context. When those particularities are not clear, one must, at the very least, intend to do that which conforms to the overall cosmic, social, and moral order.

The Standard Moral Vision

Since the Laws of Manu assume such a humble assessment of human capabilities, providing so many escape clauses of exception and extreme possibility, the question must be raised as to whether or not the text is actually meant to be read as prescriptive code. Why provide such lengthy and confining rules of behavior if, in fact, intention is what really matters? Why does Manu acknowledge that no one can actually live fully in accordance with his moral vision? For all their length and tediousness, Manu's lists simply do not cover all possible human situations on any single topic. What, for example, counts as "in extremity"? What if a man truly believes his life to be in danger, but realizes only after urinating in an inappropriate place that he mistook a menacing shadow for a homicidal maniac? Must he do an expiatory rite to cleanse himself? The text's many nods to the sheer impossibility of living up to the exact letter of the law perhaps suggest that Manu is not meant to be read as prescriptive code. Rather, it is a study in pattern, in conditioning the brahman student to see the world in a certain way: as a universe defined by innate human differences, as a cosmos in which the substance of those differences is easily transferred and must be avoided, a world in which every activity, particularly the performance of Vedic rites, must be done by the proper persons in accordance with the proper alignment of the planets, in the proper season, and at the proper time of day. For while the Vedas may serve as the ultimate source of the moral life for Manu, dharma can also be learned from the lowest of people, including women, children, and servants (2.239). Rather than creating a literal code to be enforced by the letter, Manu throughout suggests a spirit of the law in which one trains oneself to see the patterns of moral order in the world. One is to realize the webs of connection among people and cosmos and to act accordingly, even in extremity. Less precepts to be memorized than intricate series of patterns and relationships to be internalized,

Manu's text envisions a morally mature human being who ultimately requires no behavioral code to feel the fragile moral order that surrounds him and to respond to life, appropriately and creatively, in order to sustain that order.

Resources for Challenge and Change

Manu's model of *varṇāśramadharma*, with its focus on human situatedness, rapidly becomes the standard moral vision for upper-caste orthodox Hinduism. In this model of the ideal human life tightly woven into the fabric of a cosmic order perpetuated by the ritual performances of a priestly class, there would seem to be little tolerance for challenge or change from within. Those who arise to question or undermine this vision hail primarily from castes other than the brahman: the Buddha and Jina Mahāvīra, for example, both remembered by their respective communities as members of the warrior or ruling caste; the epic *Mahābhārata*, whose warrior-oriented ethos challenges at every turn the efficacy of Vedic ritualism in the current cosmic age of moral darkness; and the saints of the *bhakti* or devotional traditions, many from among the lowest social classes, whose poetry reorients the moral cosmos around a personal and loving deity who demands but single-minded devotion from his followers.

Even the devotional orientation of the great medieval saints – that so clearly attempts to steer human activity away from both ritual performance and Manu's commitment to human particularity toward an ideal life of selfless devotion and service – bears witness to the enduring influence of the classical *varṇāśramadharma* model. The exemplary lives of the great north Indian saints both champion love for the lord and its attendant virtues and "accomplish ... the ends of dharma" (Hawley 1987, 69). Dharma, even Manu's model of caste and life-stage, is "not ultimately abandoned but transformed" (68). In overturning brahmanic norms, the narratives of Hindu devotional hagiography are stories of everything turning out all right in the end, of kings acting royally, of merchants engaging prosperously in business, of brahmans performing their rituals. Yet all of this is accomplished with new or transformed intentions focused on serving a personal and accessible lord. Indeed, the very rite at the heart of Hindu devotional life – *pūjā*, ritual offerings to an image of the deity – "simultaneously replaces the *yajña* while it incorporates within itself many rites from the Vedic sacrifice" (Smith 1998, 214). From the eschewing of purity as a moral ideal by the medieval practitioners of tantra and the championing of a single intention of worth (love for a personal lord) by the great poet-saints, to the political activism of the lowest social classes in modern India, *varṇāśramadharma* – embraced, despised, or modified – provides the cornerstone for all subsequent Hindu thinking about the nature of the moral life.

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CHAPTER 76

Differentiations in Hindu Ethics

Maria Heim

In its three millennia of recorded history, South Asian civilization has produced diverse traditions of ethical reflection. Perhaps more than the other world religions considered in this volume, Hinduism presents a rich plurality of moral and religious systems. Hinduism itself can hardly be said to be a single religion. The term "Hinduism" embraces several interlocking yet distinctive religions. These in turn have developed divergent responses to questions of human nature and the moral life. In addition, dialogue with non-Hindu traditions, in premodern times Buddhism and Jainism, and, more recently, Islam and the modern West, has stimulated Hindu modes of moral discourse and their range of concerns. An accurate portrait of Hindu ethics, then, keeps the complexity and divergences ever in view, even while it delineates patterns and continuities where they emerge.

Indians did not devote a single branch of philosophical thought to what is called ethics. Instead, they incorporated moral considerations into various philosophical, literary, and theological genres in Sanskrit and the vernaculars. The chief sources of moral reflection from the Sanskrit intellectual traditions are brahmanical, that is, texts composed by and reflecting the ideologies of, the elite classes of literati learned in Sanskrit and in Vedic revelation. Of particular importance for morality is a branch of prescriptive brahmanical knowledge called Dharmaśāstra. Hindus have also employed literature – folktales, epic narratives, and poetry – to pose moral inquiry and as itself a means to stimulate moral response. Narratives create a shared moral past and cultural terrain. They explore the morality of social obligation, not through rules and categories like Dharmaśāstra discourse, but through life stories of particular epic figures. In addition, Indian literati have much to offer on how they understand literature's capacity for stimulating the moral imagination. Finally, religious treatises which seek soteriological aims through either renunciation or theistic devotion offer a range of perspectives on the relationship between spiritual attainments and moral duty. This entry explores these diverse forms of moral discourse found in the Indian context.

Normative Discourse

At one time far distant in human memory the natural and moral order (dharma) of the world stood firmly and securely like a bull planted on four legs. Over time, as the gradual decadence and decay in the cosmic order set in, dharma was reduced to standing on three legs, and then, precariously, on two. We now find ourselves in an era, called the Dark Age, where dharma teeters on one leg only and threatens to topple.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Dharma

These vast cosmic eras in which dharma is brought down foot by foot provide the backdrop for the drama of human moral activity and reflection. Moral activity becomes rarer and more difficult to accomplish, yet ever more urgent and necessary to sustain and uphold the cosmic order. Moral reflection is oriented towards the past; moral knowledge was established and complete in previous eras and so moral inquiry takes the form of preservation and recovery of that distant knowledge.

Since dharma is a natural order, sources whereby humans come to know about it, and thus learn to reflect upon how human beings should act, do not necessarily include reason. Dharma is not described as the *rational* ordering of human or natural affairs, but rather simply as the way things are. While reason is not denigrated as a useful tool for intellectual work in this tradition, it is pre-empted by the authority of revelation and memory as sources for learning about dharma. Revelation and memory are vested in the textual tradition, in particular, in a genre of textual knowledge known as *śāstra*. *Śāstra*, according to the eighth-century Mīmāṃsā theorist, Kumārilabhaṭṭa, is "that which teaches people what they should and should not do" (see Pollock 1985, 501). Broadly conceived, *śāstra* includes revelation (the Vedas) and recollections and inferences, derived from revelation, about human conduct. *Śāstras* codify nearly every branch of learning and human practice, from the mores of statecraft to the regulations of ritual activity. The *śāstra* that concerns moral behavior is called Dharmaśāstra.

While Dharmaśāstra articulates the rules and customs governing human social conventions, including law and religious practices, our concern is the category that regulates moral behavior (*ācāra*). The term *ācāra* means right conduct, customs, and conventions. The conflation of custom or convention with moral practice is consistent with the tradition's orientation to the past as a source of moral guidance. Customs are conservative and are thought to enshrine practices established when dharma was more secure in the world. One knows correct *ācāra* by three sources, in descending order of authority: revelation, texts composed by the learned who have inferred what is not explicitly stated in revelation, and the practices of learned people. The best guides for right behavior are passed down from previous generations and the correct customs carry weight in large part because of their antiquity. Sometimes personal conscience is admitted as a further source of dharma, though it carries the least authority (Manu 2.6). Reason does not secure moral guidance except when it is employed to discern what to do when moral codes in the ancient texts appear to conflict.

Just as dharma is not evenly spread out over time, it also varies from place to place. Hindus are sensitive to the geography of moral difference. Morality's close link to custom, and the variation of local customs, suggest both tolerance for differentiation as well as classifying and ranking places, customs, and peoples. Traditionally, the heartland of India, between the Himalayas and the Vindhya mountains "where the black antelope ranges by nature," is the country in which dharma is most fully established. One should endeavor to live there (Manu 2.21–3).

Dharma's structural unevenness in space and time resists the application of categorical or universal laws. That is not to say that there are no attempts to delineate general duties or virtues common to all good people. Rather, it means that most normative deliberations on dharma are highly particularist in forming principles or regulations for behavior. While modern Western ethical systems often presume and emphasize human sameness and equality as the very foundations for ethical reasoning and justice, the brahmanical traditions assume that what is morally relevant about human beings resides in their

differences. Human beings differ from one another in a variety of ways, most of which are considered relevant for understanding their moral responsibilities. Since no single homogenous moral subject is presumed, establishing moral codes is not conceived to be a quest for universal principles or laws to govern human behavior in all times and all places.

In what ways are human beings different from one another? How are these differences morally relevant? Human beings vary with regard to their locations within the social order. Since the social order is highly differentiated, moral obligations are also highly differentiated, contextual, and particularized. Since morality is not easily separated from social structure, moral obligations coincide with the fulfillment of social roles and expectations. Moreover, the social structure is conceived to be just, with one's place within the hierarchy determined by previous moral actions via the mechanisms of karma. All moral actions have consequences that will be reaped in either this life or a future life, determining one's future condition. Not only does past moral action determine one's location in the social order, but also where one fits determines a large part of present moral obligation. As a result, brahmanical moral discourse aims to establish the nature of different human social roles and the duties incumbent upon them with regard to their place in the natural order of things.

Nevertheless, sometimes lists are formulated to name virtues of common appeal that can cut across human difference. The Dharmaśāstra authority Yājñavalkya lists nine duties common to all: non-violence, truth, refraining from theft, purity, control of senses, generosity, self-control, compassion, and patience (1.122). Manu says that non-violence, honesty, abjuring theft, purification, and restraint of the senses are the duties shared in common by all social classes (10.63). In the third century BCE the great emperor King Aśoka inscribed in stone throughout his empire these universal virtues: compassion, liberality, truth, purity, gentleness, peace, joyousness, saintliness, and self-control (Kane 1974 V, 10). The *Mahābhārata* also lists freedom from anger, truthfulness, sharing one's wealth, forbearance, procreation only with one's own wife, purity, absence of enmity, straight-forwardness, and maintaining one's dependents (12.60 in Roy 1955, 134–135).

Apart from such general attempts to describe virtues with widespread application, the bulk of this discourse recognizes that dharma "has many doors" and is concerned with specific duties and obligations for the different classes in society (*Mahābhārata* 12.174 in Roy 1955, 1). To encapsulate the range of duties of the social body composed of individuals in different roles, brahmanical authors articulated the ideological system of *varṇāśramadharma*, the duties of social class and stage of life. Each social class – the elite priestly class (brahman), kings and warriors (*kṣatriya*), commoners (*vaiśya*), and servants (*śūdra*) – has particular duties prescribed for it, specific to its function and stature in the social order. In addition, the course of human life is regulated by duties prescribed for each stage of it: studentship, householder life, retirement, and final renunciation. Distinctions between the sexes are also significant. The *śāstras* generally assume a male moral subject and delineate a special class of duties enjoined for women (*strīdharma*).

This tidy conception of the ideal social body was conceived and glorified by brahmanical elites as the proper way for human beings to uphold the natural order of dharma. The dharma of social class and stage of life provides each individual with his or her own duties (*svadharma*). Morality resides in conforming to the mandates of one's station and function in the social body. This is not an ideology that prizes social mobility or individual autonomy. Straying from one's own duties (*svadharma*) is censured. Brahmanical ideology depicts a moral agent that is not autonomous and unmediated by social norms, but rather is constituted by them.

Despite the śāstric impulse to regulate nearly every aspect of human activity, there remains within Dharmaśāstra ideology a nod to local custom and difference. This results in a curious blend of authoritarianism and flexibility. The Dharmaśāstra writers are sometimes inclined to recognize and even defer to the law of the land or the family, enjoining adherence to family or local customs where śāstric norms conflict or when their application is unclear. An early Dharmasūtra author, Āpastamba, acknowledges the weight of local custom, which is often known and preserved best by the women in the family. He prescribes that in some cases people should understand from women what laws to follow (2.15.9; 2.29.11, 15, in Olivelle 1999, 59, 72–73).

Although some Dharmaśāstric discourse prescribes social rules and customs with little apparent critique and reflection, there are topics and treatises within this genre that evince second order reflection on moral behavior. Such discourses do not merely pattern moral behavior. They stand back from prescribed social practices and theorize them. One example is the development of Dharmaśāstra attention to the ethics of giving (*dāna*), a social practice that comes to be highly articulated and systematized in the medieval commentaries and compendia (*dāna-nibandhas*). These comprise extensive books given over to the rules and values of gift giving, with sustained scrutiny of the virtues and qualities of the donor and the recipient, and the etiquette of the face-to-face hospitality encounter. In some of their discussions, the authors shift from expounding duties to analyzing motivations and intentions. In these discourses, the authors set forth their social practices as objects for reflection and analysis.

That giving should come to be a chief category of moral investigation is entirely consistent with the advance of the Dark Age. In each of the four eras of time, a single duty is emphasized: in the first eon of perfection humans practiced *meditation* as the highest virtue, followed by the pursuit of *knowledge* in the next eon, then *sacrifice*, and now, in the last age, *gift giving*. It is significant that in the last and most decadent time we turn to social relationships and exchanges, rather than individual religious pursuits, to preserve what remains of the moral order in the world.

Human Nature

The mandates of *svadharma* – one's own particular duty – though binding in terms of the constraints of gender, social class, and age, are not conceived to be arbitrarily imposed from without. Through karma one is born into a station of life to which one is by nature suited. Previous action, or karma, not only creates consequences and effects that will be experienced in future lives, but it also determines one's present character. It is not only the conditions in which moral subjects act that are highly particularist and differentiated, but also human nature itself. No one enters the world as a "blank slate"; the character of one's present nature is the result of activities performed and dispositions developed in previous births.

While many of the earliest Vedic ritual texts and later Mīmāṃsā expositions of them were concerned less with internal disposition than with correct external ritual form, the Upaniṣads turned to questions of character in their interpretation of the workings of karma. Here, karma is not simply ritual action resulting in future benefit, but rather moral activity that conditions one's future nature. The logic of action and rebirth is that "like produces like," as the following passage suggests:

> Now, people here whose behavior is pleasant can expect to enter a pleasant womb, like that of a woman of the Brahmin, the Kṣatriya, or the Vaiśya class. But people of foul behavior can expect to enter a foul womb, like that of a dog, a pig, or an outcaste woman. (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 5.10.7, in Olivelle 1996, 142)

Injunctions that require one to perform one's own duty rather than another's appeal not only to the dictates of maintaining social order with everyone in his or her place. They also appeal to convictions about the formation of human nature and character across births.

Hindu thinkers have much to contribute to reflections about how moral and ritual activity is related to internal disposition. For some, moral action is generated out of human nature or disposition. The *Mahābhārata* says "all propensities for action that exist in the universe may be seen to flow from the very natures of the creatures (to which they inhere)" (12.179, in Roy 1955, 16). One ancient schema for classifying human nature depicts three psychic and moral conditions which drive all activity in the material world. These qualities are *sattva* (goodness, purity, brightness, intelligence), *rajas* (passion, lust, anger, activity), and *tamas* (darkness, inertia, gloom, ignorance). Each is present in everything and everyone, but in different and changing proportions. Human beings can be characterized by which of these three qualities predominates in their characters and actions. The elements that make up moral disposition and character are deeply rooted yet constantly changing and developing. The means of developing correct moral behavior is cultivating certain internal states and natures.

In other conceptions quite the reverse is true. Action is considered to be prior to character and human nature. Sometimes moral behavior is simply conflated with conformity to rules and any internal dimension in correct behavior is irrelevant. A Mīmāṃsā definition of dharma is simply "rule-boundedness" (*PūrMīmSū*.1.1.2, in Pollock 1985, 511). Concerned with external form, much Mīmāṃsā ritual discourse prescribes the following of rules rather than the development of virtue. In this view, dharma is exhaustively described by human activity, without reference to character or disposition.

Other reflections on ritual practice see external adherence to rules as conducive to the development of inner virtue. Theories of karma assume that human nature is pliable and unfixed. One is always in a state of becoming rather than being, and action itself generates disposition. Theoretical reflections on the ritual sacraments or *saṃskāras* (life-cycle rites such as birth ceremonies, investiture with the sacred thread, marriage rites, etc.) are a further instance where external ritual is thought to cultivate internal transformation. The *saṃskāras* are said to be actions and rites which "impart fitness." Fitness arises from the removal of moral taints and by the generation of new virtues (Śabara's commentary on Jaimini III.1.3 in Kane 1974 V, 190–191). Bringing a person into fitness or eligibility is a moral transformation. The more advanced *saṃskāras* introduce a person to new relationships with self and others, with new responsibilities and statuses. Additionally, the *saṃskāras* are thought to be external actions that leave an imprint or trace on the memory and personality that develops character and disposition. Here, *saṃskāra*, like karma, is conceived to be external action that molds internal moral character through patterning and habit. This movement from the gross to the subtle finds expression in multiple traditions of Indian thought. Purification and self-mastery often begin with bodily actions and advance to inner and subjective states once the outer forms are disciplined.

The Contributions of Narrative

Where Hindus have used Dharmaśāstra texts to delineate the ideal moral life framed within the context of given social roles, they have often turned to literature to test and challenge the limits of such roles. The great epics of India, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, study social and political life within embedded contexts of collective memory and history. In an intriguing way they reaffirm brahmanical norms while providing the contexts and opportunities for critiquing them.

The *Mahābhārata* presents itself as the story that tells all stories and all that can be known: "what is found here may be found somewhere else, but what is not found here is found nowhere" (1.56.34, in van Buitenen 1973 I, xxiii). Indeed, the sheer bulk of the text gives initial credence to this assertion. The *Mahābhārata* is perhaps the longest book from the ancient world, and its contents range considerably beyond its frame story concerning the ancient dynasty of the Bhāratas. The epic tells the story of the great fratricidal war between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. Along the way it also incorporates other stories, as well as entire books given over to moral, philosophical, and religious instruction, including the *Bhagavad Gītā* and long chapters on *Dharmaśāstra*.

The claim that the text exhaustively describes what human beings can know is more than a statement about its length and comprehensiveness. It is also a claim that sees in these stories and in the instruction given by its characters an inheritance, a repository of cultural memory and precedent. The epics furnish the historical memory that situates Hindus in the world and provides an awareness of themselves as moral agents against a moral background. The epics provide a moral compass by showing where others have walked before, and suggest a further instance of deriving a moral present from the memory of a moral past. Describing itself as "brimming with wisdom" (1.2.33, in van Buitenen 1973 I, 33), the *Mahābhārata* says "no story is found on earth that does not rest on this epic – nobody endures without living off its food" (1.2.240, in van Buitenen 1973 I, 43). This story to end all stories is the very nourishment of human endurance.

At the same time, the text's claim to its own exhaustiveness of knowledge is authoritarian, refusing to allow outside critique, reason, or new knowledge to enter into the great questions and answers it raises about the human condition. Such an assertion, like other brahmanical claims to all-encompassing authority, elevates the text's own status and import in the world by its claims to completing what can be known. Despite the potential of narrative to explore moral dilemmas in greater complexity than normative discourse, the epics still anchor moral knowledge on events and norms from the past.

Within its own parameters, however, the *Mahābhārata* does provide the resources to critique nearly every social norm and value it considers. It depicts a cast of heroes, who, in the critical moments of the epic, are faced with moral conundrums where duties conflict and the right course is unclear. Such moments portray widely held cultural presuppositions as well as conscious moral choices. Dharma is tested at every turn. The apocalyptic ending of the epic in which the Pāṇḍava brothers are victorious, but nearly the entire world has been destroyed in battle, preserves the tensions in righteous victory to the very end.

Perhaps nowhere are the ambiguities regarding social roles more perplexing than in the tragic circumstances concerning the figure of Karṇa. The elder brother of the Pāṇḍavas, Karṇa is conceived out of wedlock and abandoned at birth, and is thus deprived of his noble status and kinship. He befriends and allies himself with the Pāṇḍavas' enemy, Duryodhana, who fights an arrogant, unrighteous, and ultimately unsuccessful war at great cost to all involved. Even upon learning of his true birth, Karṇa rejects the social status of which he was originally deprived and refuses to join the Pāṇḍavas. He honors the genuine and constant bonds of affection and loyalty offered to him by his low caste adopted family and Duryodhana. He is aware he will ultimately battle his brothers and fail. His death is the result of a dishonorable breach in the rules of warfare, when he is struck by Arjuna while unarmed. Though he is not entirely blameless, Karṇa is nevertheless a deeply sympathetic character. He has been wronged by strict social codes that privilege status and birth. His character posits an ethics of friendship that may slip past the grasp of the social roles and rules of dharma.

Of equal importance as this literature's capacity to pose and wrestle with moral dilemmas is its capacity to refine and cultivate those who come to know it in ways that are morally significant. The epics describe how knowledge of them creates moral agency. By incorporating the very telling of its story into the narrative as the bard Vaiśaṃpāyana, prompted and queried by Janamejaya, relates the tale, we learn the effect of the story on the reader. Janamejaya repeatedly pleads for more of the story to unfold, for he "cannot hear enough of the great deeds of the ancient" (1.56.4, in van Buitenen 1973 I, 129). He interrogates the bard on the intricacies of dharma. Moreover, the text specifies the nature of the audience's reaction to the story: "sons become obedient and servants compliant, the evil done with body, words, or thought vanishes at once for a man who listens to it ... if a man in his ignorance chances to do evil in his day, it will vanish as soon as he has heard the story of the *Mahābhārata*" (1.56.23–30, in van Buitenen 1973 I, 130). The text attributes to itself moral agency and efficacy in its capacity to shape and refine human moral sensibilities.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* describes itself as born of sorrow. Its author Vālmīki witnessed a pair of birds in love shot down with a hunter's arrow and blurted out the world's first verse, thereby giving birth to the first poem. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, and by extension all literature, is the product and the producer of sensitivity in human beings. That its origins arise from a witness to violence and injustice is significant in terms of its deliberations on morality. It is itself formulated out of a response to unrighteousness. The *Rāmāyaṇa* describes the effect it in turn should have on its hearers. Rāma's story "confers righteousness, worldly prosperity and delight on the reader ... [it] does not degrade the mind and grants release from sorrow, that story which charms the heart" (1.3, in Shastri 1952 I, 12).

The *Rāmāyaṇa* is the tale of the wrongful exclusion from succession to kingship and the exile of Rāma, followed by the kidnapping of his wife Sītā, and the eventual restoration of both. Along the way it offers sustained examination of the conditions of social life: the nature of righteous kingship; the complexities of social and sexual relationships; and the role and place of violence in the social and political order. The characters of the epic are considerably less conflicted than those in the *Mahābhārata*. They are held up as paradigms of model behavior. Rāma is less of a hero in the Greek sense – that is, engaged in valiant and noble efforts despite facing certain defeat – than an ideal to be emulated. He is the righteous king whose convictions about proper conduct remain unruffled despite the many forces attempting to undermine him.

Rāma's only possible fault may be an overweening preoccupation with his honor and public opinion about him. This in turn is revealing about what is important. A large part of moral duty is fulfilling the expectations of one's social role without invoking censure and disapproval of others. Rāma is constantly aware that the eyes of the world are upon him. This "most truthful of men" offers reflections on his role of exemplifying dharma to others by not disobeying his father's command to go into exile. Implicit in Rāma's fixation with honor and shame is a sense that the moral order of the world rests on him, and on his capacity to attract the esteem and emulation of the world. This is cast in terms of selflessness. The world needs an icon of correct dharma to esteem and revere. The other characters in the story are no less paradigmatic in exemplifying models of behavior. They provide examples in two capacities: models appropriate to their particular social locations, as well as models of esteem and reverence for Rāma. Sītā provides a model of a faithful and loyal wife, Lakṣmaṇa, of dutiful brotherly affection and loyalty, and Hanumān, of unwavering service and devotion. Throughout the epic is the overarching theme that moral duty consists in "obedience and the suppression of the individual will" which is realized in part through recognition and esteem for honored others (Pollock 1986, 33).

Narratives are understood in this tradition as communicating not just erudition and the wisdom of past lore, nor simply as providing the models for virtuous behavior, but also allowing for intimacy and association with noble people critical for moral development. The *Rāmcaritmānas*, a Hindi telling of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, claims that hearing its tale provides association with the virtuous. It is only through association with holy men that human aspirations may be realized: "Through contact with the virtuous even the wicked get reformed, just as base metal is transmuted by the touch of the philosopher's stone" (Tulsidas 1976, 21–22). The text also sees itself as bringing one closer to God by celebrating the exploits of Lord Rāma, who is considered an incarnation of the great god Viṣṇu. Exalting virtuous people and God fosters devotion and humility, which the text sees as producing pious and worthy persons. Hindus from all ages have cherished stories of saints and gurus, of holy men and women, and of gods and goddesses, that bring them into contact with what is noble and good. Recognition and reverence of virtues in others is the mark of a cultivated and moral person.

In addition to the epics, other stories serve as sources of moral reflection and allow for inquiry that tends in a different direction than the epics' concern with the fulfillment of social roles. Popular collections of folktales such as the *Pañcatantra* and the *Hitopadeśa* are regarded as morally edifying stories full of practical wisdom for everyday life. In addition to offering general good counsel, these collections of mostly animal fables allow for a particular mode of moral reflection not always possible in stories and reflections about human beings. Animal stories can be free of the usual human social categories and hierarchies. Consideration of character and virtue can be carried out independently of the determining factors of class, caste, and social location that mark human social structures. Animal tales require their audience to divert the moral imagination away from social roles to consider generic moral virtues. Such stories can explore the intricacies of friendship, loyalty, and wise policy without correlating them to fixed social roles. Intriguingly, it is in a world of greedy jackals, clever monkeys, prudent mice, fickle crows, and courageous lions that the baseness and the nobility of human character may be most fully explored.

Morality and Religious Practice

Hindu traditions recognize four distinct values or goals of human life: love and physical pleasure (*kāma*), the acquisition of material well-being (*artha*), morality and the good (*dharma*), and spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*). Hindu thinkers have differed over the precise relationship of these different aims, especially when they conflict with one another. However, they tend to agree that each aim is a distinct and legitimate human end valued for its own good, rather than a means to something else.

Some interpreters of Indian ethics have identified what they regard as a tension between the last two aims, dharma and *mokṣa*, which distinguish between moral claims and spiritual aspirations. In this view, the ultimate spiritual aim of *mokṣa*, which by definition transcends the saṃsāric world of moral consequence and karma, is regarded as so beyond our realm of ordinary experience and its duties that it is seen to bear little relationship to them. If *mokṣa* utterly transcends the social world of worldly obligations it may appear to have nothing to do with ethics. In this view, ultimate spiritual aims radically relativize or trivialize moral codes. Another charge against some forms of Indian spirituality is that they would seem to articulate antisocial as well as potentially antinomian tendencies. The pursuit of human perfection pursued by renouncers – in which one is to leave behind home and hearth and take up the life of a wandering mendicant free of all social ties – does not seem to describe a morally significant life lived with and for others.

These critiques can be investigated further in terms of the different forms of Hindu spiritual practices. The tradition of introspective discipline and self-mastery (*yoga*) articulated in Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra* describes eight stages of the religious path of the spiritual seeker (*yogin*). The eight stages are: moral principles, religious observances, posture, breath control, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation, and pure contemplation. The path begins with moral practices (*yama*), which Patañjali defines as five "universal moral principles, unrestricted by conditions of birth, place, time, or circumstance": non-violence, truthfulness, abjuration of stealing, celibacy, and lack of greed (2.31, 35–9, in Miller 1998, 53–54). In this schema, the foundation of religious discipline and the contemplative life is moral practice. Far from being opposed to the spiritual life, moral practice is conceived as a necessary prerequisite for it. It is noteworthy that the term for moral practice, *yama*, also means self-control. Moral practice can best be seen as contiguous with the yogic life of discipline, because morality is itself viewed as a kind of self-restraint. Reigning in one's damaging effect upon others by curbing one's capacity for harm, deceit, theft, sexual activity, and avarice is part of what it means to gain mastery of self. Care of the self is necessarily morally significant, since through self-mastery the moral life is made possible. The discipline of renunciation requires the examination of the interior life which includes purifying moral disposition.

We might also consider the aims of the discipline and try to conceive of what the fully realized and self-controlled individual would be like. Patañjali says that perfect discipline (*samyama*) results in extraordinary cognitive abilities that include sensitivity to and knowledge of others' thoughts. One can hear "the cries of all creatures" (3.17, 19, in Miller 1998, 64). Among other strengths and powers, the *yogin* gains the strengths of discipline of friendship, compassion, joy, and impartiality (3.23). Moral heroism is the effect of self-mastery and discipline. When perfected, it leads the practitioner out of self toward a new and heightened sensitivity to others.

Theistic systems of religious practice also attempt to meet the charge of antinomianism in a variety of creative ways. The theistic system developed in the religious classic the *Bhagavad Gītā* articulates a novel approach to moral issues. Competing religious movements articulate compelling doctrines of retreat from social and moral activity in favor of a life lived for spiritual attainments alone. The *Bhagavad Gītā* attempts to buttress moral duty in the world by framing the individual human life within a larger divine plan.

The teachings of the *Bhagavad Gītā* emerge as a response to one of the most famous war protests ever registered. The hero Arjuna refuses to do battle against his kinsmen in the great war of the *Mahābhārata*. Arjuna, a *kṣatriya* or warrior, is required by duty to fight in battle. He balks, however, at the prospect of killing his family and teachers in what has climaxed in a devastating fratricidal war. He questions the ultimate value of dutiful action that requires such bloodshed. In response, the *Bhagavad Gītā* argues that human action is unavoidable. The proper response is to divest one's self of personal agency and desire for reward by dedicating one's action to God. The divine plan is glimpsed in a theophany in which Lord Kṛṣṇa displays at once both his impersonal supremacy as well as his personal intimacy with human life. The fulfillment of moral duties, including the violence of righteous warfare, is to be interpreted as sacrificed and surrendered to the service of God. The *Bhagavad Gītā* affirms the different duties imposed on the fourfold class system, which require Arjuna to uphold the moral order by vanquishing those who threaten justice and righteousness. True moral conduct is the performance of one's particular dharma, done without personal desire for ends and dedicated to God.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* articulates various complementary but distinct paths of spiritual and moral practice. These are appropriate to different human capacities and natures, which are, again, an acknowledgment

of differentiation in the moral life. The text describes three paths: the path of correct social and ritual action (*karmayoga*), the path of discriminating wisdom (*jñānayoga*), and the path of devotion to God (*bhaktiyoga*). The merits of these differing but complementary approaches to religious and ethical perfection are elaborated in great detail in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, providing later commentators with material rich with interpretive possibilities for their own theological systems.

The best known and successful of later commentators are the eighth-century Śankara and the eleventh-century Rāmānuja. Both thinkers developed theistic religions that have had great influence on Indian religiosity since. They emerged from their readings of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the Upaniṣads, and other scriptures with very different interpretations of the value and nature of the moral life. Śankara's emphasis is on union with the divine as a result of cultivating spiritual knowledge and insight. Ultimate spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) is the realization that the individual human soul is not different from the ultimate reality, Brahman, the ground of all existence and the goal of all experience. The human condition is analyzed in terms of cognitive error, that is, failure to realize this unity. Correct knowledge (*jñāna*) is the only way to obtain absolute freedom that realizing this unity yields. This absolute freedom is beyond moral distinctions of good and evil. Śankara's thought explicitly denies that moral practice is sufficient for *mokṣa* – since *mokṣa* is unconditioned, it cannot be brought about by actions. One realizes it through understanding the true nature of the self's relationship to the divine. Morality is something one transcends in perfect wisdom, though once one has obtained *mokṣa* one is free of selfishness and corruption.

The eleventh-century theologian Rāmānuja took a very different approach to the question of morality. Rāmānuja agreed with Śankara that ultimately there is no distinction between absolute Brahman and the human soul. Yet, in the context of ethics, Brahman is best understood as the eminent and sinless ruler or controller of creation. The proper human response to divine transcendence is reverence, devotion, and self-surrender. Human beings best display their reverence for God by devotion and the performance of religious and moral obligations.

Many of the *bhakti* or devotional traditions, with their single-minded faithfulness to God and emphasis on grace, though not altogether amoral systems, cannot be seen as privileging either moral duty or ethical reflection. They draw from passages in the *Bhagavad Gītā* which emphasize devotion to God above all else. In this interpretation, while the *Bhagavad Gītā* endorses dharma by making it an instrument for spiritual pursuits, in the end it suggests that love of God is all that matters. This profoundly theistic turn affirms the importance of moral action, but still holds out for the final preeminence of pure love of God. The humdrum world of everyday social intercourse pales in comparison to the yearning for God. In addition, the doctrine of divine grace in some of these traditions undermines the importance of works and the human capacity for moral and spiritual effort (Ramanujan 1973, 30–31).

While devotional traditions generally were not engaged in systematic exploration of moral action, nor with reforming the injustices of brahmanical ideology, some of them did offer a critique of and alternative to brahmanical claims to predominance. With the religious value of pure and heartfelt devotion to God regarded as the chief axis of value, social norms based on ritual purity, Vedic and śāstric learning, and caste regulations could be dismissed or trivialized. The *Basava Purāṇa*, a twelfth-century religious text of the Vīraśaivas, a cult devoted to Lord Śiva, ridicules uppity brahmans. It states that "ten million brahmans, even if they were scholars in the Vedas, *purāṇas*, and *śāstras*, would not be equal to a single devotee" (*Basava Purāṇa* in Rao 1990, 235). The Vaiṣṇavas also subverted brahmanical systems of value by making devotion to God the primary consideration of religious and social status, though they did not entirely nor consistently dismantle rules pertaining to *varṇāśramadharma*.

Though sometimes critical of duty and works, the devotional poets also expound an ethic of love and care for fellow creatures. Basavaṇṇa explicitly links religion to ethics in asking, "where is religion without loving-kindness?" (Ramanujan 1973, 54). A later nineteenth-century reformer, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, explicitly conflates devotion to God with love of humankind and allows for no distinction between them (Chatterji 1977, 138). In addition, some of the medieval *bhakti* poets find in their love for God a profound humility, which they link to a gentleness and concern for God's creatures. One saint's poem reads:

> Knowing one's lowliness
> in every word;
> the spray of insects in the air
> in every gesture of the hand;
> things living, things moving
> come sprung from the earth
> under every footfall;
> and when holding a plant
> or joining it to another
> or in the letting it go
> to be all mercy
> to be light
> as a dusting brush
> of peacock feathers:
> such moving, such awareness
> is love that makes us one
> with the Lord
> Dasarēśwara
> (translated from the Kannada by Ramanujan 1973, 54–55)

Religious sentiment is paired with tenderness and moral sensitivity. This heightened awareness of the condition of other creatures might be compared with the advanced *yogin*'s capacity to hear "the cries of all creatures." The devotee attains such moral sensitivity through submissiveness and devotion to God, while the *yogin* reaches it through self-mastery and discipline.

Conclusion

In Hindu thought, normative discourses pattern or condition moral behavior, inscribing the natural moral order on persons and behavior. The rules of Dharmaśāstra provide not only detailed specifications on how to live. They also communicate that the social and natural world is rule governed, and that each person has duties and obligations within it. Yet even as Hindus have acknowledged the constraints of the dharmic order, they have also sought ways to glimpse human moral capacity independently of it. The epic poet sets out to test the very limits and foundations of dharma. The *yogin* embarks on a quest of self-discovery by renouncing social norms. The religious devotee seeks out alternative axes of value to replace brahmanical structures of purity.

Moral discourses in India not only dictate and theorize moral practice, but they also contribute to moral agency. Hindus find themselves living in a storied world, where narratives link them to past moral ideals. We find in these narratives not only practical moral instruction, but also the means to expand and stimulate the moral imagination. Literature – epic, folk, or poetic – cultivates moral persons by prefiguring the moral imagination in multiple ways: either by providing models of ideal behavior within the social structure, or by suggesting exemplary behavior outside of it. One of Hinduism's key contributions to the study of religious ethics is its recognition of the capacity of literary language to stimulate sensitivity and refine those who come into contact with it.

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CHAPTER 77

Trajectories of Hindu Ethics

Joseph Prabhu

It is impossible within one entry to cover a 5,000-year tradition in any depth. In this context it is also unnecessary given the accompanying entries that describe and analyze features of Hindu ethics. What follows is a set of commentarial remarks on four aspects of this tradition: (1) the ambiguity of a *Hindu* ethics, (2) whether there is a Hindu *ethics*, (3) the tension between tradition and modernity in the Indian context generally and in Gandhi's ethics in particular, and (4) the prospects and challenges facing Hindu ethics in the future. One of the purposes herein is to highlight what is distinctive about Hindu ethics and also what it shares with other religio-cultural traditions.

The Ambiguity of *Hindu* Ethics

The term "Hindu" does not unproblematically pick out a singular religion in the modern Western sense of the term, signifying homogeneity of belief or creed under the aegis of some controlling authority. There is no such homogeneity or controlling authority in the Hindu case. For much of its history, "Hindu" was as much a cultural as a religious designation. Even such a self-consciously secular individual as Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, or an avowed atheist like J. N. Mohanty, the prominent Indian philosopher, consider(ed) themselves Hindus in a cultural sense.

The term closest in the Hindu system to religion is "dharma," which connotes a variety of different things falling under the broad rubric of a way of life. Dharma, however, carries different connotations than the term religion, something examined below. Consider the example of the medieval Indian poet Kabir, who regarded himself and was regarded by others as both Muslim and Hindu. Likewise, there are many Christians in India today who call themselves Hindu-Christian. Multiple religious belonging is not seen as a problem. "In pre-modern India ... the term 'Hindu' ... was essentially a racial, cultural expression and Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, and those we refer to as Hindus now, all shared the same multifaceted ethnicity of the subcontinent. They perceived themselves as all belonging to the same extended cultural family" (Lipner 1998, 14–15). "Hinduism" and "Hindu" in the modern sense were largely Western creations, the legacy of British colonialism. It was part of the political and intellectual project of providing for administrative and other purposes a homogeneity and a rigid classification which were quite foreign to the spirit of this family of culturally similar traditions. Hinduism evolved as a fluid and open ended reality which was free to seek truth in, and to adapt to, different circumstances, all the while maintaining a continuity, but not a sameness, with the past.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

What counts as Hindu today is a product of interactions among groups who now would be classified as non-Hindu. This indicates a philosophical difference between India and the West which has ethical repercussions. The Western logical imagination from Aristotle onwards articulates identity in terms of difference, whereas premodern India, as often as not, saw identity in terms of continuity rather than difference and in terms of adaptation rather than differentiation. Hence the relative ease with which Hindu figures like Gandhi or Ramakrishna were able to identify themselves with "non-Hindu" faiths. Their example points to the non-dogmatic temper of the Hindu sensibility at its best, open to truth wherever it is to be found, and tolerant, indeed receptive to, differences.

Unfortunately, that is not the whole story. Quite often tolerance changed to inclusiveness or assimilation and often to hostility, as the fate of Buddhism, which was essentially driven out from the country of its birth, attests. The famous *Advaita* philosopher Śaṃkara, for example, often called a crypto-Buddhist, displayed features of an "anxiety of influence" in seeking to denigrate and vanquish his Buddhist opponents. Nor is this just an academic question. Hindus who for centuries were happy to operate with porous boundaries and to move freely across them, have in recent times sought to politicize their religion. Some have called this development the "Westernization" of Hinduism, as it has tried to codify its beliefs and practices and to exclude those who fall outside essentialist definitions. Present day Hinduism displays an intolerance and a separatism strikingly at odds with an earlier pluralism and open mindedness. When writing on Hindu ethics, it is appropriate to ask which Hinduism we are considering, because as already indicated, there are shifts of tone as between premodern and modern Hinduism.

In order to sketch current "trajectories," the next section will focus on the background of classical brahmanic Hinduism. There were many challenges to Brahman authority, both within the mainstream and on the margins. The sway of Sanskritic Brahman culture was such, however, that even the challenges had to be articulated within its framework. At the same time, this framework accommodated an extraordinary internal heterogeneity of beliefs and practices held together by some unifying concepts.

Is There a Hindu *Ethics*?

There is an apparent paradox at the heart of Hindu ethics. On the one hand, it is claimed that ethics was not a prominent branch of Indian thought. Bimal Matilal, one of India's most eminent philosophers, complained:

> Certainly, there exists a lacuna in the tradition of Indian philosophy. Professional philosophers of India over the last two thousand years have been consistently concerned with the problems of logic and epistemology, metaphysics and soteriology, and sometimes they have made very important contributions to the global heritage of philosophy. But, except [for] some cursory comments and some insightful observations, the professional philosophers of India very seldom discussed what we call moral philosophy today. (Matilal 1999, 21)

On the other hand, much of the Indian philosophical tradition has a definite value orientation and is centrally concerned with the practical ideals of *dharma* (morality loosely defined), and *mokṣa* (spiritual liberation), and with spelling out how other values stand in relation to them. One of the distinguishing features of Indian thought is this strong practical emphasis. Theory exists for the sake, and as part, of

practice. At this level, there is much written not only about values but also about conflicts and dilemmas and the challenges of practical wisdom.

The appearance of paradox depends on a hidden assumption. Much of Western moral philosophy is preoccupied with the search for universal moral principles, which can serve as the legitimizing ground for moral belief and actions. In that sense of the term, there is perhaps an absence of "ethics" in Indian thought. But is that the normative sense of the concept? As is well known, this abstract theoretical conceptualization of ethics has recently come under fire. With the rehabilitation of virtue theory, the emphasis in current literature seems to have shifted to descriptive analyses of human excellences and action. This change in Western moral philosophy sits well with the Indian situation. A large part of Indian thought deals with an elaborate articulation of different values and human ends or goals designed primarily to guide the individual along a path of spiritual liberation. There is also a codified system of social duties and obligations nuanced according to class, caste, and the stages of a life-cycle (*varṇāshrama dharmas*).

The concept in Western ethics that might from a theoretical perspective best capture the spirit, if not the letter, of Indian moral reflection would be Hegel's notion of *Sittlichkeit*. *Sittlichkeit* refers to the actual set of norms, duties, values, and goods that a community valorizes. It also includes the habits, practices, laws, and customs that constitute the ethical life of a society and that actualize these values and norms. All these sustain and in turn have to be sustained by an ongoing community. In the Hindu tradition, dharma constitutes the handed-down rules of morality and practice that provide the content of social ethics. These are grounded in custom and convention, no further moral justification being deemed necessary because they have met the pragmatic test of "workability."

There is, however, a feature of Hindu ethics that distinguishes it even from this strand of Western moral theory. There is a close kinship between humans and other manifestations of nature in Hindu ethics. The scope of human responsibility extends not only to other humans, but also to the whole cosmos. Thus, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says: "This Atman [breath or vital essence] is the same in the ant, the same in the gnat, the same in the elephant, the same in these three worlds, the same in the universe" (1, 3, 22). This range of ethical reference is mirrored in the crucial term of Hindu moral discourse, namely the idea of *dharma*, as it figures in classical discussion. *Dharma* is the fixed position of duty and of right, in the sense of what is proper and normative. It is not restricted to personal ethics, but also designates religious observance and secular law, prescribing the individual's social and legal standing within the wider domains of community, caste, class, and station. Expanding its range even further, *dharma* connotes a cosmic contract to which the individual is bound, both in the sense that she derives support from it (Sanskrit, *dhar*) and the corresponding obligation to support it. This, as universal order, assigns to each entity, personal or impersonal, its specific place in the cosmic, social, and personal orders.

This notion of *dharma* is at once metaphysical and ethical. The problem becomes what the precise connection is between the two. It would be incorrect to suggest that the ethical is deduced from the metaphysical. The logic is rather one of analogy and isomorphism, with custom and tradition playing the mediating role of providing the specific rights and duties attached to the individual. They are obviously able to play this mediating role more easily in a closed and highly structured setting rather than in a mobile, fluid, and pluralistic society. This fact will form one of the trajectories of Hindu ethics explored below.

Importantly, *dharma* is only one of four human ends discussed in the classical view, which might be said to have intrinsic value. The others are *artha*, or material interests, *kāma*, pleasure and emotional

fulfillment, and *mokṣa*, or spiritual liberation. Even though *artha* and *kāma* have ethical dimensions, conceptually they belong to the fields of political economy (*artha*) and aesthetics and psychology (*kāma*), and so fall outside the scope of our discussion. What is of interest for ethics is the connection between *dharma* and *mokṣa*. While it is generally agreed that the ideal of *mokṣa* trumps the claims of *dharma*, the exact relationship between the two ideals and the validity of *dharma* when seen from the perspective of *mokṣa* have been subjects of debate. On the one hand, *dharma* is seen as a means to the attainment of *mokṣa*, but from the perspective of *mokṣa*, *dharma* with its rigid clan/caste/family structure is often regarded as an obstacle to *mokṣa*. Orthodoxy often held that *dharma* had absolute validity even for the person who had attained *mokṣa*; but there were – and are – many influential views that question this assertion. After all, *mokṣa* is a state of consciousness consequent upon the knowledge of the true nature of things, while *dharma* belongs to the realm of action and will. Put otherwise, *dharma* upholds the established social–ethical order, whereas *mokṣa* is "release" from this order in order to achieve self-realization, a free spiritual individuality that transcends the "ethical" realm.

This has given rise to the common, and somewhat tedious, Western reproach of the purported amorality and the alleged life-negating quality of Hindu spirituality (Schweitzer 1955). Even long-time students of Indian religions like R. C. Zaehner, analyzing the ritual murders of Charles Manson and his followers, argue that the killings may well have derived their moral justification from the teachings of the Upaniṣads, according to which the enlightened individual lives "beyond good and evil" and transcends the conventional morality of right and wrong (Zaehner 1974, 97–98). This interpretation is based on a strange mistranslation of the relevant Upaniṣadic texts (see Lipner 1998). It is, however, a sufficiently widespread view to warrant rebuttal.

First, the very definition of the enlightened sage is one who has developmentally advanced beyond his empirical self and its interests, and is established in a "transcendental" wisdom. To ascribe egoistic acts like murder to such an individual is to misunderstand what enlightenment means and entails. Second, while *dharma* strictly speaking is neither a necessary nor a sufficient means for *moksha*, in actual fact, *dharma* is often presupposed as a condition for *moksha*. Even though *moksha* lies beyond *dharma* the means of achieving both are not vastly different. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, one of the central ethical texts of the tradition, Arjuna, the protagonist, is instructed in the path of *dharma* as a precondition for enlightenment. The *Bhagavad Gītā* attempts to synthesize two moral ideals, the outer one of social obligation and the inner one of renunciation and detachment. It is made clear to Arjuna that this goal of renunciation *in*, but not *of*, action requires, among other disciplines, that of *karma yoga*, the path of selfless service. Third, there are texts that challenge this harmonizing interpretation, like Śaṃkara's *Advaita Vedānta*. Yet nowhere is it suggested that the enlightened person can disregard everyday morality with impunity. Spiritual liberation is a progression beyond, not a regression from, the strictures of dharma.

Nonetheless, viewing morality from this developmental perspective results in a shift of meaning and emphasis compared to some Western understandings of the term. The life-cycle is seen as progressing through four stages, each with its appropriate code of conduct. Studentship (*brahmacarya*) requires habits of studiousness, sobriety, and reverence for one's teachers; the householder (*gṛhastha*) stage entails the responsibilities of marriage, family, career, money, and power; the forest-dweller (*vānaprastha*) stage brings with it a gradual withdrawal from worldly pursuits and interests; while finally the stage of renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*) calls for complete withdrawal from society so as to have freedom for spiritual contemplation. To these social stations and their duties are fused the four life goals mentioned earlier. At each stage of life there is a basis in custom and convention for one's responsibilities. Individuals operate

on the basis of a moral appropriateness that seems fitting in the circumstances. This is not "situation ethics" calling for ad hoc responses. Rather, the understanding of "morality" is subtly different. It is neither the application of abstract moral rules, nor the invocation of general principles that is deemed important. More vital is the unfolding journey of self-realization and the demands which this journey imposes at each stage. There is a close relation between ethics and religion in the Hindu tradition. Still, there is no doubt that questions of "ultimacy" and of spiritual liberation relativize morality and render it ultimately subordinate to spiritual goals.

The Dialogue of Tradition and Modernity: The Case of Gandhi

This entry has emphasized so far the classical moral tradition articulated in the long interval from the Vedas (before 1500 BCE) to the working out of philosophical systems and commentaries on scriptures culminating with the dualist *Vedantin* Madhva in the fourteenth century CE. What comes after that period are the Moghul and British invasions. These caused great disruptions in Hindu thought, at least in its philosophical aspects, until the modern period heralded by Rammohan Roy and the Bengal Renaissance in the early nineteenth century. As this is not a historical inquiry, what will be perhaps of greatest interest is how modern Hindu thinkers received and appropriated their traditions.

Much of classical moral thought took shape within a highly structured and traditional society, where custom and convention, though by no means static, were able to specify moral roles and responsibilities. Modernity, with its scientific temper, technological innovation, economic and social mobility, and democratic ethos, issues a quite different set of moral demands. The question arises how well the traditions are able to adapt to modern conditions. Custom, by definition, remains local and defies universal application. In a modern society like India's, with more than a billion people, it should not be surprising that forces besides custom take on the role of moral arbiters. Increasingly, constitutional, legal, and parliamentary debates assume greater importance than social conventions and habits. It is important in this light to distinguish between orthodoxy and tradition. Orthodoxy hypostatizes tradition rendering it static and unchanging, whereas tradition, from its very etymology, suggests that which is carried forward, as it seeks to preserve significations and create new meanings in changed circumstances. The real issue for ethics outside the strictures of orthodoxy is, then, that tradition and modernity, ideally speaking, are caught up in an ongoing dialogue, each challenging and questioning the other.

In recent Indian religious ethics, the most consequential dialogue of tradition and modernity was conducted by Gandhi. Two considerations motivate the focus on Gandhi. First, without any question Gandhi is the modern Indian who has most caught the world's imagination. His ethics of non-violence, though not particularly original in its theoretical underpinnings, is striking in its practical applications. It represents the most significant development of Hindu ethics in the twentieth century. Second, his successes and failures point to some of the challenges now facing Hindu ethics in the twenty-first century, as noted below.

Gandhi is a moralist through and through and yet it is difficult to write philosophically about his ethics (Prabhu 2001, 2004). This is because Gandhi is concerned with practice rather than with theory or abstract thought, and such philosophy as he used was meant to reveal its "truth" in the crucible of experience. Hence the subtitle of his *Autobiography*: "the story of my experiments in truth." The truth

of concepts, values, and ideals is fulfilled only in practice. Prior to that practical fulfillment they remain spectral and abstract. Furthermore, Gandhi's ethics are inextricably tied up with his religion, which itself is unconventional. Though an avowed Hindu, he was a Hindu in a philosophical rather than a sectarian sense. There was much Hindu ritual and practice that he subjected to critique. His religion could be described as the life of the self attempting to realize itself as Self, thus achieving *mokṣa* or spiritual liberation. *Karmayogi* that he was, self-realization had to be expressed through work in the world and the details of daily life rather than through renunciation of the world. Gandhi's own ethics have a decidedly spiritual cast, but because he takes pains to express them in a neutral philosophical manner, he intends them to have general validity. When he switches from affirming that God is Truth to saying that Truth is God, his rationale is that the latter is a more general statement which has resonance even for unbelievers. This is a testament to Gandhi's innate sense of tolerance and inclusiveness, in that he believes that his ideals of truth and non-violence are accessible even to those who do not share his religious metaphysics.

Truth for Gandhi is not merely, or even primarily, the property of statements. He does not deny the importance of factual truth or the correspondence between propositions and states of affairs in the world that either confirm or refute them. Rather, his multifaceted notion of truth emphasizes ontological, moral, and existential aspects. Ontologically, *satya* is derived from *Sat*, the self-existent essence, both the Is and the Ought of reality. It was this derivation that led Gandhi often to say, "Nothing exists in reality except Truth, everything else is illusion." Beyond the illusory temporal flux of phenomena lies the eternal Truth, what Gandhi also called Absolute Truth. We humans, with our finite capacities, can have access however only to relative truth, an assertion Gandhi uses to justify epistemological humility and tolerance. All our perceptions of truth are inevitably partial and therefore claims of cognitive absoluteness are unwarranted and dangerous.

While the ontological aspect of truth points to a more objective notion, the moral and existential aspects move in the direction of a more subjective dimension, the deeply personal intuition of truth which can be experienced only through action. "Gandhi could not regard truth either as solely the object of reason or as simply the product of human decision. For him ... truth is nothing less than the splendor of reality and cannot be gained without an understanding of the Eternal Law of Nature, but when it is perceived and seized it must be acted upon" (Iyer 1973, 154). Truth for Gandhi found its fullest expression in the field of politics, which in accordance with his moral outlook he regarded as the arena for doing good on the largest possible scale. The idea used to encapsulate this moral conception of politics was *satyāgraha*. This was conceived as a practical experiment to introduce truth and non-violence into the political field. Gandhi adopted this idea early in his political career when he chose *satyāgraha* as the name for his resistance movement against the repressive South African government. Gandhi wrote, "Truth [*satya*] implies love and firmness [*agraha*] and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement *satyāgraha*, that is to say, the force which is born of truth and love of non-violence" (Gandhi 1938, 172).

The forceful and activist character of *satyāgraha* should correct a common misperception, namely, that it denotes a passivity of resistance, a mere turning of the other cheek. Although Gandhi insisted that violence be met with love and understanding, the non-violent means chosen should not obscure the powerful end of establishing justice and truth. He is on record as saying that if the choice were between the passive acceptance of injustice and violent resistance to it, he would choose the latter. He was convinced, however, that non-violent resistance was superior to both alternatives.

Satyāgraha begins with reasoning with one's opponent or adversary in an attempt to arrive at a just solution, recognizing that no party has a monopoly on the truth, or is wholly in the right. The purpose is to work out a rational compromise that will be agreeable to both sides. It is only when such processes of reasoning, persuasion, and compromise have been tried and have proved unsuccessful that one adopts the direct action techniques of *satyāgraha*. *Satyāgraha* involves performing actions such as noncooperation (strikes, boycotts, lockouts, fasts); civil disobedience (non-payment of taxes, disregard of specific laws or injunctions); publicizing one's cause through marches, rallies, picketing, and other forms of peaceful protest; and constructive programs (low-cost housing, education, health facilities, cooperative banks for the poor). A big part of non-violent resistance is *tapas* or the willingness to suffer for one's cause. "It is the assumption of *satyāgraha* that when reasoning fails to move the head, the argument of suffering by the *satyāgrahis* helps move the heart of the oppressor or opponent. Self-suffering, moreover, is the truth-serving alternative to the truth-denying method of inflicting violence on others" (Pantham 1987, 292–310). Contained in this idea of *satyāgraha* is the question of means and ends. Gandhi disagrees with the common political idea that the ends justify the means. To the contrary, he held that immoral means taint and distort potentially good ends and to that extent he placed at least as much, if not more, emphasis on the means, which he described as ends in actions. "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree" (Gandhi 1956–1994, X, 431).

The forceful and activist character of *satyāgraha* leads naturally to the idea of non-violence. Gandhi invokes the Jain precept of *ahiṃsā*, or not causing deliberate injury or harm to any being. He takes the precept beyond its merely negative formulation to mean the largest love, the greatest charity. "If I am a follower of *ahiṃsā*, I must love my enemy or a stranger as I would love my wrong-doing father or son. This *ahiṃsā* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness" (Gandhi 1916, in Iyer 1973, 180). *Ahiṃsā* is the deployment of moral force to persuade one's opponent or adversary. It differs from violence in that it respects the autonomy and dignity of the other, whereas violence does not. *Ahiṃsā* differs from violence in the perpetual willingness to dialogue and negotiate with the other and, as far as is consistent with rightness, to come to a compromise. Given that one's grasp of the truth is at best partial, it is imperative to see and appreciate the truth in the position of the other and to try and achieve a higher or dialectical reconciliation of conflicting ends. This negotiated compromise has the opposite effect of violence, which involves vanquishing and putting down one's opponent that inevitably sets up a cycle of resentment, ill will, and further violence. The search for truth becomes a shared quest based on epistemological humility and mutual respect, notwithstanding the differences that still remain after the effort at understanding.

Gandhi was not so naive as to think that such moral persuasion would come easily. He was aware that people who exercise power over others are not likely to give it up without some pressure being exerted. All the means of *satyāgraha* should then be adopted as a way of morally coercing one's opponent to negotiate. It is true that coercion is being exerted, but it is a coercion that still respects the moral agency and dignity of the other, not least by the willingness to undergo self-suffering. The strategy presupposes that the opponent does have a minimal openness to such moral appeal, a trait that Gandhi was willing to grant to most people. However, he also recognized that there are madmen and tyrants, rapists and aggressors who would not fall within that category. In those extreme cases Gandhi was willing to use physical force for the purpose of self-defense. For example, he sanctioned the use of military force to drive back the Pakistani Army in what he considered to be the invasion of Kashmir in 1947–1948.

The three concepts discussed, *satya*, *satyāgraha*, and *ahiṃsā*, might give some idea of the texture of Gandhi's ethical thought. The ideas of truth and non-violence are certainly to be found in the Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions, but there is a difference between Gandhi's conceptualization of these ideas and traditional ones. The high standards of moral and spiritual discipline that Gandhi invokes were traditionally part of the *sādhana* of monks and saints, but decidedly not of people in political life. To the contrary, political thinkers like Manu and Kautilya sanctioned the use of physical force both for self-defense and for purposes of political order. Gandhi, by contrast, considerably softens the traditional dualism between religion and politics. Instead, he attempts to forge a non-dual relationship between the two, where religion, seen as reverence for and service to Life, necessarily leads to politics, the arena for the greatest potential public service. Politics in turn is saved from power mongering and the conflict of factional interests by the moral purification involved in religion at its best. It is important to distinguish Gandhi's highly moral notions of religion and politics from the ideological conceptions of them all too common in our time. Certainly, the rise of religious fundamentalism and right-wing religious groups would make any peace-loving person nervous about the marriage of religion and politics. It should be clear, however, that the moral checks and balances that Gandhi exercised over religion and politics purified both domains and offered the world a different and more noble conception of them that we have yet to live out.

These principles of Gandhi represent only one aspect of his ethics – his ethics of love. Love, for Gandhi, was not a simple sentimental matter, or just a benevolence towards all, demanding as that ethic might be. Love in the full sense incorporates justice, treating people fairly, if not always equally. It was these elements of love and truth, on the one hand, and justice and fairness on the other, that constitute his comprehensive philosophy of peace. What warrants its claim to comprehensiveness is that it tackles overt and structural violence, the violence that is all too visible, and the more subtle and less visible violence contained in unjust practices and institutions. Peace, for Gandhi, was not simply a narrowly conceived moral and spiritual matter. It encompassed a holistic way of life that includes economic and social concerns.

As early as 1909 Gandhi wrote *Hind Swarāj*, a book that was in many ways the foundation for his subsequent thinking. In it he criticizes the Western path of modernization as unstable and alienating. It is materialistic, exploitative of nature and human beings, unrestrained, and lacking a sense of direction of moral purpose. The key factor responsible for this state of affairs is the conception of human beings and of human nature that underlies it. Instead of seeing humans as essentially moral and spiritual beings, Western modernity regards them fundamentally as consumers driven by greed and self-indulgence. The goal of the modern economic system is endlessly to produce goods in response to the ever-increasing demand of consumers, continually driven and inflamed by advertising. Modernity confuses material production for progress, restlessness for vitality, acceleration for efficiency, and consumer satisfaction for an improved quality of life.

From his critique of Western modernity, we can infer the character of Gandhi's alternative modernity in dialogue with tradition. It is based on a picture of human beings as moral, spiritual, and culturally creative. From this basic conception of human nature, Gandhi derives some regulative principles that should govern a good society. First, it should be informed by a reverence for life. Because human beings are not the masters or owners, but are instead the caretakers and trustees of creation, they should organize their affairs in such a way that they respect nature's integrity, diversity, and rhythm, and adjust their demands accordingly. Second, because human beings are interdependent, a sound social system should

discourage all forms of exploitation, domination, and inequality, and instead promote the values of love, truthfulness, cooperation, and solidarity. Third, because human beings are creative and spiritual in nature, a good society should encourage them to develop these capacities, and in particular, their capacity for *swarāj* (moral self-rule). When Gandhi applied these principles to the social and economic spheres, the ideas he emphasized are those of decentralization, regional development, local self-sufficiency, and the creation of a technology adapted to the needs and resources of a particular area and to the creativity of people. He insisted that economic growth should proceed in harmony with nature and between people, even if such growth is slower and more gradual than that brought about by heavy industry and high technology. Gandhi had nothing against wealth or productivity as such. His point was that the production of wealth should be regulated by a set of moral values rather than being an end in itself.

Gandhi's critique of modernity by no means implied a complete rejection of modernization. He greatly valued the scientific temper of modernity and its emphasis on investigation and experimentation. Gandhi also valued the spirit of the Enlightenment with its valorization of independence, critical thinking, and moral autonomy. Conversely, there were many aspects of his tradition that Gandhi criticized, from caste and untouchability to the oppression of women. By the same token, modernity for Gandhi did not imply a wholesale rejection of tradition and an embrace of the new for its own sake. Rather, he sought to assimilate the best of tradition and modernity, as measured by his own evolving standards. To that extent, we can justify Gandhi's vision as being in tune with the spirit of openness and independence of thought betokened by modernity.

The Prospects and Challenges Facing Hindu Ethics

Gandhi was assassinated by a fellow Hindu – a rabid nationalist who feared that he was betraying Hinduism – in 1948. The dialogue that he initiated between tradition and modernity is one that has continued since his time. India today, as a full-fledged nation-state, grapples internally with a range of ethical problems, from questions of distributive justice and minority rights to a uniform civil code for the diverse social and religious groups. At the same time, operating within the community of nations, and being the largest democracy in the world, it is faced with its share of transnational challenges, from the impact of globalization and global ecology to problems of war and peace.

In meeting these challenges, Hinduism has a rich ethical tradition to draw on, with moral ideas that are complex enough to allow for reinterpretation in new settings. These resources for contemporary trajectories in ethics are rooted in the past forms of thought noted above. Consider a few examples. The idea of dharma, with its cosmic, holistic, and ecologically sensitive perspectives, provides a counter-weight to the possessive individualism, acquisitiveness, and nature-dominating features of modern and postmodern society. The ethic of the *Bhagavad Gītā* of doing one's duty selflessly and with inner-detachment is one that has wide resonance. Gandhi's ethic of non-violence has long attracted the attention of groups in civil society working for peace, human rights, transnational distributive justice, and ecological harmony. In an age of globalization, it is heartening to read the praise of a renowned scholar of comparative legal systems: "The genius of India ... is peaceful coexistence between groups, creative co-prosperity. India has harnessed the concepts of religion not to *activity*, nor to a meditative and self-absorbed *stagnation*, but to the creative co-prosperity of groups each recognizing the other's right to contribute to the whole. A balance of forces is still needed and because it favors it, Hinduism still dominates" (Derrett, in Smith 2003, 202).

However, any dispassionate student of Hindu ethics will readily admit that there are urgent tasks ahead that any use of traditional resources must address. The future trajectories of Hindu ethics will be along the lines of these urgent tasks. In this way, contemporary Hindu ethics will enact in its own way the dialogue of tradition and modernity.

First, in relation to the paradox about Hindu ethics isolated above, it still remains true that the lacuna of a *systematic ethics*, though often remarked on, has still not been filled or even adequately addressed (but see Bilimoria, Prabhu, and Sharma 2004; Gupta 2002; Perrett 1998). Granted the distinctive features of Hindu ethics, there still remains a puzzle as to the paucity of good accounts of the subject that meet modern canons of rigor and thoroughness. The few that do exist are largely descriptive treatments detailing the ethical features of various philosophical systems and texts, but displaying relatively little analytical acumen (Hopkins 1924; Dasgupta 1965; Jhingran 1989). If one considers another tradition quite different from the West – the Chinese, for example – one would have to concede that studies of Indian ethics fare poorly in comparison. It is possible that as scholars face the challenges of contemporary moral problems more resolutely, they will also examine the traditions more carefully.

Beyond this academic trajectory, however, there is a set of practical ethical challenges that India faces. One challenge surrounds *toleration and pluralism*. The peaceful coexistence of many different beliefs, practices, and institutions within Hinduism, and its tolerant attitude towards non-Hindu traditions, has been a hallmark from earliest times. There is at least a threefold basis for this tolerance: religious, philosophical, and psychological. The Vedic maxim "Truth is one, though sages call it by different names" (*ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*) captures the pervasive sense of religious pluralism that Hinduism often espouses. The Jain doctrine of *Anekāntavāda*, the many-sidedness of truth, referring to the perspectival quality of truth in general, signals the philosophical open-mindedness and rejection of dogma of Hinduism at its best. Psychologically, the idea of karma (moral cause and effect), together with the recognition of differences in personality, social station, aptitude, etc., points towards a latitude of lifestyle and conduct. While there are indeed basic moral rules and norms (*sādhāraṇadharmas*), these get applied differently to caste and one's stage of life (*varṇāshramadharmas*). This tolerance has gone together with a general disposition in favor of non-violence. It is both wrong and wrong-headed to coerce someone into agreement with one's particular moral standards, because that involves a violation of her or his moral integrity. This is a relativistic position, but one (a systematic ethics would show) that stops well short of a self-defeating relativism. There *are* appropriate standards which can be justified, but the appropriateness is nuanced according to caste, class, stage of life, etc.

All this is theoretical and like many theoretical pronouncements does not always translate into practice. Indian Muslims and Christians, in recent times, have tested the limits of Hindu tolerance, and one cannot say that the results have been encouraging. Hindu–Muslim and Hindu–Christian tensions, alas, are now fairly common and on the rise. This is a complex topic and the many causes of this development cannot be explored. Suffice it so say that there is fault on all sides; suffice it also to say that many Hindus regret the chauvinism and fundamentalism that seem to be conspicuous features of their religion today. It is important for the future of Hindu ethics to distinguish the pluralism and genuine tolerance of Gandhi and Ramakrishna from inclusivism, which has often been mistaken for them. Inclusivism is the position in which one's particular tradition is taken to represent the final or ultimate truth, and other traditions are seen either as aspects of, or stages leading up to, such final truth. It easily absorbs or assimilates or subordinates other traditions. The difference between pluralism and inclusivism comes at the point where they deal with difference. Where inclusivism tends to neutralize difference and reduce it to

the same, pluralism either celebrates difference as part of the infinite plenitude of being, or when differences harden into oppositions and celebration is not possible, tries to live with such oppositions. Some, but by no means all, of Hindu tolerance has been of this inclusivist kind. Even that is an improvement on the exclusivism and marked intolerance that recent Hindu fundamentalism often displays. But the question of *toleration* requires more reflection.

If religious violence points to a dimming of the great ideals of tolerance and spiritual unity that once animated India, there is another area of ethics which has never been strongly addressed. This is the theme of *social justice* treated systematically in ethics; its relative absence in the literature is a troubling lacuna in the tradition. While the classical tradition espoused the idea of impartiality (Doniger and Smith 1991), this is counterbalanced by the belief of inequality among castes and between genders. The caste system was not always the hierarchical and inegalitarian institution it has become. At its inception, it was a functional system based on a division of labor, talent, and disposition and one could argue that it may not then have been prima facie unjust. That argument cannot be sustained today. It is impossible to examine here the details of something as complicated as the caste system. Caste poses serious questions for the democracy and egalitarianism that post-independence India has espoused. In this egalitarian ethos, all sorts of oppressed groups, from tribal peoples and "untouchables" to women and landless laborers, demand justice in a system that has not adequately thematized it.

The problem generally expressed is how to fashion a just social order out of a hierarchical system that embodies inequalities of rank, status, and power. Gandhi thought he could retain the caste system by interpreting it as a functional order expressing differentiation, though not necessarily inequality. In this judgment, he was naive at best, and self-deluded at worst. B. R. Ambedkar, the father of the Indian constitution and an "untouchable" himself, in his exchange with Gandhi exposed the latter's wishful thinking. Ambedkar organized a mass conversion of his fellow "untouchables" to Buddhism as a mark of protest against Hindu caste oppression (Zelliott 1996). It is not surprising that the burden of trying to meet some of these demands for social justice has fallen disproportionately on the law courts without much ethical reflection to draw on (Larson 2002). Here, too, the lack of a *systematic ethical reflection* is linked to grave practical matters.

This selective treatment highlights a few of the challenges that Hindu ethics faces in the future: to develop *modes of moral reflection*, to clarify features of *toleration*, and to address basic issues of *social justice*. Modern India has opted for a democratic and egalitarian society. While it has a rich ethical legacy to draw on, it nevertheless faces a daunting task as it seeks to revise its hierarchical social system and the beliefs that support it to meet these urgent demands.

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6 Chinese Religions

CHAPTER 78

Chinese Ethics?

Eske Møllgaard

The main concern of traditional Chinese thinkers has been what we call ethics, and not epistemology, logic, or theology, to name a few other important European interests. For a Western reader, the rich field of Chinese ethical thought is difficult to approach. The discourse of "ethics" does not easily map onto the Chinese tradition. First, the field of knowledge was structured differently in China than in the West. Second, we must consider the question of the difference in conceptual schemes between Western and Chinese thought. The third difficulty is the pervasive authoritarianism in the Chinese tradition. This is particularly important to highlight when Chinese thought is read within a Western liberal and post-modern context.

Fields of Knowledge

The fields of knowledge in traditional China are not divided according to the familiar Western academic disciplines: ethics, politics, history, literature, and so on. Traditionally, Chinese learning was divided into the "six arts" (*liuyi*): *shu* (history), *shi* (poetry), *yi* (changes), *li* (ritual), the *chunqiu* (the Spring and Autumn Annals), and *yue* (music). During the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) this division was codified in the study of the *Five Classics* (*wujing*): *Book of History*, *Book of Poetry*, *Book of Changes*, *Book of Rites*, *Spring and Autumn Annals* (a *Book of Music* either never existed or was lost). It may be tempting to take the Chinese categories roughly to correspond to what we call history, poetry, metaphysics, and the socio-ethical domain. But in translating the Chinese terms we find no strict equivalencies: *shu* (history) does not historicize in the way modern history does; *shi* (poetry) is not poetic in the way of modern poetry; the book on *yi* (*changes*) is concerned with divination of changes rather than with our familiar metaphysics of being; and the *li* (rituals) cover the whole field of civilized behavior from bowing to an elder to conducting animal sacrifices.

The point to grasp is that in traditional China the ethical is not a separate category but pervades all the fields of knowledge. Traditional Chinese "learning" (*xue*) has no separate discipline of ethics. To be sure, the works of the early "Masters" (*zi*) and later the "collected works" (*wenji*) of scholar-officials have much to say about "humanity and righteousness" (*renyi*) and "moral conduct" (*dexing*). There are also works that catalogue and explain ethical terms, yet no philosophical ethics is found in traditional China. (The Mohists made a beginning, but their theories had no impact on the tradition.) There never was in China an Aristotle, who defined practical wisdom in relation to scientific knowledge, craft knowledge,

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

and sagely wisdom. It was only with the encounter with the West that the Chinese came to see ethics as a separate domain and coined terms for it: *lunlixue* or *daodexue*. What we call "Chinese ethics" is therefore an object constructed according to the logic of Western science.

The tradition of Chinese ethics does not have our familiar landmarks, in particular the division between ancient and modern ethics. Chinese ethics may seem at once premodern and postmodern, or it may impress us, as Confucius did Elias Canetti, as being thoroughly modern. But if we do not find in traditional China a theory of moral autonomy, we have in the various traditional Chinese schools of thought not only a great deal of moralism but also more importantly an invaluable range of ethics not as theory but as spiritual exercise. Like in ancient philosophy in the West, we find in the Chinese tradition examples of ways of forming oneself as an ethical subject that are of universal significance. In the Greek tradition the ideal is the philosopher who is a lover of wisdom but does not possess wisdom, and is a true lover precisely because the consummation is denied. In China the ideal is the sage, who embodies wisdom – at the price, perhaps, of giving up the *eros* of the philosopher (expressed in irony, dialectics, speculative propositions, and so on). Most Chinese schools of thought justify themselves by referring back to "sages" (*shengren*) of the past and the "sage knowledge" (*shengzhi*) they possessed. Most schools promote a particular "way" (*dao*) of "learning to become a sage" (*shengxue*), and in many of the schools the politico-ethical ideal culminates in the "sage king" (*shengwang*).

This dominance of the figure of the sage in the Chinese tradition poses difficulties for the Western interpreter. In the modern West the image of the sage has lost its force and has become largely irrelevant for speculative thought. By default Western interpreters treat Chinese thinkers as "philosophers." But for the Chinese the point is to *embody* wisdom, not to contemplate it. Here we may be tempted to say that the Chinese value practice rather than theory. But this reversal of the Western valuation remains inscribed in the Western dichotomy; it does not quite capture what is at stake in Chinese thought. Perhaps we should say that for the ancient Chinese, practice was theoretical (or metaphysical) – as if one could see with the hand.

In regard to religious ethics, it is decisive that whereas the philosopher is situated somewhere in-between human opinion and human wisdom, the sage is situated somewhere in-between human wisdom and the divine. The Confucian sage is closer to the wise human being; the Daoist sage is closer to the divine. It appears that in China the ethical and the religious are split between the two indigenous traditions: Confucianism and Daoism. Everyone agrees that Confucianism has an ethics, but it is controversial if Confucianism is a religion. The prestigious Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, for instance, does not include Confucianism among the World Religions. On the other hand, everyone agrees that Daoism is a religion, but many scholars, in traditional China as well as in the modern West, emphatically deny that Daoism has any ethics at all. (By "Daoism" I mean the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* and not later Daoist schools and movements, which had strict ethical codes.) Concerted efforts have been made to present Confucianism as a religion. But it may not be before the profoundly ethical nature of early Daoist thought is brought to view that we are in a position to assess China's most important contribution to religious ethics.

Conceptual Schemes

The view that Chinese thought relies on conceptual schemes that are radically different from those of Western thought has a long history in sinology. Most recently, it has been claimed the Chinese have no concepts of rationality, causal thinking, objective truth, dialectics, and definition. It is said that Europe

and China rely on opposed valuations. Whereas Europeans value being, individuality, freedom, and rights, the Chinese value becoming, relation, spontaneity, and rites. Not long ago the conceptual difference now claimed for China would have relegated Chinese ethics to the most dense substantiality without any development towards autonomy. In the present postmodern climate of Western philosophy, Chinese ethics is seen rather as an aesthetic expression liberated from all foundationalism. Yet this construction and comparison of conceptual schemes comes at the price of interpretive reductionism. The very moment we establish the difference *between* the two traditions, we homogenize differences *within* each of the traditions. Chinese thinkers are now merely representatives of underlying linguistic and conceptual formations, and the same holds true for the Western interpreter. The result of this operation is that all unique (existential) features disappear.

Against this reductionism we should emphasize that the other, just like the self, is always also an other (a stranger) to itself, and precisely this provides the possibility for mutual understanding between different cultures. Consider a well-known but under-appreciated fact of translation. We know that our best translation is not adequate, but we do not know exactly what it is we know in knowing this. For instance, we know that the English word "humanity" does not quite cover the meaning of the Chinese *ren*, but we do not know *precisely* what it is we know when we know this (if we did, the deficiency could easily be remedied). But Confucius himself was not really sure what the word *ren* meant. For him, too, the word had an uncanny excess of meaning that he could not express. Just like the modern translator, Confucius knows that he does not know the full meaning of the word, but he does not know precisely what he knows in knowing this. It is from the meeting of these two lacks of understanding (Confucius' and ours) that the universal emerges (Žižek 1997, 49–50).

The differences in conceptual schemes are important, but most often it is not conceptual differences but a certain chinoiserie that prevents the Western reader from seeing what is at stake in Chinese ethics. This has led to the prevalent view that Chinese ethics is a kind of aestheticism. According to F. S. C. Northrop, for instance, Chinese ethics has to do with "warm, vivid, personal experiences filled with aesthetic content, such as the crunching of bamboo sprouts between one's teeth, the enjoyment of the flavor of sharks' fins, or the quiet aesthetic intuition of the fragrance and flavor of a cup of tea" (Saussy 2002, 105). This aesthetic interpretation of Chinese ethics is also found in recent postmodern celebrations of Chinese thought. The claim is that because the Chinese sage is not hampered by universal rules, he correctly assesses the ethical flavor of a particular situation – much like a connoisseur appreciates a bowl of sharks' fins soup. This may be a pleasant view, but the real substance of Chinese ethics lies elsewhere: in authoritarianism and strategic thinking.

Authoritarianism

Kinship and bureaucracy are the two fundamental factors of traditional Chinese culture. Society was viewed in terms of the hierarchical structure of the family, and there was a continuum reaching from the family to the scholar-officials (the "father–mother official"), all the way to the earthly emperor (the "son of Heaven") and further into the realm of ancestors and divine bureaucrats that serve the Jade Emperor in Heaven. This continuum may seem to preclude any notion of transcendence, but the power invested in the king (or the emperor) is the one transcending power in China. Whereas everyone in the continuum of hierarchical relations had to bend to their superior (and so lost their moral autonomy), the king was the only one who in principle could act without any regard for such strictures.

This king's transcendent power was absolutely necessary to maintain the traditional system. The power that circulated in the continuum of hierarchical relationships was not bound by a transcending principle (such as God or justice), but was maintained rather through constant strategic manipulation. The ideal (and the ideology) was that the system of hierarchical relations could be strategically manipulated in such a way that it functioned harmoniously as second nature. On two occasions the intervention of a power that transcends the system was necessary. First, the power that circulates within the system cannot itself found the system. Therefore, at the founding of a new dynasty the "mandate of Heaven" (*tianming*) had to intervene. The system had to be recharged, as it were, by investing the new ruler with transcendent power. Second, once the system is operating there is always the danger that it may crash. The harmony may be so seriously disturbed that it cannot be restored by strategic manipulation. Again, in this state of exception, to borrow Carl Schmitt's term, the transcending power must intervene, and the one who rules over the exception is the king.

In early China the philosophers and the kings compete over the right to rule over the exception. Competition with the ruler for command of the state is the distinguishing characteristic of the early Chinese schools. The early Chinese "Masters" (*zi*) (Mozi, Mengzi, Hanfeizi, Xunzi, etc.), says Mark Edward Lewis (1999, ch. 2), create in their texts "parallel realities" or "an imaginary counterstate" to the actually existing polity. In this imaginary realm the Master or the sage (who himself was a textual creation) is put in a position that parallels that of the king in the actual polity. In this way the king and the sage (or, rather, the Master as the sage's representative) are in competition with each other, yet they are also identified in the figure of the sage-king, or the ruler who embodies the "wisdom" (*zhi*) provided by the Master.

If Greek philosophy originated in the competition between citizens and friends and implies a certain equality, the Chinese Masters competed with the king for a power that produces a fundamental split between the ruler (the regulator) and the ruled (the regulated). The Masters claim that they possess a higher order strategic competence: a flexible wisdom that transcends the set responses of particular skills and arts. The philosophical schools present themselves, says Lewis, "as exponents of a generalist, regulatory intelligence comparable to that of the monarch, in contrast to the particular, technical skills of other text-based traditions" (1999, 96). It is precisely as regulators of regulation that the sage and the king coincide. Both are exceptional in that they can act without regard to the strictures that hold for everyone else in the continuum of hierarchical relations. This is well illustrated, for instance, in the idea that Confucius transcends the dichotomy between what is "allowable" (*ke*) and "not allowable" (*buke*) and simply "falls in with what is right" (*yizhi yubi*). This type of sagely "wisdom" (*zhi*) has been compared to Western forms of practical wisdom (*phronesis* or *prudentia*), or to a kind of aesthetic perception. It is should be understood in terms of the attempt to put oneself in the exceptional position of ruling over the exception, and so control the entire system of hierarchical relations.

In their own imaginary textual world, the Masters may have won the competition with the kings. In the real world, of course, the kings and emperors remained in power. They did, however, adopt a combination of Confucian moralism and Legalist authoritarianism as state ideology. The exercise of state power in China consists in distributing rewards (honor and favors) and punishments (mutilation and death) in a strategic balancing of powers, where the center of power remains obscure or "empty," that is to say, in no particular position and therefore impossible to attack. Confucian "sage knowledge" (*shengzi*) provided important ideological support for this particular configuration of power, which proved to be one of the most enduring in human history. It is remarkable that the ancient Chinese not only developed

a bureaucratic form of government that is comparable to that of modern Europe, but also conceived of a totalitarian regime that in its intention is similar to the totalitarian states of the twentieth century. The first Western counterpart to this concept of power may be Bentham's panopticon, sometimes seen as characteristic of modernity. But, as François Jullien points out, in China it had already been invented in antiquity, "and not simply on the cautious, modest scale of a prison but on a scale that controlled the whole of humanity" (1995, 57).

The profoundly authoritarian character of Chinese culture had decisive consequences for Chinese ethics and religious ethics in particular. If state power, the exceptional power to rule over the exception, is sacrilized as the "empty" space beyond any determination, then it can tolerate no competition. Any claim to a competing transcendence must be immediately suppressed. This explains why the Chinese state and its scholar-officials viewed religion with such suspicion and fear. In traditional China it was the responsibility of the county magistrate to collect taxes, employ clerks, sheriffs, and jailers, give lectures on morality, and make offerings at the officially recognized temples. But the magistrate also "kept close watch over all religious activities, especially those involving voluntary organizations of people outside the family and locality groups, whose actions might threaten the sovereignty and religious prerogative of the state" (Teiser 1999, 115). Many have wondered why the present regime in Beijing so brutally suppresses the Falun gong religious movement, not to mention the incarceration, torture, and murder of so many Buddhists and Christians. The response seems out of proportion to the threat. But the regime in Beijing is well aware that the foundation of its power – which is entirely traditional – can tolerate no competition. As a transcendent power, state power must remain one and undivided. This notion of power is the main impediment for China's transition to modernity. One may expect that the most pressing concern of Chinese scholars today would be to formulate an ethics that, unlike the traditional ethics, is not inextricably bound to the notion of a transcendent (sacred) state power.

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CHAPTER 79

Origins of Chinese Ethics

Philip J. Ivanhoe

Any account of the "origin of ethics" will be to some degree speculative, for it attempts to explain not only what we know about the written records of another time and place, but also to reconstruct what the authors of these texts were trying to achieve by writing them. For ethics is the attempt to explain oneself to others, to offer a story that one believes other reasonable people will take as in some sense justifying why one acts, believes, and feels as one does. In this brief account of the origin of Chinese ethics, I will introduce some of the religious and philosophical concepts and orientations that informed the early development of Chinese thought. I will begin with material from the Bronze Age culture of the twelfth century BCE, and then focus on what many regard as the "classic period" of Chinese philosophy, roughly the period between the sixth and third centuries BCE.

The Bronze Age and Early Chinese Ethics

The rulers of twelfth-century BCE China, the latter part of a period known as the Shang Dynasty, relied upon divination to consult a variety of spirits concerning what actions and policies they should pursue. One method involved the use of shell and bone. Questions would be posed to various ancestral and nature spirits and specially prepared shells or bones would then be cracked by applying the tip of some type of hot implement. The resulting fissures would then be "read" by a diviner – often the king himself – and an answer to the inquiry determined. The questions and often the responses as well would then be carved onto the bone or shell and stored away, perhaps for future reference.

Oracular divination of this period was an important feature of Chinese society, for it enabled the ruling elite to discern and influence events in the spirit world. The early Chinese thought that spirits in general were quite capricious, often hostile or at best indifferent to human well-being. Oracular consultation and sacrifice were ways to understand and influence the powerful spirits who were thought to control many important events, both on the personal and larger social and political levels. Ancestral spirits were especially important in this regard as they retained some of the concern for their posterity that they felt while alive. Hence they were important allies for their living descendants.

The goal of divination was to understand and influence the spiritual world in order to comprehend and control events in the human realm. Successful divination required two primary abilities. On the one hand, the diviner needed to be a master of and be aided by those who could prepare and conduct the physical acts which constituted the divination. Regardless of the type of divination being performed,

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special *technical* skills and knowledge were needed simply to move through the process. On the other hand, the diviner also needed to be a certain kind of person and to have a certain *character* in order for the divination to succeed. Among other things, he needed to show the proper reverence for the spirits whose aid he sought. Even the most technically flawless divination or sacrifice would prove ineffective if the person performing it was not properly oriented and attuned to the spiritual world. Only a properly sensitive diviner could discern the true meaning of the cracks produced on shell and bone. These three features of early oracular practice – its general goal of understanding "Heaven" in order to facilitate human well-being and the combination of technical knowledge and personal character needed for success – played critical roles in the development of Chinese ethics.

In certain oracular inscriptions, we encounter early forms of a Chinese character which in the modern Mandarin dialect is pronounced *de* ("virtue"). In these early Shang contexts, *de* was a kind of power which accrued to and resided within an individual who had acted favorably toward a spirit or another person. The favor shown could be some common act of kindness or in the case of a spirit the proper presentation of an appropriate sacrificial offering. It was believed that the recipients of such favorable treatment would feel a psychic debt toward their benefactor and this feeling would, in turn, engender a desire to "respond to" or "repay" the kindness. In this early period, the notion of *de* is almost always found in contexts concerning rulers and had the sense of that virtue particular to a good ruler. A king with "royal virtue" had the endorsement of ancestral spirits, and such support was thought necessary for him to gain and maintain his rule.

With the emergence of a new ruling line, known as the Zhou Dynasty, around the eleventh century BCE, the notion of "virtue" began to change, particularly in regard to the person of the king. A king's ability to rule and the legitimacy of his rule came to be seen as something he could earn or forfeit. An improper ruler, one who neglected his ritual duties, dissipated his *de*, which in turn led to the collapse of his rule. Such a king would lose *tianming* ("Heaven's Mandate") to rule. A ruler who was scrupulous in his conduct, preserved and could even augment his personal power. Rulers were thought to have a role-specific obligation to "take reverential care of" their virtue. They did this primarily by paying strict attention to their ritual obligations as king. These obligations were numerous and varied but underlying them all was the idea that the king must put the good of the people before the satisfaction of his personal desires. At times, the king might even be called upon to put himself at risk in order to benefit his people. A king who failed to revere his virtue, by indulging personal desires at the expense of his royal obligations, would dissipate his virtue and weaken his rule.

The fall of the Western Zhou, in 771 BCE, is traditionally explained in terms of the last king's lack of virtue. It seems that King Yu was deeply enamored of his concubine Bao Si and indulged himself by amusing her. Bao Si was fond of having the king light the series of beacon fires that were supposed to be used to summon his vassals from surrounding territories in times of attack. Even though there was no danger of attack, King Yu would have the fires lit for her amusement. Vassals would gather their forces and rush to the capital, only to find that it was a false alarm. After a number of such false alarms, they stopped coming and hence were not there when the real attack came and toppled his regime.

The story illustrates the belief that self-indulgence weakens the power of a ruler and that eventually this will result in the loss of Heaven's Mandate to rule. Political failure was strongly correlated with moral decay and the latter was understood primarily in terms of sacrificing proper role-specific duties by indulging personal pleasure and advantage. The duties incumbent upon a good king – one who reveres his Heavenly virtue – were for the most part defined by a set of ceremonies and social practices known

collectively as the *li* ("rites"). These included high religious ceremonies of state, the regular administration of the government, personal deportment and behavior, and what we would call matters of etiquette. Since everything the ruler did contributed, in some small measure, to the character of his virtue, almost everything he did took on great significance. One sees how the trajectory of this style of thinking leads to a concern with self-cultivation, namely, the attempt, through concerted effort and reflection, to transform one's basic inclinations and dispositions.

Along with and to some extent as consequences of these changes in the concept of "virtue," two related shifts in the Chinese religious and philosophical paradigm were important for the emerging ethical consciousness. First, an appeal to kinship was no longer seen as sufficient grounds to legitimate one's rule. Heaven's Mandate was no longer simply viewed as a hereditary right or a question of fate. The right to rule was thought to depend upon the ritual propriety of the ruler. Second, what mattered in cases of ritual propriety was not simply acting or behaving in a certain way; more important was acting out of proper motivations. One had to perform one's ritual obligations with the appropriate feelings and these were defined largely in terms of self-restraint and other-regarding, ethical qualities.

One can see in this constellation of concerns the influence of the "general goal" and "two primary abilities" needed for divination that were described above. A good king sought to serve and gain the favor of Heaven in order to control important events in the human realm. In order to do this, he needed to master an impressive body of technical knowledge concerning the rites, while at the same time working to cultivate the personal character required to carry them out effectively.

The Classic Period of Chinese Philosophy

Kongzi (551–479 BCE) or "Confucius" and his early followers preserved all three of these central features of early Chinese oracular culture and in this respect they show a conservative tendency. However, they also transformed these ideas into more distinctively ethical concepts. For example, while they believed that properly performed ritual actions had the power to influence events in the world, they tended to believe that this occurred as a result of the force of the ethical example that a practitioner displayed rather than as a manifestation of spiritual powers. In the case of Xunzi (310–219 BCE), a sophisticated and influential follower of Kongzi's teachings, there is an explicit rejection of magical understandings of ritual. He argues for the critical importance of ritual, but in terms that a modern sociologist could easily embrace.

The Confucians are distinctive among early Chinese philosophers for the great emphasis they placed upon rituals and culture in general. They believed that the influence one receives through the practice of certain rituals and the appreciation of certain cultural pursuits such as archery, charioteering, poetry, and music were necessary for the development of moral character. In this set of beliefs, we hear clear echoes of the two "primary abilities" discussed above. In order to realize the Confucian ideal, one needed to master a substantial body of technical knowledge regarding the rites, while at the same time learning how to perform them with the attitudes and sensibilities needed for efficacious performance. While remarkably influential throughout later Chinese history, this characteristically Confucian approach to ethics was rejected by two important competitors: the Mohists and Daoists.

While Mozi (ca. 480–390 BCE) and his followers sought to understand Heaven and control the spirits in order to benefit human beings, they explicitly rejected and ridiculed the Confucian concern with ritual and culture in general and the related emphasis on self-cultivation. Mohists rejected the need for ritual

and culture because they did not believe these things in fact helped to shape people's character. They saw Confucian ritual and advocacy of culture as a wasteful extravagance which served as a source of oppression for the common people.

Mohists also strenuously objected to the way that Confucians tended to deemphasize overt faith in and direct appeal to Heaven and the spirits. In contrast, they advocated a literal belief in spirits as the agents of Heaven who regularly acted in the world to ensure that Heaven's will was obeyed. They also believed that certain well-formed arguments proved the truth of their teachings and would convince anyone who was able to follow their arguments to adopt their beliefs. For example, they argued that Heaven cares for and seeks to benefit the people and shows no favorites, supporting only those who are righteous. Those who want to follow Heaven should therefore directly emulate these qualities and act toward all with "impartial care." These and other Mohist teachings gave rise to a kind of state-centered consequentialism. They believed that if people rejected Confucian teachings regarding the importance of ritual and cultural pursuits, as well as the central importance of familial ties, and instead acted with impartial care to increase the basic common goods of wealth, population, and order within the state, everyone would be better off.

Daoist texts such as the *Daodejing*, purportedly the work of the legendary Laozi, and *Zhuangzi*, the "Inner Chapters" of which at least seem to express the views of a historical individual named Zhuangzi, date from the fourth to third centuries BCE. Both texts emphasize the need to follow *tian* ("Heaven") and develop *de* ("virtue"), but understand these ideals in distinctive ways. The *Daodejing* offers a vision of a pristine and innocent stage of human existence, when people enjoyed simple yet satisfying lives in a primitive village-based utopia. Such conditions offered people a way to preserve and strengthen their natural "virtue," "power," or "vitality." They also offered an opportunity to live in peace and harmony, avoiding the dire consequences that are described as the inevitable consequence of more "developed" societies.

The *Daodejing* offers a mystical teaching that purportedly enables one to pre-reflectively understand and move in harmony with natural, Heavenly patterns and processes, thereby avoiding harm and attaining various benefits. In this way, it preserves the "goal" of early oracular approaches. However, it strenuously denies the efficacy or value of ritual and high culture. The *Daodejing* claims instead that such pursuits obscure and deform one's original *de*. The text describes a form of self-cultivation, but one that is designed to pare away and eliminate cultural embellishment and return one to a spontaneous, natural state of understanding and action.

The *Zhuangzi* also seeks to find a way to live in harmony with Heaven or Nature. It is distinctive among the texts discussed in that it does not link the ethical vision it advocates with any particular social or political philosophy. Rather than insisting on the need to reform or reconstitute society, the author describes a way to live in the social world but not be fettered and ruined by it. The *Zhuangzi* notes the importance of *de* ("virtue"). The Confucians tended to regard virtue as a power to attract people and inspire them to greater ethical heights. Zhuangzi sees it as an ability to put others at ease and help relieve them of the debilitating posturing that is seen as characteristic of normal human society. Like the *Daodejing* and the Mohists, Zhuangzi holds ritual and culture as sources of a great deal of human deceit, hypocrisy, and suffering. However, unlike the Mohists, who place great faith in reason, these Daoist thinkers believe that human nature is fundamentally benign and simply needs to be liberated from social practices and norms. Like the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi* advocates a form of self-cultivation that aims at eliminating the pernicious effects of socialization. The author advocates practices like "fasting the heart

and mind" and "sitting in forgetfulness" as ways to return to the natural state that is his ideal. Zhuangzi is unique among the thinkers discussed above in explicitly arguing that our natural, authentic state of being is compatible with a wide variety of equally good and proper human lives. He is more than a pluralist; he is ethically promiscuous. He believes that the remarkable variety of good lives the Way engenders offers a valuable lesson. It can make us aware of the vast, open-ended diversity of good lives and help us avoid the common failing of taking our particular point of view as the definitive standard for what is good.

Early Chinese concerns about the power of the spiritual world and the need to understand and control it played a central role in the development of Chinese ethics. Later thinkers retained these concerns and worked to devise ways to comprehend and tap into Heavenly powers, to flow along with the stream of Heaven. In significant contrast to the Mohists, Confucians as well as Daoists of the classical period tended to naturalize earlier, explicitly anthropocentric conceptions of Heaven and the spirits. Yet all three of these schools sought to understand and accord with the Heavenly in a way that would enable human beings to avoid harm and to flourish.

The thinkers we have discussed offered different views about the need for and relationship between the "technical knowledge" and "personal character" that were described as the "primary abilities" for successful divination. Confucians insisted on the importance of both and saw the ethical life as arising from the reflective interplay of ritual, traditional culture, and personal character. Mohists rejected the need for self-cultivation and the value of tradition. They advocated a more rational understanding of the nature and function of both the Heavenly and human realms. Daoists were opposed to Confucian ritual and tradition as well as Mohist rationality. They believed in a spontaneous, pre-reflective style of understanding and action.

The Mohist school died out around the time of the Qin unification in 221 BCE and their demise saw the end of explicitly rational approaches to ethics in China. Confucianism and Daoism continued to flourish and mutually influence one another and were joined by Buddhism, which arrived in China sometime during the first century CE, to constitute the three "Great Traditions" of later Chinese culture.

Subsequent Developments

Throughout the subsequent course of Chinese history, Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist thinkers continued to elaborate new variations on the ancient themes. The aim of understanding and tapping into the power of Heaven remained a central concern, especially for Confucians and Daoists. The interplay between the mastery of technical knowledge and the cultivation of personal character proved to be a productive tension for thinkers in all three traditions. It can be seen at work across a range of very different cultural activities. This is one reason why ethical concerns often are not sharply distinguished from other cultural practices within the Chinese tradition. Whether one was consulting the *Yijing*, compiling a history, writing calligraphy, composing a poem, or producing a painting, one was relying on the mastery of technical knowledge that enabled one to cultivate and to express one's personal character. Many of the debates between these three traditions and within each of them about the nature and practice of ethics turned on the relative importance of technical knowledge – often conceived of primarily in terms of traditional methods and standards – versus personal character – often described in terms of innate

intuitions or spontaneous tendencies. Regardless of the value attached to these related concerns, they were aimed at cultivating an understanding of Heaven or Nature that would enable human beings to avoid harm and fare well. In this, we see the distinctive orientation of Chinese ethics.

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CHAPTER 80

Differentiations in Chinese Ethics

Mark Csikszentmihalyi

"Learning from moral models" is what China's President Jiang Zemin prescribed to combat materialism and corruption in a July 2001 speech promoting a combination of law and morality. In 2014, his successor, Xi Jingping, used the occasion of Confucius's birthday to argue that the Communist Party was composed of "faithful inheritors" of the Confucian tradition and used a scientific approach to the tradition in developing the country. In doing so, Jiang and Xi were continuing a longstanding practice of redesigning socialism to make it compatible with the structures of traditional Chinese ethics. At the height of the Cultural Revolution, when Confucius was criticized as a reactionary who upheld the ideals of a slave society, his model was replaced by "the untroubled image of Mao as the fountainhead of all morality, standing high above all laws and institutions." Ethical behavior was promoted by broadly publicizing the exemplary behaviors of socialist paragons "capable of heroic acts of self-transcendence" and who drew their inspiration from Mao himself (Schwartz 1970, 168). Viewed against the backdrop of traditional China, accommodations to Marx, Lenin, and the ideology of the "market" are the latest in a series of variations resulting from internal conflicts and encounters with foreign religious traditions. While grounded in a set of canonical texts, and in a set of virtues and the mythic figures that exemplify these virtues, Chinese traditions have constantly varied the elements of these sets in response to such external challenges.

This entry will proceed chronologically through the major stages in the development of China's ethical and political traditions. The subjects of the sections that follow are:

1 The three major strands of ethical thinking that were woven together by the historical figure of Kongzi (Kong Qiu, i.e. Confucius), traditionally said to have lived from 551 to 479 BCE.
2 The legacy of Kongzi, his disciples, and the two major Warring States period works that developed systematic accounts of human nature based on the example of Kongzi.
3 Responses to the different traditions labeled as "Daoism" (i.e. Taoism): a naturalization of ethics into a unified theory of the cosmos under the rubric of Way (*Dao*) in the synthetic atmosphere of the early imperial period, and, on the popular level, the developing role of superhuman entities as arbiters of morality and fate in organized Daoism.
4 The response to Buddhism in the Six Dynasties and Tang periods, as well as its influence on canon formation in the Song Dynasty.
5 The development of scholasticism in the "Study of Principle" (*Lixue*) school associated with Zhu Xi and the "Study of Mind" (*Xinxue*) school associated with Liu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming in the late imperial period from the Song through the Qing dynasties.

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The encounter with the West led to attempts at fusion with non-Chinese traditions and transformed ethical thinking in significant ways while preserving important structures of ethical learning and behavior. Throughout, special attention will be paid to the interplay between the three earliest strands of ethics that were combined to form Kongzi's model of self-cultivation of the virtues.

Three Strands of Ethical Thinking Before Kongzi

The view that Kongzi was "the fountainhead of all morality" in China is not only an artifact of the tradition of moral paragons, but runs counter to the words attributed to Kongzi in the *Analects* (*Lunyu*): "I am a transmitter, not a creator" (7.1). Kongzi's avowed project was not specifically ethical, but rather the recreation of the cultural patterns of the Zhou (trad. 1027–221 BCE): "If there was someone who would make use of me, could I not make a Zhou in the East?" (17.5). Kongzi is not simply being modest: his didactic use of the Zhou *Classic of Odes* (*Shijing*, hereafter *Odes*) and elements of its ritual code are only the most explicit instances of his appropriation of Zhou cultural standards. In particular, three strands of ethical thought appear to have been well developed prior to Kongzi: a political morality, a ritual blueprint for society, and a theory of self-formation based in part on internalizing classic texts. Their common recourse to the ancient sage kings was perhaps the most significant shared characteristic of the three strands prior to their being woven together by the *Analects* and by subsequent attempts to synthesize the heritage of the moral models of the past.

The assertion that Kongzi's religious ethics was in part *political* risks obscuring the more important point that, at least until the time of the early empire in the third century BCE, ruling authority had always been both political and religious. The clearest illustration of this identity was the concept of "Heaven's Mandate" (*tianming*), the fulcrum of many of the proclamations that make up the *Classic of Documents* (*Shujing*, hereafter *Documents*), also known as the *Books of the Predecessors* (*Shangshu*). Heaven's Mandate was the command issued to the Zhou founders, King Wen and King Wu, to overthrow the last corrupt ruler of the Shang in the eleventh century BCE. More generally, it refers to an endorsement by divine authority that both good rulers and virtuous rebels received. Although often viewed as a heterogeneous set of historical works, the texts in the earliest stratum of the *Documents* are orations that repeatedly champion the political authority of the speakers, justifying events such as the Zhou conquest of the Shang and the forced move of the Shang capital to Anyang. These early chapters, thought to date to the reign of Wen's son King Cheng of Zhou, illustrate the way in which the ruler's link with Heaven was the source of his personal morality and of his political authority. The "Announcement of Kang" (*Kanggao*) illustrates the way in which morality and authority are granted by Heaven, albeit conditionally. The tension in the *Documents* between a picture of the ruler as simply a conduit for the divine and the volitional ruler subject to Heaven's sanction becomes an important theme in later discussions of the "mandate" (*ming*), a term that came to connote a limited concept of "fate" in the context of individual lives. These narratives of political justification, first centered on the Zhou, were later retold about sage rulers of greater and greater antiquity, whose privileged connection with Heaven was identified as the source of their morality.

A separate set of standards of behavior grew out of the multiple contexts of Zhou *ritual performance*. In areas of intense ritual attention such as sacrifice and funerals, normative attitudes and behaviors were abstracted into general ritual scripts, and then into virtues whose cultivation signaled an acceptance of those roles. Both the *Odes* and the *Documents* preserve early Zhou liturgical formulas that illuminate the degree to which gesture, expression, and appearance were seen as both formative and expressive of ethical dispositions. The *Rituals of Zhou* (*Zhouli*), *Ceremonials and Rituals* (*Yili*), and *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*), three compendia that purported to reconstruct the ritual system of the Zhou, contain elaborate descriptions of the proper attitudes of reverence in sacrifice and grief in mourning. A quotation of Kongzi preserved in the early third century BCE *Mengzi* (Master Meng) explains how when a king dies, the exemplary crown prince's face turns a deep inky black. Other mourners are reassured by this proof of his heartfelt reaction: "When it comes time for the burial, people come from all directions to see it. The devastation on his countenance and the sorrow of his crying (leave) the mourners greatly satisfied."

In writings that post-date Kongzi, a view developed that saw ritual participation as both process and end of self-cultivation practice. In the fourth and third centuries BCE, theorists went to great lengths to explain mechanisms behind the correlation between external signs (e.g. demeanor, gait, and bearing) in ritual contexts, and the internal virtues that they evidenced. Just as the sage kings exemplified an ideal political morality, they were also associated with the construction of the ideal ritual framework.

Bound with these two strands of ethics was a third grounded in a *pedagogical method* based on the interpretation of sacred texts. While it is difficult to reconstruct the social context of the early transmission of the *Odes* and *Documents*, archeological evidence supports the conclusion that sophisticated exegesis of early texts was a central aspect of the early community associated with Kongzi. In the *Analects* and in excavated texts like the late fourth-century "Kongzi discusses the *Odes*" (*kongzi shilum* among the tomb texts purchased by the Shanghai Museum in 1994), Kongzi offers didactic readings of ancient texts, and twice praises a disciple by saying: "only with you can I discuss the *Odes*!" (*Analects* 1.16 and 3.8). The hermeneutic assumption of exegetes was that the classics expressed the aims (*zhi*) of the early sage kings. As one commentary held, "the *Odes* articulate aims," and so the study and performance of their compositions provided direct religious inspiration. Teaching the proper understanding of these texts led to the development of distinctive modes of exegesis and was a central means of the transmission of the tradition (Van Zoeren 1991). In the second century BCE the Five Classics (*Wujing*, including the *Classic of Changes – Yijing –* and *Spring and Autumn – Chunqiu –* in addition to the *Odes*, *Documents*, and *Ritual*) became the curriculum associated with the imperial civil service examinations. This began the long process of state sponsorship and institutionalization of their interpretation. In contrast to the other two strands, the actual practice of interpreting the message of the sage kings was attached much more immediately to a fixed set of texts.

These three strands were interwoven from a very early time. For example, the performance of mantic arts by the Zhou rulers as a means of divining Heaven's Mandate was a ritual event that demanded the proper attitude of awe, and which was then memorialized in the *Documents*. However, in context, these three strands appear to have often been separate in terms of social practice, specific sources of authority, and the texts they generated. What they shared was their common perception that they were all part of the bequest of the sage kings of the past.

The Legacy of Kongzi

The diverse teachings of the sage kings were systematized in writings that have come to be identified with the pivotal figure of Kongzi. One of the most controversial scholarly questions today is when that identification began to be made. Chinese writing is usually thought to have originated with official records of communication with the divine inscribed on media of divination, inscriptions commemorating noble individuals or events inscribed on sumptuary vessels, and records of the speeches and edicts of early rulers. Even in the case of new genres of the kinds identified with Kongzi, archeology reveals that texts rarely circulated with authorship explicitly identified. The biographies of the putative authors of many early Chinese texts appear to be little more than later projections of voices found in the texts themselves. Despite centuries of attempts to discover the authentic Kongzi, this problem and a related one imperils any claim to authoritative biography: there are too many texts and so too many possible Kongzis to definitively select one as authoritative.

Despite the lack of an authoritative biography, there are common tropes and concerns in many of the earliest attributed materials. Descriptions of Kongzi differ from that of the celebrated sage kings in one major detail: Kongzi, despite his intention to revive the ritual and political system of Zhou, was unable to attain the political influence to do so. The earliest biography of Kongzi, dating to the *Grand Scribe's Records* (*Shiji*) at the end of the second century BCE, narrates his life as a circuit of feudal states during which Kongzi was by turns slandered, overlooked, or treated in a ritually improper way. Though he occupied minor offices, he suffered the fate that the age never recognized his talents. As a result, narratives about Kongzi's deeds were less important than his recorded advice to rulers and disciples aspiring to hold official positions.

Several canonical sources draw from a body of diverse sayings and anecdotes written on bamboo slips and circulated in the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, but do so based on different principles of selection. The *Transmission of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*), a commentary to the terse chronicle *Spring and Autumn*, transmits quotations that are loosely concerned with historical episodes, issues of fate and contingency, and, occasionally, a form of historically informed observation that resembles the reading of omens. The *Analects* (*Lunyu*, literally "Considered discussions"), by contrast, appears to have been assembled in the early imperial period, probably in the second century BCE. The conversations in the work represent the sage's advice to rulers and disciples. They are concerned with self-cultivation practices that result in reliable stewardship of state or office. Early imperial collections like the *Records of Ritual* and the *Lineage sayings of Kongzi* (*Kongzi jiayu*) preserve large amounts of Kongzi's recorded speech, but are generally more diverse and thought to mix material from Kongzi's time, Warring States period inventions, and genealogies and prophecies from the early dynastic period.

It is the *Analects* that has long been the basis for the later reception of Kongzi's ethics. The work as a whole incorporates all three strands outlined above into an ideal of moral perfection based on the internalization of a set of behaviors designed to qualify one for the performance of official duties. The process of self-transformation in the *Analects* focuses on developing benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*). *Benevolence* entails acting with awareness of the personhood of others, entailing both kindness and compassion. *Righteousness* is an obligation to act fairly, especially in official contexts. *Wisdom* is often discussed in the context of discerning the character of others or

evaluating the appropriateness of actions in particular circumstances. *Trustworthiness* is acting in a manner consistent with one's words.

In the system of the *Analects*, ethical action was also role-specific. Self-transformation consisted of locating oneself correctly with respect to one's family through filial piety (*xiao*) and to one's community through ritual propriety (*li*). Speech and demeanor proper to one's status in the family and society were not seen as "surface" requirements, but as transparent and spontaneous signs of developed ethical dispositions. The *Records of Ritual* make this connection: "This is the same reason that the gentleman is ashamed of wearing suitable clothes but having the incorrect deportment, of having the correct deportment but saying the wrong things, of saying the right things but lacking the appropriate virtue, of having the appropriate virtue but lacking the proper action." The progression from dress to ethical action is not a matter of etiquette. It confirms that the actor understands the way in which clothing, deportment, speech, virtue, and action are all inextricably linked, and mutually entail each other. Besides this central place of ritual self-cultivation, the *Analects* also champions the position that Heaven's Mandate, as testified to in the *Odes* and the *Documents*, had been granted to the ancient sage kings on account of their virtue.

In the centuries after Kongzi's death, changes in society led to modifications in his system. One third-century BCE source, *Master Fei of Han* (*Han Feizi*), records that after Kongzi's death, his disciples split into eight factions, each of which emphasized different aspects of Kongzi's message. The fragmentation that was to have the most influence on the tradition dates to a third-century BCE debate on human nature. While there is no question that the major synthesis of the three strands of ethics had already occurred by the time of the fourth and third century BCE writers Mengzi (Meng Ke or Mencius, ca. 380–ca. 290 BCE) and Xunzi (Xun Qing or Hsün Tzu, ca. 310–ca. 238 BCE), they extended the legacy of Kongzi in ways that made the synthesis ethically robust. Both figures are known through the texts that bear their names, the 14-chapter *Mengzi* and the 32-chapter *Xunzi*.

The *Mengzi* argues that within each person's mind are incipient bases of the virtues. These were the "minds" of compassion (*ceyin*), shame (*xiu'wu*), yielding (*cirang*), and right and wrong (*shifei*). These "sprouts" (*duan*) of moral reactions are already present in the inner mind, and may be nurtured to become the four virtues of benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, and wisdom, respectively. The *Mengzi* does not really argue that human nature is good, but instead that the mind has dispositions to goodness, which need to be developed through reflection and practice (Ivanhoe 2002). The *Mengzi*'s picture is an innatist one. The moral education of Kongzi was held to be the best way of developing moral dispositions that were inherent in human physiology.

The contents of the *Xunzi* are extremely diverse, but the chapters thought to be authentically the work of Xunzi are generally concerned with ritual and music as a means to transform individuals, and thereby society. A famous catechism in its first chapter, *Quanxue* (Encouraging Learning), outlines the central role of a course of training: "In terms of its process, [learning] begins with reciting the classics and ends with reading the rites. In terms of its significance, [learning] begins with being a candidate for office, and it ends with being a sage." The reason one studies ritual is that it allows one to cultivate the virtues, which is an indirect means to promoting social order. The *Lilun* (Discussion of Ritual) chapter emphasizes how rituals and obligations (*li* and *yi*) were developed by the sage kings to "nourish the people's desires and satisfy their needs." In the *Xunzi*, society is an expression of the sages' desire for order, the only sense in which moral tendencies might be considered "innate" (Wong 2000).

The connection between ritual's radical reshaping of a person in the *Xunzi* and the development of incipient "sprouts" through reflection on the *Odes* and *Documents* in the *Mengzi* also illustrates how the program of ethical training favored in each text is consistent with its implicit moral psychology. The *Xunzi*'s focus is not on innate dispositions as in the *Mengzi*, but rather on external influences. Proper training conditions a person to have a certain set of reactions to external stimuli, in effect transforming the individual's basic nature and the affective dispositions that guide his or her reactions. The *Xunzi* explicitly and implicitly attacks the *Mengzi* and indicts the notion that anything inherent in the body will aid the process of training.

To some extent, these developments of the synthesis associated with Kongzi may be seen as a redifferentiation of the tradition in response to changes in society in the Warring States period. Li Zehou (1986) has argued that the changes in social structure allowed the *Mengzi* to go further than *Analects* in separating noble status from virtue, and promoting moral self-restraint. Hou Wailu (1947) wrote that the late third century's integration of law and ritual, as well as attempts at synthesizing diverse modes of knowledge under the rubric of the "Way," are all clear influences on the *Xunzi*. The competing pictures of human nature in these two texts, then, have been read as variations on Kongzi's synthesis resulting from contrasting social conditions. The unification of the Chinese empire in the third and second centuries BCE exerted another type of influence on these ethical traditions, one in which the "Way" played the major role.

Ethics and the Way in the Early Empire

Both the *Mengzi* and *Xunzi* continued to be read after the consolidation of the empire in the third century BCE, yet the major transformation of ethics was a result of its integration with other discourses. The Qin (221–206 BCE) and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) dynasties established a precedent for many of the structures that are now identified as essential characteristics of Chinese society. Despite its brevity, Qin structures of imperial control and its methods for unifying diverse groups were adopted by the Han. It was the sustained and unified empire of the Han that established the pattern for everything from political institutions to historical writing throughout later dynastic history. From the perspective of religion and philosophy, the introduction of Buddhism in the first century CE and the formation of organized Daoism in the late second century CE exerted profound effects on the legacy of Kongzi. The systematization of theories of natural cycles based on *yinyang* dualism, the physics of the five phases (*wuxing*, i.e. water, wood, fire, earth, and metal), and other classifications of phenomena became the basis for the growth of a plethora of technical disciplines in areas from divination to astronomy to medicine.

The political consolidation of the early empire set the tone for an attempt to integrate regional traditions and specializations that had hitherto been differentiated. The Han synthetic impulse extended to ethics, and many Han texts integrated the diverse influences on Kongzi's thinking into other frameworks, such as theories of natural cycles. In the first century BCE *Elder Dai's Records of Ritual* (*DaDai Liji*), attributed to Dai De, the ritual and obligations central to *Xunzi*'s picture of ethics are likened to the alternation of the five phases according to the seasons: "That the pattern changes is because ritual is like the five phases and obligation is like the four seasons." The fact that ritual forms depend on one's obligations reflects the progress of the five phases according to the four seasons. Often, these correlations had the effect of erasing the remaining distinctiveness of the early strands of ethics explored above. An example is the recently excavated Han commentary on a pre-imperial work on ethics called the *Five*

Kinds of Action (*Wuxing*). The anonymous commentary explains a verse from the *Odes* about King Wen of Zhou's reception of the mandate from Heaven by paraphrasing the *Xunzi*'s account of the origins of ritual, thereby homogenizing all three strands of thinking identified above. What both these uses of the earlier writer Xunzi have in common is that they put less emphasis on the role of the sage kings in cultural creation. Instead, they imply that ritual patterns were incipient in the natural order and provide for the possibility that the patterns may change.

The increasing importance of concepts of natural order and change in the Han synthesis reflects the influence of fourth and third century works like the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, often identified with Daoism or as the canonical texts of "philosophical" Daoism. These works in general rejected the ethics of virtue in favor of a call to return to the spontaneous reactions characteristic of one's original nature (*xing*). The normative or originary picture of a world in which everything follows its nature is expressed using the concept of an overarching Dao (Way), which was then picked up in the Han as a universal framework on which a synthesis of disparate ideals could be built.

The Way was used to similar purposes in the second and third centuries CE by a set of healers who combined medical and shamanistic practices with the rhetoric of the *Laozi* to create the social organization of the *tianshi* (Celestial Masters). As Qing Xitai (1988) has argued, the notion of an automatic reward for good and bad actions found in the earliest strata of the Celestial Masters tradition has much in common with the consequentialist mechanisms of the fourth century BCE *Mozi*, yet because the celestial masters used the same emblem of the Way, they are today also labeled as Daoist. An emphasis on the aid of salvific divinities, perhaps in part a response to the arrival of the forerunners of Buddhism in China, may also have led to an increasing emphasis on the role of a semi-divine Kongzi in the newly unified ethical systems. His chronicle *Spring and Autumn* acquired commentaries that read it as an encoded manual for rulership. The Han historical work *Shiji* (Grand Scribe's Records) traced the project of classical exegesis to the initial efforts of Kongzi, whose birth was accompanied by auspicious portents. Finally, the Kong family's maintenance of ritual traditions at the birthplace of Kongzi in Qufu (in modern Shandong province) became the model for the later imperial system of Kongzi temple sacrifice. In the synthetic atmosphere of the Han, the malleability of Kongzi's biography was used as a resource for unifying the diverse strands of pre-imperial ethical thought.

The Influence of Buddhism in the Six Dynasties and Tang

The Six Dynasties period (222–589 CE) was a pivot in the history of Chinese religions in that it marked the period in which the "three teachings" (*sanjiao*) of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism became self-conscious traditions. The common suffix *jiao*, which meant "teaching" and later came to be used for "religion," identified them for the first time as being of the same kind, so engaged in similar projects, and potentially in competition. Imperially sponsored debates between the adherents of two or three of the "three teachings" made clear the degree to which they could be, for the first time, viewed as mutually exclusive systems of belief.

The Six Dynasties period saw a resurgence of interest in the classics *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, and figures like Wang Bi (226–49 CE) and Guo Xiang (d. 312 CE) read such "Daoist" works alongside works attributed to Kongzi. They also applied terms deriving from the former texts, such as "naturalness" (*ziran*), to the understanding of the latter. Guo Xiang, in his commentary to the *Zhuangzi*, explains how a person

who has stripped him or herself of the artificial trappings of morality would have no use for praise of the sage kings: "condemnation and glorification both arise from insufficiency, so those of ultimate sufficiency forget good and evil, and dispense with death and life. They become one with change and transformation, and in their vastness nothing is not proper". This challenge to the ethics of virtue was answered by figures like Fan Ning (339–401 CE), who specifically criticized Wang Bi for allowing "benevolence and righteousness [to] sink into darkness."

Criticisms of Daoism, however, were tempered by the fact that some of its notions were useful in anti-Buddhist polemics. The close relationship between Buddhist cosmology and ethics meant that in order to rebut the Buddhist eschatological framework, writers had to enlist aspects of indigenous cosmology that were better developed in Daoist texts. In the Six Dynasties period, Liu Jun (462–521 CE) echoed the argument of Dai Kui (330–95 CE) that natural endowments of pneumas and unpredictable environmental influences all had determining effects on people's lives in a way that had nothing to do with notions of karma. In refuting Buddhist cosmology, Liu Jun expanded the notion of the "mandate of Heaven" to resemble the *Zhuangzi*'s notion of "naturalness."

In the newly centralized China of the Tang Dynasty (618–906 CE), Buddhist and Daoist institutions developed and received official support, and Confucianism adopted some of their models of lineage and transmission. In particular, the notions of *Daotong* (transmission of the Way) and *Zhengtong* (transmission of good governance) developed as an attempt to define both a Confucian orthodoxy and orthopraxy that might be distinguished from doctrines and practices that had been "polluted" by Buddhism and Daoism. Official support for Confucianism was exemplified by Emperor Taizong's commission of Yan Shigu (581–645 CE) to annotate the Five Classics. Anti-Daoist and anti-Buddhist writings rebutted the challenges of these traditions to Confucian ethics on a fundamentally different basis than the challenges to Buddhist cosmology of the Six Dynasties period.

The task of defining an authoritative "transmission of the Way" was a central element of the nascent Confucian revival of the Tang. Because the transmission was traced to pre-Buddhist China, this definition was part of an effort to legitimate Confucian traditions. Han Yu (768–824 CE), an influential and iconoclastic Tang essayist, traced the transmission of the Way from the ancient sage kings, to the rulers of the Zhou dynasty, to Kongzi and then to Mengzi. The loss of the transmission roughly coincided with the arrival of Buddhism in China. The biography of Han Yu in the *New History of the Tang* (*Xin Tangshu*) draws a comparison between Han's critiques of Buddhism and Daoism and Mengzi's earlier criticisms of the figures Yang Zhu and Mozi, implicitly identifying Han Yu as the next figure in the line of the Daotong or Daoxue (Learning of the Way). Han Yu attacked Buddhism on a number of counts. Foremost was a genealogical argument: Buddhist traditions did not derive from the Way of the ancient sage kings of China, and as a result lacked the proper connection between knowledge and action. At the same time, Han Yu was also implying that Han and Six Dynasties exegetes had also lost the Way. In so doing he was attempting to refocus the Confucian enterprise back to the Warring States concern with moral rulership and social engagement.

Han Yu's contemporary Li Ao (d. ca. 844 CE) promoted a model of self-cultivation based on a concept of "returning to one's nature" (*fuxing*) that had strong overtones of the Tiantai Buddhist conception of the recovery of the "original mind" (*benxin*). For Li, the goal of Confucian practice is not simply the development of cultivated ethical dispositions. It is also to clear away desires in order to attain a sagely ideal that was described with many of the same terms used to characterize Buddhist enlightenment. While the Confucian emphasis on social engagement was held up as a major factor that differentiated it

from Buddhism, Confucian writers also began to reread their tradition to recover its idealist aspects and resuscitate its moral psychology.

In the Tang and the Song Dynasties, in part in response to such needs, the Confucian canon was gradually redefined. Those elements of indigenous traditions that could rebut Buddhist notions of the mind and enlightenment were preferentially revived. The establishment of the "Four Books" (*sishu*) in the Song Dynasty was actually the result of changes that had been underway for centuries. At that time, the *Analects* was raised to canonical status along with the *Mengzi* and two chapters of the *Record of Ritual*: *Great Learning* (*Daxue*) and the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*). The *Mengzi*'s place in the canon may be traced back at least to Han Yu's contention that Mengzi was the last classical representative of the Transmission of the Way. One reason the *Mengzi*, *Great Learning*, and *Doctrine of the Mean* were especially appealing in the post-Buddhist context was their development of moral psychology and of links between that psychology and a cosmology that included the magnetic power of *cheng* (sincerity) and the quasi-divine conception of the *sheng* (sage). These texts furnished a basis for constructing models of transcendence compatible with the goal of returning to an original "nature" unclouded by desires.

"Study of Principle" and "Study of Mind" in the Later Empire

The late imperial revival of the legacy of Kongzi bifurcated into two competing traditions in the Song (960–1279), Yuan (1280–1367), and Ming (1368–1643) dynasties. Both offered solutions to the problem of how to reconcile traditional practice and the imperative to social engagement with the reemergent psychologistic and idealist orientation represented in the newly elevated "Four Books." The solutions of the "Study of Principle" (*lixue*) school associated with Zhu Xi (Zhu Yuanhui, 1130–1200) were critiqued by Lu Jiuyuan (Lu Xiangshan, 1139–1193) and later by Wang Yangming (born Wang Shouren, or Wang Bo'an, 1472–1529). The latter critiques developed into another tradition, sometimes called "Study of the Mind" (*xinxue*).

The early "Study of Principle" school structured its theory of moral knowledge on a view of the cosmos based on the dualism between *li* "principle" and *qi* "matter". The cosmological basis of this school is often traced back to Zhou Dunyi's (Zhou Maoshu, 1017–1073) "Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate" (*Taijitu shuo*), which combines the symbolic scheme of the *Classic of Changes* with the moral language of the "Four Books." Zhou Dunyi's "supreme ultimate" (*taiji*) imbues all things, both animate and inanimate, but is expressed in its purest state in the nature of human beings. The basic disposition to good found in the *Mengzi* is no longer an aspect of the physiological model of incipient "sprouts" of virtue, but a reflection of the purity of this cosmic principle contained in human nature, identified with the sage's quality of sincerity. The brothers Cheng Hao (Cheng Mingdao, 1032–1085) and Cheng Yi (Cheng Yichuan, 1033–1107), who exerted a major influence on the views of Zhu Xi, developed and elevated the notion of human nature to subsume allied notions of fate, mind, affective dispositions, the Way, and Heaven. Cheng Yi held that morality inheres in the aspect of one's nature that is an expression of the natural pattern of principle, but is obscured by the *qi* of one's material nature. "Settling one's nature" (*ding xing*) and cultivating an attitude of reverence refines the neutral *qi* in the mind, making it possible to discover principle. In this way, the dualism between *li* and *qi* became the cosmological background to a new understanding of self-cultivation as the search for a transcendent order permeating the universe.

Zhu Xi's influence as a religious systematizer and a commentator on the "Four Books" exerted a defining influence on the "Study of Principle" school. His views became a reference point for future argumentation in ethical traditions. At the heart of the "Study of Principle" (also called the Cheng-Zhu school) was Zhu Xi's systematic application of the Cheng's notion of principle to his scholarly reformation of prior doctrine and practice. For this reason, some writers have applied terms like "rationalist" or "metaphysical" to what has been called Zhu Xi's "Neo-Confucian" position. It is true that human nature became entrained with a conception of principle that transcended not only the individual but also the category of human beings in general. Indeed, Zhu Xi wrote that jackals and otters carried out sacrifices, while tigers and wolves cared for their young, citing this as proof that animals could also penetrate principle. At the same time, Zhu's early exposure to Chan Buddhism translated into an appreciation of the role of institutions and practice in the maintenance of traditions, and the study of the classics was at the core of his self-cultivation practice.

Zhu Xi's synthesis centered on transcendent principle, and was tied to a program of cultivation practice directed to gaining access to that principle. Since ritual, the virtues, and social hierarchies were all expressions of this incipient pattern, Zhu Xi was able to resynthesize the strands of early Chinese ethics in a way that more closely matched the needs of a post-Buddhist age. The mind was the vehicle for understanding "principle," but this was not accomplished in isolation because principle was embodied in the works of the sages and worthies of the past. To properly engage these works, a program that combined quiet sitting (*qingzuo*) to clarify the mind and a particular method of studying the classics with was developed. Zhu Xi adopted Cheng Yi's application of the phrase "penetrating things" (*gewu*) from the *Great Learning* to his hermeneutical method. He meant to foster a resonance between the principle in the interpreter's mind and the principle of the things being interpreted. This method of mutual activation was a crucial aspect of Zhu Xi's self-cultivation program. It had the effect of restoring the ethical status of exegesis by making interpretation an active process integral to becoming a moral person.

The "Study of Mind" (*Xinxue*) school became a formal rival of the "Study of Principle" school, especially following the explicit criticism of Zhu Xi's understanding of "penetrating things" by Wang Yangming in the early Ming Dynasty. Some early Song writers, such as Zhang Zai (Zhang Hengju, 1020–1077) and to some extent even Cheng Hao, conceptualized the apprehension of principle as largely a matter of intuition. It was Zhu Xi's contemporary Lu Jiuyuan who argued that principle was discernable in the mind, and as such practice needed to be organized around the realization that, in Lu's words: "The universe and my mind are identical." Harkening back to the physiological arguments of the *Mengzi*, Lu saw the structure of the mind as being universal, and therefore held that the principle that ran through the works of the sages and worthies of the past was accessible in one's own mind.

Wang Yangming, the other major figure in the "Study of Mind" school (also called the Lu-Wang school), extended Lu's position by criticizing Zhu Xi for artificially dividing the mind and principle. Wang Yangming's critique of "Study of Principle" revolves around his view of the necessary relationship between knowledge and action, and of the inferiority of "ordinary knowledge" gained through study to experiential knowledge connected with daily action. Wang Yangming's fame rests on his reputation for swift action in his official career, and on his related emphasis on accessing an intuitive level of understanding. This has led some to label his thought "idealist." Wang adopts the phrase "true knowledge" (*liangzhi*) from the *Mengzi*, where it is explained as "the things a person knows without having to reflect" (*suo bulu er shi*), such as parental love and respect for elders. He used it to explain the way in which knowledge of principle is incipient in the mind.

While both the "Study of Principle" and the "Study of the Mind" criticized Buddhism, both their views on the mind and on specific meditative practices clearly owed much to Buddhist traditions. Lu Jiuyuan explicitly criticized Zhu Xi as advocating Chan Buddhism, yet was also criticized by Zhu Xi's disciple Chen Chun (Chen Anqing, 1159–1223) for "sitting in silence all day, during which time even a slight idea is taken as a sign of enlightenment, and said to be an authentic secret that had not been transmitted from the time of the ancient sages." Wang Yangming also directly criticized Buddhist practitioners for their detachment from the world. Nevertheless, modern scholars have compared his view that moral knowledge depends on clearing away the dust of the desires to reveal the mind's inherent moral principles to Chan Buddhist notions of the "original mind." Liu Zongzhou (Liu Qidong, 1578–1645), a revisionist "Study of the Mind" scholar, acknowledged the nature of the mutual influence when he wrote that Zhu Xi "was affected by Chan but then repudiated Chan," Liu Jiuyuan "interacted with Chan but then shunned Chan," and Wang Yangming "resembled Chan but then condemned Chan."

The institutional aspects of Confucian writing in later imperial China reflect the importance of orthodoxy in its concern with the "transmission of the Way." Zhu Xi's redefinition of that transmission included the early Confucians connected with the composition of the "Four Books." He located the Late Imperial resumption of the transmission with Zhou Dunyi and the Cheng brothers. Zhu Xi's own commentaries became orthodox parts of the civil service examination system at the start of the fourteenth century. This happened despite the fact that one area in which both the "Study of Principle" and the "Study of the Mind" schools agreed was in their criticism of the examination system as encouraging people to pursue Confucian training out of a desire for self-advancement.

Conclusion

Transformations of Chinese ethics resulting from the encounter with the West may be seen in the rather syncretic moral works of the Qing (1644–1911). In the work of revisionists like Kang Youwei (1858–1927), the portrait of Confucius as a social reformer was part of an effort not only to change the corrupt system of Manchu rule, but also exert a unifying effect in the manner that Christianity was perceived to have done in the West. A more critical attitude toward many aspects of traditional culture was taken by the 1919 May Fourth Movement, an attempt to reform the post-imperial Republican government. When the 1949 Communist Revolution established the People's Republic of China, the locus of new Confucian thinking and scholarship moved to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese diaspora. The destruction of the connection between the state, the performance of Confucian ritual, and the mastery of traditional texts significantly changed the nature of the modern tradition. This has effectively shifted the locus of its transmission from the imperial government to the international university.

Because Kongzi's vision of ethical self-transformation was intended to make a person worthy of stewardship, it was predicated on a particular model of familial and social relations. For this reason, ethics in the contemporary Chinese family is still predicated on preserving a connection between particular social institutions and personal morality. Perhaps this best explains why, while the understanding of both individual virtues and the optimal means of cultivating them changed significantly in response to factors like the arrival of Buddhism and changes in society, the goal of emulating a set of moral exemplars by developing ethical dispositions has remained constant.

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CHAPTER 81

Trajectories of Chinese Religious Ethics

Mark Berkson

The Chinese traditions that date from the classical period (ca. sixth to second centuries BCE) – most prominently the *Rujia* ("The School of the Scholars," or "Confucianism") and *Daojia* ("Philosophical Daoism," exemplified in the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*) – as well as the organized Daoist religious traditions (*Daojiao*) that date from the late Han (second to third centuries CE), establish a number of essential themes, terms, and concepts that have remained significant to the present. These give Chinese religious ethics a certain coherence, albeit a remarkably plural one with numerous tensions. To this set of indigenous traditions is added Indian Buddhism around the beginning of the common era, which constitutes the first major outside cultural and religious influence on China. Throughout China's history there has been only one example of foreign influence that rivals the Buddhist, namely the modern encounter with "the West." This encounter – far more violent, both literally and metaphorically, than the Indian Buddhist – shook China's foundations. It threatened China's political and cultural integrity and posed a major intellectual challenge to the inheritors of its religious traditions. The ways in which Chinese thinkers drew on the resources of and/or critiqued Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism in response to the challenges of the West constitutes one of the most significant aspects of modern and contemporary Chinese thought. These efforts have resulted in the development of distinctive forms of Chinese religious ethics characterized by an engagement with Western philosophy, democracy, economics, technology, natural sciences, and more recently, ecology, feminism, and postmodern thought. This entry considers common themes and current trajectories in Chinese ethics.

Common Threads

While "Chinese religious ethics" contains multiple traditions that differ from each other in significant ways, there is also a discernible set of ethical concerns, concepts, and orientations shared by the indigenous traditions and those that are "sinicized," such as Chinese Buddhism of the Tang Dynasty (618–907) and beyond. These themes include the following:

1 A prominent role for "nature" in the ethical framework. This includes the Confucian concern with the cultivation/realization of human nature; the Daoist emphasis on following the natural Dao; and the Buddhist focus on realizing Buddha Nature.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

2 A "this-worldly" emphasis focusing on practical considerations of how to live well, how to become a "good" or "true" person. There is not the kind of emphasis on the next world or afterlife that there is in Christianity and Islam, particularly among the indigenous Chinese traditions.
3 An emphasis on self-cultivation and a belief in human perfectibility. The goal is the achievement of sagehood, a possibility for any human being.
4 Syncretism and pluralism, seen in both thinkers who are deeply informed by multiple traditions, and in organizations and movements that bring together many traditions.
5 A notion of order and harmony as the highest goods, involving both an inner harmony within each human being (e.g. between mind and body) and, ultimately, a harmonization of heaven, earth, and humanity.

The Challenge of the West and Modernity

The unprecedented shock that China received in the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries came from the West both in the form of political–military challenges and new intellectual currents. Beginning in the 1840s, Chinese military defeats resulted in a loss of territory and the imposition of unequal treaties, producing feelings of humiliation and powerlessness in many Chinese. On the intellectual front, works of Western thought were becoming increasingly available in China.

Chinese intellectuals focused on the question of how China should adapt to meet these challenges while retaining its own identity in the process. One prominent response came in the form of the "Self-Strengthening Movement." It argued that China did not need to change institutions or philosophical foundations, but needed only to master Western arts like shipbuilding and weaponmaking in order to repel the "barbarians" and protect Chinese civilization.

Other thinkers, such as Kang Youwei (1858–1927), believed that China did need to make institutional changes, but that this could be done in an entirely Confucian manner. Rather than looking to a past Golden Age, Kang looked to a future utopia characterized by the Confucian virtue of *ren* (benevolence), egalitarianism (including equality of women), and universalism.

Some Chinese thinkers advocated the more radical goal of replacing traditional Chinese culture. One of the leading critics of Confucianism was Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), a founder of the Chinese Communist Party, who argued that Chinese ethics is the "ethics of a feudal age" and sharply attacked Confucianism for its patriarchy. Despite the harsh criticism often directed at Confucianism by communists, it is clear that Chinese communist ethics was influenced by Confucian thought. For example, Liu Shaoqi, a chief theoretician of the Chinese Communist Party, wrote "The Self-Cultivation of a Party Member" (the very title employs a Confucian theme), which emphasized the Confucian practice of moral self-reflection in party members.

Another radical critic of traditional Chinese thought was Hu Shi (1891–1962). Hu embraced American pragmatism, rationalism, and science, and was a harsh critic of Buddhism and Confucianism. Hu admired the restless striving toward advancement found in the West and argued that China's "culture of contentment" was an obstacle to progress.

Varieties of New Confucianism

The Confucian thinkers of the nineteenth century and beyond are often characterized as constituting the "Third Epoch" of Confucianism. The first was the classical period of the late Zhou, during which the foundations of the tradition were laid; the second was the "Neo-Confucianism" that arose from

Confucian thinkers' engagement with Buddhist thought. The Third Epoch, known as "Contemporary Neo-Confucianism" or, more commonly, "New Confucianism," is characterized by the response to, and integration with, Western thought through the critical examination and creative renewal of the tradition.

The thinkers of this period, often working in Taiwan and Hong Kong, emphasize the "religious" or "spiritual" dimension of Confucianism grounded in a cosmic source (*tian*, "Heaven") that is both transcendent and immanent. The vision has been described as "anthropocosmic," centered on humanity, but not in an "anthropocentric" way. It recognizes the micro/macrocosm interconnection and correspondence between the human and heavenly realms. The metaphysics is grounded in the notion of a single, integrated cosmos, one ultimate reality that embraces and harmonizes all individuals. This Way can be found within the individual human heart-mind (*xin*). Embodying the Way (*Dao*) is equivalent to revealing and manifesting the moral heart-mind, the heavenly endowment within each of us. The essential nature of this heart-mind (and thus the moral cosmos) is *ren*, the overarching Confucian virtue of "benevolence" or "humanity."

Most New Confucians have advocated a form of idealism and intuitionism, particularly as articulated by the Neo-Confucian Wang Yangming (1472–1529) and the Consciousness-Only (*Yogācāra*, *Weishi*) school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Most also exhibit a tendency toward creating syncretistic systems that combine Western and Chinese thought and feature a systematic moral metaphysics.

One feature of New Confucianism that has emerged largely as a result of the encounter with Western thought is an increased emphasis on equality (including political, economic, and gender equality) and a corresponding critique of Confucianism's traditional hierarchical worldview. In general, New Confucians have seen the value of democracy, science, human rights, and the importance of critical reason. They also caution against the excesses to which some Western ideas tend (e.g. rational*ism*, scient*ism*). They want to present a reformed and revitalized tradition that they believe will be seen as at least equal to Western thought, and amenable to fruitful harmonization with it.

Xiong Shili and His Students

There are debates over the point at which a coherent "New Confucian" school coalesced and who belongs in its ranks. One common picture emphasizes the lineage of philosopher Xiong Shili and his students, "second generation" members Xu Fuguan, Tang Junyi, and Mou Zongsan. Xiong Shili (1885–1968) brought together Neo-Confucian and Buddhist thought with *Yi Jing* cosmology and Western influences, such as science and nationalism. Xiong's emphasis was on unity, and he criticized the separations of *li* (principle) and *qi* (psychophysical energy), tranquility and activity, and substance and function. All of these dualities are merely different aspects of the same reality, the "Great Ultimate," which is a fundamental unity underlying all individual things. He employed the common Buddhist metaphor of water and waves to describe a pervasive ultimate reality that gives rise to individual instantiations that are not ultimately separable from it. Human beings can apprehend this reality with intuition, through which we "awaken to our original nature," which is *ren*. Echoing earlier Neo-Confucians, he wrote: "A man of *ren* forms one body with all things." Xiong advocated a balance of activity and quietude, a full participation in social life grounded in the pure, unchanging moral mind. Xiong emphasized an aphoristic formulation which was then picked up by later New Confucians: "Sage Within, King Without." This illustrates how realizing the moral self leads to social and political action.

Xu Fuguan (1903–1982) was the least interested in metaphysical speculation among the disciples of Xiong. He emphasized the practical dimension. One of his contributions was the positing of a "sense of anxiety" as a central feature of Chinese culture. Unlike the notion of existential *angst*, original sin, or *dukkha*, Xu's notion is a fully moral one. It describes the feeling of responsibility toward the world, arising from our conscience, that leads us to want to cultivate our moral selves and improve the world. Sages are those people who are true to their own nature by overcoming selfish desires and allowing the inner moral reality to manifest itself in virtuous action. For Xu and the others, Confucian ethics is deeply political. He argued that not only is Confucianism compatible with democracy (the people are seen as "heaven's representatives"), but that "democracy can obtain a more supreme ground from the revival of the Confucian spirit, and Confucianism can complete its actual objective structure through the establishment of a democratic polity."

The two other well-known students of Xiong, Tang Junyi (1909–1978) and Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), both constructed elaborate metaphysical systems to ground their ethics. Mou wrote that the trajectory of Chinese thought, unlike Western thought with its origins in Greek natural philosophy, had its origins in moral sage kings and always maintained ethics at the center. Mou's ethics takes the moral subject as a starting point, seeing intellectual/moral intuition as the foundation for systematic philosophy. He focused on "concern consciousness," a sense of worry and concern for other people and the world that is a source for the developing moral consciousness. Mou was profoundly influenced by Kant, whose distinction of noumena and phenomena played a central role in Mou's thought. Mou argued that we have two kinds of intuition: a sensible intuition that allows for the apprehension of worldly phenomena, and an intellectual intuition that enables us to grasp the noumenal. He believed that the intellectual/moral consciousness is rational, and that to follow it is to realize our nature. This results in happiness, the *summum bonum* understood as a fully moral achievement. The mind is "the transcendental foundation of moral behavior and is itself absolutely and infinitely universal."

The Third Generation and Beyond

Contemporary New Confucians are often called the "Third Generation" and share many characteristics with their predecessors. The best known among the contemporary New Confucians is Tu Weiming, who teaches at Harvard University. His work sympathetically presents the Confucian vision to a Western audience and contributes to its interpretation, reform, and modern application through commentaries and philosophical work. Tu advocates Confucian dialogue not only with other religions and Western philosophy, but also with psychoanalysis and Marxism (a departure from the strong anti-Marxist stances of most earlier New Confucians).

Tu's prominence is one example of the lively development of Chinese thought in the West. An aspect of this trend is the growing involvement of non-Chinese scholars in both the interpretation of Chinese thought (Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist) and active participation in constructive daological work. There are even "schools" of Chinese thought developing in the West. The most famous is the "Boston Confucians" that includes Chinese scholars living in the area and American thinkers such as Robert Cummings Neville and John Berthrong, who bring in Christian and Western philosophical perspectives to their Confucianism. Understood broadly, "Boston Confucians" can apply to all Confucians living in the West whose goal, in Neville's words, is "bringing Confucian philosophy into the world philosophic conversation." A related phenomenon is the growing presence of people who see themselves as having a

"multiple religious identity." Some members of the Boston Confucian school, for example, have a deep commitment to the values and worldviews of both Confucianism and Christianity, making them "Confucian Christians."

Another significant trend is the recent development of New Confucianism in mainland China and a growing dialogue between mainland and overseas Chinese. In the decades that followed the Communist Revolution, the Marxist–Maoist orthodoxy, enforced by the coercive power of the state, virtually silenced other forms of thought. After the ascension of Deng Xiaoping and the significant, though unpredictable, opening and reform that has occurred since, Chinese religious and philosophical traditions have enjoyed something of a renaissance. Conferences on Confucian thought have been held in China, volumes published, and a "China Confucius Foundation" established. One notable voice has been that of Fang Keli. He describes communism, liberalism, and New Confucianism as the three major streams of Chinese thought, all of which must work together for the modernization of China.

Global Confucian Philosophy

Three of the main areas in which the increasingly global Confucian philosophy is participating are ecology, feminism, and human rights. Thinkers representing Chinese traditions have pointed out that the Western "Enlightenment Mentality," while producing many admirable achievements, has also led to serious crises. One of the most severe crises is environmental. Some thinkers suggest that the anthropocentrism that characterizes much of the Abrahamic faiths' attitude toward the rest of creation has been at least partly responsible for the current problems. Chinese thinkers propose that the "anthropocosmic" Chinese view might provide a better foundation for a sustainable environmentalism. China's "naturalistic cosmology" is grounded in a notion of the Dao as the natural pattern underlying all things. It is characterized by an emphasis on the interdependence of all things and an underlying psychophysical foundation of *qi*. Confucian thinkers point out that this "continuity of being," and the possibility of attaining a harmonious triad of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, make Confucianism a good candidate for contributing vital perspectives to the environmental movement.

Many modern Chinese thinkers have taken seriously the challenge of feminist critique and have attempted to respond with reinterpretation and reform. Confucianism's patriarchal history might make it an unlikely candidate in terms of usability for feminist projects. Yet some scholars argue that if one strips Confucianism of its androcentrism and patriarchy, there are valuable resources for feminist thought. Confucianism emphasizes a nature that is shared by all human beings and the possibility of any human being, male or female, achieving sagehood. The primary Confucian virtue of *ren* has been compared with the feminist ethic of care. The relational Confucian self has been understood as somewhat analogous to a feminist conception of the self. Resources for a "Confucian feminism" (which might differ from, and thereby serve as a critical lens on, Western feminism) have been drawn from both classical Confucians as well as later thinkers such as the Ming Dynasty radical thinker Li Zhi (1527–1602). He believed that women, like men, can fully realize themselves through self-cultivation if their lives are not unfairly restricted.

Finally, there is a robust discourse occurring regarding Confucianism and human rights, with scholars representing a wide range of positions. Some have argued that "rights" is a concept conceived in the West and therefore inextricably tied to its culture and philosophical positions (e.g. a particular notion of the autonomous individual as rights-bearer and a law-based society). Rather than speak of

Chinese "rights," we should look at Chinese "rites." This provides an ethical alternative that should be explored by the West as a supplement to the discourse of rights. On the other end of the spectrum are those who argue that rights are universal, whether or not any particular culture recognizes them or has an indigenous notion of them. Some scholars point to the embrace of human rights notions by Chinese students and intellectuals during the uprising of June 1989 as evidence of their universal applicability. There are also scholars who argue that, while traditional China had no concept or term for "rights," such a notion was implicit in Chinese ethics. There are many thinkers who are now working on ways to bring together Chinese "concept clusters" (to use Henry Rosemont's term) involving virtues, the relational self, and role-specific obligations with Western clusters involving rights and the autonomous individual. The idea is to mutually enrich both and create a more "international philosophical language."

Developments in Daoist and Buddhist Ethics

Throughout history, Confucians have criticized Daoist and Buddhist quietude and detachment, particularly the Daoist notion of "non-action" and avoidance of political service, and Buddhist monasticism and emphasis on sitting meditation or simple chanting. The criticisms are somewhat unfair, as there are well-developed ethical dimensions in both Daoism and Buddhism. There is also some truth to that characterization when applied to certain forms of the two traditions. This has led modern Daoists and Buddhists to work on developing more socially engaged forms of their traditions.

Daoism

"Daoism" has been used to refer to both the philosophical–daological traditions represented most commonly by the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, and the multiple "religious"/liturgical traditions that originated in the Han Dynasty. One area in which an increasing number of Daoist thinkers and scholars are working is ecological thought. Some scholars caution against the tendency to think of Laozi and Zhuangzi as allies in environmentalism (particularly because of the dimension of non-action and noninterference in these texts, which would undermine the activist orientation that most environmentalists endorse). However, many believe that the worldview informed by "philosophical Daoism" provides a way of thinking about and acting toward the nonhuman natural realm that produces a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship. The Dao is understood as the natural pattern that underlies all living things, and is described as a creative, nurturing force. The texts caution about interference with its processes and over-reliance on human intelligence. They advocate a way of acting that is fully in accordance with the movement of the Dao (*wu wei*, "effortless action"), rather than self-conscious striving. This would produce a tendency to "let Nature be," so that the Dao will act as harmonizer of all things. Harmonization occurs when each thing acts *ziran*, in accordance with what is "so of itself" without artificial impositions. While there is what might be called an "ethic" involving harmonization, the guidance of nature, and the undermining of selfishness and rationalism, there is not the sense of a "moral cosmos" in the Confucian sense. The cosmos is generally seen as amoral (e.g. not characterized by benevolence) and yet harmonization with it, living in accordance with its way, can be seen as the *summum bonum*. Daoism does not share the Confucian belief that human beings occupy a higher place than other natural beings in the order of

things. Daoism holds that the very things that set human beings apart (e.g. the mind's making of distinctions and creation of categories) bring about our downfall.

Daoist "religious" traditions also provide valuable resources for ethics. From the beginning, moral codes were an essential component of Daoist communities. Many Daoists posit a link between moral action and one's spiritual and physical states (immoral action can produce illness, and can be healed through rituals of expiation). Virtue has been connected with longevity or immortality, and Daoist sages are seen as having perfected moral qualities. Altruism and compassion are common features of the sages featured in the Daoist religious traditions such as *Tianshi* (Celestial Masters), *Lingbao* (Numinous Talisman), and *Quanzhen* (Complete Perfection). Much of what can be described as "Daoist self-cultivation" involves the elimination of selfish desires to achieve harmony with the Dao.

There are two main existing Daoist religious traditions – *Zhengyi* ("Orthodox Unity") and *Quanzhen*. Members of these traditions have increasingly become involved in environmental action. For example, Zhang Jiyu, the 65th descendant of Zhang Daoling, considered to be the founding figure of religious Daoism, has written about ecological consciousness from a Daoist perspective and publicly calls upon Daoists to put these views into practice. He writes: "We shall spread the ecological teachings of Daoism, lead all Daoist followers to abide in the teachings of self-so or non-action ... and preserve and protect the harmonious relationship of all things with Nature ... We shall continue the Daoist ecological tradition by planting trees and cultivating forests."

Daoist resources have also been applied to recent work on feminism. Historically, the Daoist religious communities have featured women in leadership roles and as sages to an extent not found in the other Chinese religious traditions. For example, there are Daoist nuns in contemporary Taiwan who lead temples, and they are committed to Daoism's engagement with the modern world, particularly through environmental action. The philosophical texts, with their emphasis on either the need to harmoniously balance the *yin* (female) and *yang* (male) energies, or the primacy of the *yin* (which, seen as "yielding," "non-competitive," and "soft," has the power to ultimately overcome the "hard"), are seen as having much to offer contemporary feminists. Some feminists, who articulate a view grounded in nature, focus on the descriptions of the Dao as fertile, nurturing, and characterized by "feminine" values. Others who have a more "cultural constructivist position," emphasize the theme, found in both the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, of the artificiality of all dualities and the complementarity and mutual dependence of all apparent opposites, including male–female.

Buddhism

While Buddhist scholarship was eclipsed by Neo-Confucian developments during the late imperial period, Buddhism in China enjoyed a revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, along with the other religions, it fared very poorly from 1949 to the 1980s in mainland China, with its nadir during the Cultural Revolution. Since the 1980s, fortunes have improved in mainland China. In addition, a dramatic Buddhist revival occurred in Taiwan following the establishment of the Nationalist government in 1949.

The best-known figure of the Buddhist revival is the abbot Tai Xu (1889–1947). Beginning in the 1920s, he started a reform movement that advocated social involvement and an approach to education that taught secular subjects in addition to Buddhist studies. Tai Xu believed that the Buddhist emphasis on universal compassion could help bring together the various ethnic groups that make up the Chinese

population and thereby strengthen China. The movement connects an emphasis on the revival of monastic life with social engagement, including a central role for the monasteries in helping the poor.

Engaged Buddhists see liberation from *dukkha* (suffering, unsatisfactoriness) as something that can occur not only at the level of the individual practitioner, but also at the social, political, economic, and environmental levels. The very notion of interdependence shows that these levels cannot be separated. Engaged Buddhism often makes use of notions such as interdependence and mutual interpenetration (a theme with powerful ecological applications), no-self, Buddha Nature (a nature shared by all beings), and skillful means to ground the ethical praxis. The bodhisattva ideal, a selfless commitment to work within this world in order to relieve the suffering of others, occupies a prominent place in this religious ethics.

A noteworthy feature of the Buddhist revival in Taiwan is the prominent role of women, who constitute the majority among the thousands of monastics ordained after 1949. One example is the Buddhist nun Ven. Zheng Yan, the founder of Taiwan's largest charitable association. The foundation supports hospitals and free clinics, education and environmental protection, among other things, and Zheng Yan calls on people to "wash the earth clean and purify people's hearts." The ethical commitments are connected with a metaphysical picture. She believes that when people awaken to their original nature, the result will be a spontaneous manifestation of love for all sentient beings. When acted upon, that love produces "a Pure Land of peace and joy."

Fo Guang Shan, another significant movement, was founded by Master Xing Yun. His personal experience of war and poverty moved him to focus on social action (including the founding of medical clinics, orphanages, wildlife preserves, and educational institutions). The group, which advocates the equality of men and women, has an international scope (supporting development efforts in different parts of the world) and has been involved in intrafaith (bringing forms of Buddhism together) and interfaith dialogue.

Over the last few decades, Buddhists, more than the members of any other Asian religious tradition, have engaged in interfaith dialogue with other traditions, particularly Christians and Jews. There has been an increase in people with "dual religious citizenship" who might call themselves "Zen Christians" or "Buddhist Jews." Models of pluralism, syncretism, and multiple religious identity have long existed in much of East Asia. They are beginning to take shape increasingly in the West.

One frequently addressed theoretical issue is the relationship of ethics (often represented by the notion of *śīla* – moral practice in accordance with the precepts, including no harming, lying, stealing, abusing intoxicants or sexual misconduct) and soteriology. Nirvāna is sometimes portrayed as beyond ordinary moral distinctions and therefore transcending ethics. There is a division between those who believe that ethics is a preliminary step to be left behind upon enlightenment, and those who believe that an enlightened Buddha is one who manifests ethical perfection (e.g. the full realization of the Bodhisattva perfections) and thus is never "beyond good and evil." To what degree *upāya*, or skillful means aimed at liberation, can lead to a suspension of the ethical is also the subject of debate.

Popular Religion

There are countless examples of syncretic religious groups or societies in China that have flourished for periods of time. The best-known contemporary Chinese movement, Falun Gong, is a synthesis of Daoist and Buddhist elements. It involves notions of enlightenment and physical and spiritual power that can

be achieved through the psychophysical exercises of *qigong*. The group has become well known in light of the crackdown by the Chinese government. Their practice involves exercises that combine movement, breath work, and meditation. Falun Gong, as with other modern syncretic groups, has an ethical dimension, focusing on three main virtues: truth (*zhen*), goodness (*shan*), and forbearance (*ren*). The assumption is that moral cultivation must accompany the physical and contemplative exercises in order for one to achieve enlightenment. Through dedication to the practice, individuals become happy and a harmonious social environment results.

Popular Chinese religious practice focuses on earthly, life-affirming values such as happiness, longevity, and wealth (these goods being represented by deities who can help people achieve them). While much of popular religion does have an element of *quid pro quo* ethics involving gods, ghosts, and ancestors, it also serves as a source of moral education. Like China's elite daological traditions, popular religion is highly syncretic. Popular ethics is characterized by the strong role of ancestors, filial piety, education, and virtue cultivation from Confucianism. It is also informed by notions of karma and hell regions derived from Buddhism. It can be difficult to disentangle the pervasive influence of Daoist religion from that of general "folk religion" in the overall lives of most Chinese people. Chinese deities, for example, combine a bureaucratic model often seen in Daoism (with representation at the home, local, and "imperial" levels) with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, numerous ghosts and popular gods (such as Mazu), and ancestors. These beings are to be worshipped, revered, propitiated, or petitioned as appropriate. If the deity is treated properly and not angered, one will avoid harm or enjoy benefits. Many Chinese believe that one is watched by a range of deities, both within the body (a Daoist contribution) and without. The deities keep records and decide on rewards and punishments, with consequences for one's lifespan and afterlife existence. Beyond this results-oriented relationship, people express attitudes and feelings such as gratitude, piety, and awe, through ritual, chanting, praying, etc. The "moods and motivations" connected with religious belief and practice certainly have an impact in the ethical sphere.

Conclusion

The Chinese religions' approaches to syncretism and harmonization, along with their "this-worldly" emphasis on nature, interdependence, self-cultivation, and the achievement of sagehood, make them good dialogue partners for the Abrahamic traditions and valuable participants in the global ethical conversation. Having had a profound influence on the East Asian cultural sphere for around two millennia, Chinese religious ethics has now begun to have an impact on the rest of the world. The future trajectory of Chinese religious ethics will likely involve an increasingly global character, a continuation of interfaith dialogue, and philosophical and social engagement with the vital issues of our time, such as ecology, feminism, human rights, and religious pluralism.

Developments in Chinese religious ethics over the last two centuries illustrate both the continuity provided by the core concepts and values that have characterized the Chinese traditions since the classical period, and also the transformations that have occurred as the traditions responded to the confrontations with the West and modernity. Chinese and non-Chinese thinkers alike will continue to apply, develop, and transform the rich ethical resources of China's religious traditions.

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7 African Religions

CHAPTER 82

African Ethics?

Barry Hallen

Controversial Paradigms

Western scholars have tended to use the word "morality" rather than "ethics" when discussing values in the African context (Beidelman 1993). The presumed reasons for this may be hypothesized as follows. First, the articulated systematic thinking underlying these societies' moral codes is minimal, and so it is better not to obscure this point by associating stipulated forms of moral behavior with the name of a discipline, "ethics," that is defined primarily by articulated systematic thinking and the reasoned principles it produces. Second, morality in the African context is practically oriented, in that its primary task is to inculcate and regulate behavior that is socially acceptable or unacceptable.

African intellectuals and scholars have protested vigorously about such studies (Gbadegesin 1991; Gyekye 1995; Wiredu 1996), which falsely portray African societies as communities where individuals mindlessly submit to moral values (characterized as "traditions") that are inherited from the distant past, that continue to be enforced virtually unchanged in the present, and that will be passed on to future generations in an uncritical manner because their ultimate justification is itself an appeal to tradition. "We believe these things are right (or wrong) because this is what we inherited from the forefathers".

One of the earliest and still influential publications on this subject by an African scholar is John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy*. Note the plural and singular forms, respectively, of the nouns that constitute the title. This might be taken to imply that, depending upon the particular African culture, the relationship between religion and philosophy can vary. This would mean that, although there is a common philosophical core to all of Africa's cultures (a point now subject to controversy), there are a variety of religions ("native," "traditional" religions) that may or may not impinge upon that philosophy. "Traditional religions are not universal: they are tribal or national. Each religion is bound and limited to the people among whom it has evolved" (Mbiti 1970, 5). As far as morality is concerned, this would mean that there are cultures in Africa in which moral values derive directly from a divine source (Idowu 1962), as well as cultures in which the linkage between the religious and the ethical is less significant. "There are other societies in which people do not feel that they can offend against God ... that God has no influence on people's moral values" (Mbiti 1970, 270). The latter would apply to a culture in which the ultimate justification for morality is humanistic – these are the chosen values because they are deemed

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

most likely to secure human happiness – a viewpoint about which there will be a good deal more to say in what follows (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992, 193–198).

The more controversial implication of the title is that there is a single set of philosophical (including ethical) principles that underlie all of Africa's cultures. Whether Mbiti's divergent views on religion and philosophy in the African context would themselves remain consistent becomes a point worthy of consideration, insofar as the same ethical/moral principles and values would be held common to all of Africa regardless of whether they had a divine or secular origin. Mbiti eventually comes down in a fairly one-sided manner on behalf of the divine. "Most African peoples accept or acknowledge God as the final guardian of law and order and of the moral and ethical codes" (1970, 269). He affirms that religion permeates virtually every aspect of African life, as well as viewing African society as an organic whole (he prefers the term "corporate") whereby individual immorality is also communal immorality is also divine immorality.

One unfortunate consequence of this paradigm has been to reaffirm the portrayal of African societies as places where the individual moral consciousness ("Regardless of what my community says is right, what ought I do in this situation?" – MacIntyre 1967, 84–109) was denied in an uncompromising manner. Africa again is presented as an ethical environment where behavior and compliance with rules is the praiseworthy norm, and the role of the individual consciousness in determining or evaluating "traditional" norms inherited from some virtually mythical past is of no real consequence. "Therefore, the essence of African morality is that it is more 'societary' than 'spiritual'; it is a morality of 'conduct' rather than a morality of 'being.' This is what one might call 'dynamic ethics' ... for it defines what a person *does* rather than what he *is*" (Mbiti 1970, 279).

Divinely Inspired or Humanistic Ethics?

In what follows, interest will center upon the debate among philosophers of Africa as to whether a variety of ethical principles and moral values that may be taken as truly indigenous to Africa's cultures are directly divinely inspired and sanctioned or are more properly seen as of secular origin in societies that are best typed as humanitarian in orientation. One noteworthy consequence of this debate has been the reinstatement of articulated, reasoned ethical principles as intrinsic to the justification of more specific moral values in these societies (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992, 198). Another is that the importance of moral judgments made by the individual in determining and affirming what is or is not ethical in a particular situation has been reasserted (Hallen 2000). These findings have been achieved via the research of a new generation of African scholars, as well as via a vigorous critique of Western views of how thought must be expressed in order to qualify as genuinely philosophical, and thereby ethical, in character.

Though knowledge in cultures that are significantly oral may be expressed in different forms than is conventional in the paradigmatically literate West, this does not mean the character of thought underlying those forms is different (e.g. emotive and prereflective rather than reasoned and critical). Myth, poetry, song, verse, proverb, and story, as well as such philosophical staples as language usage and discursive ideas (social or individual), can also be used to express viewpoints that are of theoretical (as well as practical) significance.

Certainly, most Africans have never felt deficient in this regard and were taken aback to find themselves being characterized as such. It was primarily Western scholars, associating such forms or

expressions of thought with relatively underdeveloped powers of ratiocination, who persevered in drawing this conclusion. But it is philosophers familiar with the intellectual contexts and content of both Western and African cultures who are challenging it as ethnocentric and insisting that the boundaries of philosophy must be redrawn if it too is not to be labeled the "traditional" beliefs of just one other "tribe" – those of the so-called "West." This need not mean that orthodox philosophical approaches such as analytic philosophy (Hallen 2002), phenomenology/hermeneutics (Serequeberhan 1994), or Marxism (Fashina 1989) become irrelevant to the African ethical context. Rather, with the appropriate adaptations made to facilitate their working within that cultural context, they too may continue to provide insights of genuine value.

In order to place in historical context the claim that ethical principles and moral values in indigenous African cultures can be of secular origin, and therefore may be best characterized as humanitarian, it is important to recall that initially (Western) scholars and missionaries did not even consider this a possibility. The vocabulary that associated the religious with the moral was demeaning, to say the least – emphasizing such terms as "fetishes," "idols," "rituals," "taboos," "juju," "cults," "witchcraft," etc. – all involving exotic beliefs about various "forces," "spirits," or "deities" characterized as "pagan" and unenlightened by comparison with truly "world" religions like Christianity and Islam. (There are a number of published studies that detail how Christianity and Islam are themselves being indigenized – transformed – so as to suit the African context: e.g. Peel 2000.) The image of "tribes" of "natives" bowing down to "fetishes" that were associated with rigidly enforced moral absolutes ("traditions") was more compatible with the portrayal of societies that had been characterized as "primitive" (precursor to the supposedly less offensive "traditional"). This is why, in what follows, more attention will be devoted to recent secular, humanistic renderings of ethics in specific African cultures. Although, to do justice to the relation between indigenous religions and moral values, it will also be necessary to examine the arguments of those new generations of African scholars and intellectuals in this respect as well.

Contemporary Positions

A growing number of contemporary African philosophers maintain that the relationship between religion and morality in Africa's indigenous cultures has been misrepresented by claims about the supposed permeation of religion into all facets of African life. The Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu aims to counter this by maintaining: "African conceptions of morals would seem to be of a humanistic orientation" (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992, 194). Wiredu suggests this hypothesis may be confirmed via studies of the basis for morality in individual African societies. To practice what he is "preaching," Wiredu himself has published numerous studies of morality in his native Akan culture.

In what follows, interest will center on Wiredu's writings, as well as those of his Ghanaian colleague, the philosopher Kwame Gyekye. The case they make for the secular basis of morality in Akan culture is compelling. It arises from five specific points:

1 "The remarkable fact that there is no such thing as an institutional religion in Akan culture" (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992, 194). The idea that the cosmos has been created by God with various deities and quasi-physical forces within it is a given. But their primary relevance to human beings is that these deities and forces can be used for personal and/or utilitarian ends if correctly addressed and respected.

The motive for doing so is primarily to achieve some form of practical end. The idea of "worshiping" such beings because of their intrinsic holiness is foreign. On the other hand, an attitude of "unconditional reverence and absolute trust" (1992, 195) is extended to the Supreme Being (or God). This is conjoined with the belief that *so* perfect a Being is not in need of worship – in fact might not even welcome it – and therefore remains somehow distant from the created world (Gyekye 1995, 196).

2 The humanitarian origins and focus of morality (in Africa generally) are further justified and explained by Gyekye because of the absence of a prophetic religious tradition:

> The doctrinal system of a religion *revealed* by God to a single person, the founder, invariably includes elaborate prescriptions to guide the ethical life of the people who can accept and practice that religion. A coherent system of ethics can be founded upon such divinely revealed commands ... It is clear, however, that traditional African religion cannot be said to be a religion whose doctrines were embodied in a revelation. (Gyekye 1995, 206)

3 Given points (1) and (2), the basis for morality must derive directly from humanity. It is human beings who are left to devise systems of values ("all value is derived from human interests"). Furthermore, an essential motivating factor is the consensus that "human fellowship is the most important of human needs" (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992, 194). The good is what is regarded as promoting human interests as defined by human beings themselves.

4 The primary source of moral instruction is the family. "Nor, relatedly, are any such institutions ["institutionalized" religion as a source of moral values] felt to be necessary for the dissemination of moral education or the reinforcement of the will to virtue. The theater of moral upbringing is the home, at parents' feet and within range of kinsmen's inputs. The mechanism is precept, example and correction" (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992, 195).

5 All of the above points mean that religion in Akan society is said to be "purely personal, being just a tenet of an individual's voluntary metaphysic, devoid of social entanglements" (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992, 195).

What becomes of interest are the specific values espoused by such a culture to flesh out what is said to be its basic humanitarian orientation, and what are said to be the ethical principles that underlie and justify those more specific values. The fundamental ethical principles underlying the more specific moral values distinctive of Akan society and culture are two: (1) an obverse form of the Golden Rule: "Do not unto others what you would not they do unto you" (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992, 198) and its corollary (2) individual interest cannot and therefore should not be divorced from communal well-being. "In Akan moral thought the sole criterion of goodness is the welfare or well-being of the community" (Gyekye 1995, 132).

The specific values derived from these principles are "kindness," "generosity," "faithfulness," "honesty," "truthfulness," "compassion," "hospitality," and whatever "brings peace, happiness, dignity and respect" (Gyekye 1995, 132). All of these are said to promote *social* well-being. This should not be taken to mean that an individual's personal interests become totally subordinate to those of the community. Communal and individual interests are balanced so that self-interest encompasses the welfare of the community along with that of the individual (Gbadegesin 1991, 64).

Sanctions play an essential role in the *constitution* of morality in Akan society. But these sanctions, as well, are primarily social insofar as they involve the diminution of an individual's integrity and thereby

personhood if, for example, self-interest becomes a motive that has negative consequences for communal well-being. Gyekye ridicules Western philosophers who tout the individual's moral "reason" as the sole basis for doing what one "ought" as unrealistic and impractical. It takes a social context and socially imposed sanctions for morality to become a real force on purely practical grounds (1995, 139–141).

The revised role of religion in this overall humanitarian ethical and moral schema is said to be supportive rather than foundational. In certain situations religious beliefs serve as reinforcement for moral behavior that, on logically independent humanitarian grounds, is considered improper. Both Gyekye and the Nigerian philosopher Segun Gbadegesin (1991, 67–78) regard the function of religion in this regard as pragmatic – it can serve as a further, though less direct or powerful, incentive for the individual to be moral. "It may appear puzzling that the practical aspects of a morality whose principles are not grounded in religion should [also] be animated by religion; yet this position does not involve any logical inconsistency" (Gyekye 1995, 141).

The individual person has a self-conscious sense of what is right and wrong (or conscience) in addition to these relatively external sanctions. Indeed, the role of individual moral judgments, and therefore responsibility for one's actions, are another foundational element of Akan ethics and morality. The connection between this individual moral sense and the communal is made explicit when Gyekye argues it "is not innate to man, but [is] something acquired through socialization, through habituation, through moral experience" (Gyekye 1995, 143).

A final dimension to the ethical in the Akan context is the importance attached to "character." When one is said to have a good character, one is awarded the status of being a "good person," which means that one can then be depended upon consciously to try to do the right thing in any situation. This is determined primarily on the basis of behavior and therefore socially, but such behavior is of course thought to arise from individualized and self-conscious intentions.

Among the Yoruba people in Nigeria a good character appears to have epistemological consequences as well, in that such individuals are regarded as reliable sources of information generally. If being good also involves being honest about what one truly knows (or does not know), then ethical values also involve epistemological virtues (Hallen 2000). Among the Yoruba this conjunction of the ethical with the epistemological is further reinforced by the involvement of the aesthetic, in that a person who has a moral character that can be depended upon is also said to embody the highest form of beauty. In other words, the individual who is said to have a good character embodies the highest paradigm of the beautiful, with physical beauty, by comparison, coming in a distant second (Hallen 2000).

Conclusion

Does the emphasis upon being practically relevant diminish a moral system's theoretical integrity? Does the fact that moral precepts must be seen to work in practice – to produce results that benefit both the individual and society – transform theory into dogma, precept into command? The response that seems to be coming from philosophers in and of Africa is a resounding "no." The point of the ethical and the moral *is* to make a difference in people's lives. This need not mean that the importance of the underlying ethical principles is diminished. What it does indicate is that the process of deriving specific moral values from those principles that promote a moral society (and individual character) is of no less importance to their justification.

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CHAPTER 83

Origins of African Ethics

Segun Gbadegesin

What is African Religion?

John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* is arguably the vehicle that conveys many Westerners to the corridors of African traditional religion. It is as controversial as it is famous for some of its claims. Two of those claims have been subjected to vicious attacks by African scholars: (1) his assertion that traditional Africans have no concept of future time and (2) his claim that Africans are in all things religious (Mbiti 1989, 1).

While these claims are controversial, they do not define Mbiti's seminal contribution to African traditional religions. Indeed, there are two other claims or assertions by Mbiti that appear to me to strike at the core of African traditional religions. Unfortunately, Mbiti himself seems to have underplayed their significance or indeed may have had a negative attitude toward them. One of them (found in the same volume) is that "because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life (Mbiti 1989, 2). The second is found in Mbiti's *Introduction to African Religions*, where he claims that African religions "evolved slowly through many centuries, as people responded to the situations of their life and reflected upon their experiences" (Mbiti 1991, 14; see also Masolo 1994).

Both of these claims define the core of African traditional religions. First, religion in traditional Africa is the outcome of reflection on life's circumstances, the vagaries of nature, the inexplicable splendor of the universe, the blue sky, the rugged mountains, and the deep ocean. The loneliness of humans in the midst of these wonders could be perplexing. A religious attitude is the response of the traditional African. The response of the traditional African is one of reverence and devotion, but one that is motivated by the well-being of the human. Thus, for the traditional African contemplating the universe, there is an "apprehension, awareness, or conviction of the existence of a supreme being, or more widely, of supernatural powers or influences controlling one's own, humanity's or nature's destiny," and thus religion, as Webster's dictionary defines it. Yet this manifestation of religion on the African landscape is not an abstract idea. It is purposeful; it is utilitarian. In traditional Africa, humanity is not made for religion, religion is made for humanity.

The Akan attitude to the gods is typical of most African cultures. Kwame Gyekye (1995, 137) has observed that a deity that fails to fulfill a promise would be censured and abandoned by the people. And

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Busia notes that "the gods are treated with respect if they deliver the goods, and with contempt if they fail ... Attitudes to ... [the gods] depend upon their success, and vary from healthy respect to sneering contempt" (1954, 197).

The other claim makes sense in the light of the foregoing. If religion has an instrumental role, if the gods are valued for what they can deliver, then there can be no unbridgeable gulf between the sacred and the secular. Consider the case of the worker in the field. The effectiveness of the gods in his life must be felt in terms of how well his crops do, how safe he is from the wild. He would be much inclined to do his own part, make the necessary supplications to the gods, and expect the logical results. The demarcation between work and religion is eliminated and the secular and the sacred merge. But if there is no unique sacred space, can we still speak of "religion"?

One implication of this feature of religion in traditional Africa should not escape us: the gods are subject to human evaluation and assessment. This does not suggest any possibility of escape from religion as such. With the uncertainties of the stormy world around, one needs a safe anchor. One needs to shop around to identify a god that might provide that safe anchor. This does not mean that one can escape the need for a safe anchor. The religious shoreline has numerous anchors as well as the tools for choosing one. In the case of the Yoruba, the tool is Orunmila, the god of wisdom or divination. A new baby born into the world today needs to have a divination with respect to her destiny, including the god to which she would be devoted. This god will afford her protection and provision. But since it is also believed that uncertainties mark the life of humans, the expectation and advice is that an oracle should be consulted. In this case, it may well be that the baby-become-teenager needs a new or additional god for maximum protection and provision. Changing gods or having additional gods does not entail escape from religion. It is the fulfillment of religion.

The features of African traditional religion just discussed are not exhaustive, but they are the most relevant to this entry, which is mainly a discussion of the origins of ethical thought in traditional religions. To this I now move with a transitional thought. Masolo complains of African scholars (Mulago, Bahoken, and Mbiti) who "have been eager to demonstrate that African religious concepts could be explained in terms of Greek metaphysics" and then argues that their demonstration "has not been convincing. There is nothing which proves that the idea of unity is superior to that of multiplicity or pluralism, or that monotheism is superior to or develops from polytheism" (Masolo 1994, 122). I agree with this observation. However, Masolo also notes that while it is frequently stated that Africans are notoriously religious, the loose intertwining of religion with nearly all aspects of lives could be a weakness responsible for the demise of the traditional religions. "There may be attempts," he notes, "to drag religion unnecessarily into situations requiring simple practical approaches" (Masolo 1994, 123).

The problem with this way of looking at the matter is that it takes away with the left hand the recognition of the uniqueness of African traditional religions that has previously been offered by the right hand. Scholars do not impose uniqueness on traditional African religions; rather, it is due to the conception of the worldly nature of religion by traditional Africans themselves. It is the original contribution of traditional Africans to religious theory and practice. Religion is not separable from life because it is part of life and it is for life as we live it; it is *this-worldly*. Religion is to benefit human and communal life; hence the conception of the other world in the image of this world. Religion has to be constantly there, even at beer parties, as Mbiti notes. It is not unusual that many of the rules and prohibitions of Christianity – monogamy, for instance – rightly or wrongly, are not part of the core of African traditional religion. There are prudential injunctions on matters of relationship, including monogamy and polygamy. Orunmila, the

Yoruba god of wisdom, counsels his devotees against polygamous relationships simply on account of its internal problems. Religion functions for the well-being of the people. So does morality.

The phenomena of morality comprise moral beliefs, rules, principles, and problems. The purpose of a "morality" is the furtherance of a harmonious relationship within a particular society, the control and enhancement of its other institutions and individuals, the protection of its land and its individual members, and as a result of success in that area, the survival of that society as an entity. If this is the case, all societies certainly have the incentive to develop a vibrant moral institution for the promotion of their communal existence and individual enhancement. They may adopt different strategies and/or develop different emphases. For some, the moral institution will emerge through the instrumentality of the state. For others, religion and spirituality may be the catalyst that shapes and confirms morality.

The Moral Outlook of African Religious Traditions

We should begin by addressing the question: What is morality to traditional Africans? What purpose does it serve? How do they relate to it? Indeed, how do they come about the idea of a moral institution? Like other cultural traditions, morality comes into play in African cultures as a system of rules and practices for the purpose of maintaining the social order and enhancing the individual's process of self-actualization. These two goals are not exclusive. The enhancement of the self-actualization of individuals is an important means of maintaining the social order. A community with self-respecting individuals will have no problem maintaining its social order. Conversely, maintaining the social order is an important means of enhancing the self-actualization of individuals. A community that succeeds in maintaining its social order is one in which individual members can have the peace of mind and an atmosphere conducive to the realization of their full potentials. This is the way that traditional African societies understand the matter. This is what the process of socialization is about. It is also the main goal of moral education.

How does religion come into this picture? Is there a specific set of values and morals that come out of religion and serve as ingredients in the moral menu of traditional Africans? In *Introduction to African Religions*, Mbiti discusses the parts of African religion. These include beliefs, practices, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, values and morals, and religious officials and leaders (Mbiti 1991, 11–13). These are what Bolaji Idowu also refers to as the structure of African religion. We may gain a good understanding of African religion if we focus on these features or structure.

If morals and values are a part of traditional religion, in what sense should we understand this? What does it mean to discuss values and morals as part of African religion? It could mean any or all of the following: (1) religion gives birth to societal morals and values; (2) religion shapes morals and values; (3) religion serves as an enforcer of societal morals and values; (4) religion is a source or origin of some specific morals and values. Now, it is fair to say that of these possible interpretations of the claim, Mbiti has the broadest sympathy for (1), which is all-inclusive. What is the claim and what is its support?

According to Mbiti, morality comes from God to Africans. He attributes this verdict to the belief of African peoples themselves. "It is believed by African peoples that God gave moral order to people so that they might live happily and in harmony with one another. Through the moral order, customs and institutions have arisen in all societies to safeguard the life of the individual and the community of which he

is part" (Mbiti 1991, 41). This statement may be interpreted in various ways, two of which are crucial. First, it could mean simply that the moral order – the order that exists in the African moral realm – is ordained by God. So God brought the moral institution into being at the same time that God created the African universe. In this case, it would not have mattered what humans did, the moral order would be there to manifest itself and the morality that it represents.

There is a second and more adequate interpretation. Traditional Africans believe that God gives the moral sense to each person, and they use the moral sense to fashion the moral order and its structure. The moral sense includes the sense of right and wrong, the sense of decency, the sense of fittingness, appropriateness, beauty and ugliness, the sense of straightness and crookedness, etc. Understood in this way, the moral sense is contextual, spatial, and temporal. For what is appropriate in one context, in one community, may be inappropriate in another. It is not appropriate to use water recklessly in the desert region, but such a rule is unnecessary in the rain forest. It is the moral sense that helps to discern this distinction. Human beings create the moral order through the use of the moral sense given to them by God. This is the case with traditional Africans.

The foregoing position does not, by itself, suggest a severance of all connections between religion and morality. This seems clear if we focus on the other three interpretations that we have identified. First, it is true that religion shapes morality. If in fact traditional Africans believe that they receive their moral sense from God, this is a crucial way in which religion shapes morality. Second, however, the various contents of our moral norms are also influenced and shaped by religion. To see that this is the case, we only need to compare Christianity and its impact on the African moral realm with traditional religions. In traditional Yoruba religion, as in many African religions, the gods are strict with regard to punishment for particular moral infractions. Adultery, for instance, is punishable by a huge fine and forms of restitution to the aggrieved family. This is not the case in Christianity. In Yoruba religion, it is believed that whoever swears on the altar of Sango, the god of thunder and justice, and breaks his or her oath, will be punished with death. Though Christians swear on the Bible to assure others of their fidelity, there is no belief that any empirical consequences would follow should they renege on their promise. In this sense, religion shapes the morals and values of the people, and traditional African religion is no exception.

It also seems clear, third, that religion serves as an enforcer of morals and values. Many African religions have little or no conception of a heaven where punishment is given to bad or evil people. What they have is worse, namely the belief that punishment will be given here on earth towards the end of a person's life. Such punishment may include total reversal of fortune. Since no one knows what the future holds, there is a terrifying thought that one may go from an extreme of fortune to one of misfortune. Therefore, there is an interest in pleasing the gods to avoid that kind of fate.

There are certain morals and values that are specifically religious in origin and content. They come out of religious beliefs and practices and they are mobilized for the purpose of observance and advancement of religious practices. These are found in the injunctions of particular gods through their priests for their devotees. The purposes of this class of moral injunctions are ostensibly devotional, but in reality, they are utilitarian. For instance, the devotees of Obatala, the Yoruba god of creation, are enjoined to refrain from alcohol. The purpose is supposedly devotional and referential, to make them clean and sober before the god. But it is also utilitarian and one variant of the myth of Obatala supports this interpretation. According to the Yoruba cosmogony, Obatala was the divinity that Olodumare, the Yoruba supreme being, sent to create the earth. But as he was descending from heaven, he saw a group of palm trees and he helped

himself to some of its juice. He got drunk and slept it off. Olodumare had to send Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba, to finish the job. Thus, Oduduwa took the glory for creating the earth and Obatala never forgot the embarrassment. So he instructed his devotees to avoid alcohol. The devotees, in turn, understand this as a taboo, for the simple reason that it is so enjoined by the divinity they serve. It is a norm of behavior that is clearly religious in origin. This does not mean that a secular rationale may not be found for the norm. Indeed, from the story behind it, the injunction itself has its origin in the embarrassing experience of the divinity after his consumption of alcohol. Therefore, there are both religious (injunction of a divinity) as well as secular (avoidance of embarrassment) reasons for the devotees of Obatala to follow the norm thus enjoined by the divinity (see Idowu 1962).

There are norms of behavior that traditional Africans have come to accept as regular norms without raising any question about their origin. What is crucial for them is that these norms and moral codes have been effective in the furtherance of their communal lives and have served as important guiding lights in their daily lives. Indeed, a significant aspect of the moral outlook of a number of traditional Africans is that it does not really matter to them what is the source of the norms they live by. The communal nature of their lives ensures that they accept the norms that work for the survival and prosperity of their community.

The foregoing point deserves a modification. We must distinguish between the traditional thinkers, that is, the philosophical sages on the one hand, and the priests and practitioners of traditional religion on the other. The first group looks further and deeper to identify the rationale for moral injunctions in the secular world, in terms of the consequences for human beings, though, in a minority, their existence in traditional societies cannot be doubted (Oruka 1990). The second group, the practitioners of traditional religion, is guided by the pronouncements of the gods through the priests and priestesses. They abide by the injunctions because they want to please the gods. For them, the moral norms are the injunctions of the divinities, and are thus religious norms, just as the natural is the spiritual. Their position or attitude is not significantly different than the Christian priest/parishioner in terms of where authority resides in matters of morality.

Significantly, because of the structure of traditional society, and in particular the continuity between the spiritual and the natural, this group gets enlarged insofar as the traditional political authority is its extension. The traditional ruler is the chief priest of all the religions and therefore religious, moral, and political authority are rolled up in one. When our topic is the origin of African religious traditions and their moral outlook, this group (more than the philosophical sage) has pride of place. I will conclude by identifying some examples of the moral outlooks that are characteristic of African religious traditions as seen from the vantage point of priests and practitioners.

The Essence of an African Moral Outlook

One of the enduring features of African religious traditions is the emphasis placed on good character. The development of good character is the focus of the various religions and processes of informal education. There is recognition of good character as a prerequisite for social harmony and justice, which are the mandate of the divinities on earth. The key to religious devotion in the context of the utilitarian interpretation of religion is the character of each person. The Yoruba people summarize this in a sentence, *iwa l'esin*, or "character is religion." All there is to religious devotion and sacrifice is good character. If you

claim to be a devout believer and you do not demonstrate the qualities of body and mind that even non-believers possess, your claim is empty. For the African religious tradition, a person's character is her amulet and it is her character that will judge her in the end. Therefore, one must have good character.

The Yoruba word for character is *iwa*. *Iwa*, however, has a second meaning, which is "existence." Thus we have *iwa* as character and *iwa* as existence. It has been suggested that the former is a derivative of the latter. *Iwa* as existence is primary in the sense that without existence, we cannot talk of character (Abimbola 1975a, 389–420). But we may talk of the character of a person's existence. This is just a different way of talking about the person's character, which may affect for better or for worse his or her existence. A person with bad character will spoil the means to good fortune. In this sense, *iwa* means the totality of the person's being, including habits of right conduct, right attitude, and right emotions at the right time. We can now isolate the components of *iwa* to conclude this account of African moral outlooks.

Truthfulness

In the African religious traditions, truthfulness, as a component of *iwa*, is an important injunction of the divinities. The Yoruba Ifa oracle instructs devotees of Orunmila (the divinity of wisdom) always to tell the truth because it is those who are truthful that the divinities will promote and bless. Many religious traditions have ways of detecting lying and deceit, and there are instant punishments for such waywardness. In the Yoruba tradition, Sango, the divinity of justice, is summoned whenever there is a suspicion of wayward dealings, and the culprit is punished along with his or her household.

Industry

All divinities of the African pantheon are shining examples of industry. Many of the myths of creation depict the divinities as engaged in one activity or the other. They may clear the bush that leads from heaven to the earth; they may plant the first seeds on earth; they may be skilled hunters. The value of work is the theme of many religious poems. Thus, Yoruba children learn from the cradle a poem that sings the praise of work as a means to avoid poverty. Work is taken seriously as a moral requirement because people who do not work cannot carry out their responsibilities to their families and are likely to become parasites on communal resources.

Moderation

Moderation in food, drink, and bodily pleasure is an important component of character that African religions emphasize. Lack of moderation may result in squandering of resources. It may lead to weakness of the body, mind, and spirit. It may lead to loss of dignity. This is one reason, noted before, that the arch divinity Obatala prohibits devotees from indulgence in alcoholic beverages.

Generosity

The generous person is appreciated by the gods, according to African religious traditions. It is incumbent on devotees of many of the religions to make provision for those in need, no matter how small their own fortunes may be. There is a sense in which sacrifice is understood as a lesson in generosity. When a

divination oracle instructs a supplicant to offer a sacrifice of palm oil or used clothes, the idea behind this is to make provision for those in need so that the divinities may look favorably on one and provide for one's specific needs.

Patience

In the Yoruba religious tradition, patience (*suru*) is depicted as the son of Olodumare (supreme being) and father of *iwa* (character). They say "patience, the father or lord of character" (*suru baba iwa*). A person with patience has all she needs for good character. A patient person would have no cause to be immoderate, or to be lazy, or to be dishonest, or to insult the elders. A patient person will not run before she is ready to walk. The story is told of how Orunmila, the divinity of wisdom, lacked patience. His wife was Iwa. She was a dutiful wife, but she had some defects. Orunmila could not stand these defects and he maltreated his wife until she left him. Orunmila had to look for her all over the earth without success. Then after some sacrifice, Esu, the trickster god, led him to where Iwa was in the world beyond. But Iwa refused to go back with Orunmila to the world. Here in this story, the priests depict their own divinity as lacking some important character trait, and because of this, the divinity suffered the consequence, the loss of his precious wife, Iwa. If a divinity could thus suffer for lack of such a trait, the reasoning is that humans should watch out.

Respect for elders

In traditional African cultures old age is held in esteem. With experience of life comes wisdom, which is necessary to avoid falling into the same mistake. Therefore, even if an elder is poor in material wealth, he or she will be rich in wisdom. It is said that if a young one has as many cloth outfits as an old person, there can be no comparison to their stock of rags. Having lived longer, that is, the older person must have more rags. It is therefore incumbent on a young one to respect the elder in order to tap his or her wisdom. Since one expects to grow old too, and since one good turn deserves another, one ought to respect elders so one may be respected in one's old age. Furthermore, there is a strong belief that elders have a mystic power that clings to their spoken word. One would not want to be on the receiving end of a curse from the elders, and surely this may be the case if one shows disrespect to them. Here is another moral injunction that is sanctioned by religion but which has a this-worldly justification.

Respect for community

The community is the source of a person's being in the African understanding. Religion itself is a collective endowment of the community. The particular divinities are communal divinities in the sense that the majority of them are identified with certain peculiarities of the community: its mountains, its rivers, its weather, etc. The community gives existence and validation to religion. The young child is born into the community and is brought up as a community member. He or she experiences the ups and downs of the community and grows up seeing him or herself as nothing outside of the community. This is the meaning of the saying credited to traditional Africa: I am because we are. In this context, the religious injunction of respect for the community only reinforces the recognition of the community's role in

one's life. In concrete terms, the injunction requires a devotee to refrain from polluting the land through acts of murder, adulterous relationships, defacement of and defecation on community altars and landscape, and violent acts of robbery. Respect for the gods of the community and for the rules and procedures of the community are religious injunctions that individuals have incentives to obey if they think of the community's role in their own origin, growth, and prosperity.

Conclusion

I have argued that the moral outlook of African religions is essentially this-worldly. Its emphasis is on the promotion of harmonious relationships within communities with a view to enhancing the self-actualization of individual human beings. The specific moral injunctions from the divinities and the supreme being are meant to serve this same purpose. In the final analysis, character is religion, and it is on one's character that one is judged. There is no escape from such judgment at the end of life by appeal to the saving grace of "God." There is reward and punishment in this world and at the end of life for whatever a person does, and there is no intercession from anyone, human or divine.

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CHAPTER 84

Differentiations in African Ethics

Bénézet Bujo

This entry considers the historical aspect of African traditions' origins and the differences among them. From the outset, we must state, together with most African scientists, that it is inappropriate to talk in the plural about ethics or religion in sub-Saharan Africa. Except for a few non-African researchers and scientists, most tend to agree on the unity of religion – and ethics – in Black Africa (Mulago 1965, 1980; Magesa 1998; Mugambi 2001, 7–26; Mbiti 1996). Mugambi notes a great affinity of religious thought throughout all of Africa. This pronounced affinity led the first Western researchers to believe that the only possibility was that Africans had copied their religious conceptions from the Jewish people (see, for instance, research on the Masai in Merker 1910; Hollis 1969). Mugambi rightly refuses to accept this thesis. The differences we can observe among African ethnic groups do not concern the substance of the African conception itself, but the way that conception is translated and put into practice (costumes, rites, etc.). It is inappropriate to look for the kind of divergence in African religion we find, for instance, within the various Christian denominations (Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy) or the various Buddhist, Muslim, and other traditions. The African conception centers on life. Life articulates itself thanks to and through the community of the living, the dead, and the not-yet-born, and it never forgets to refer to God, the actual foundation of this three-dimensional community.

To begin with, we will examine the foundation of African ethics before dealing with the problem of the invention and the articulation of norms. We will conclude our journey by showing, based on a few examples, the relevance of African ethics in the modern world.

The Foundation of African Ethics

In order to understand the ethical conception and articulation in Black Africa, we must apply ourselves to its main anthropological basis. Many theologians and philosophers, as well as ethnologists of all tendencies, have already made this kind of study. However, it seems that until now no one has undertaken any systematic elaboration of its ethics. The emphasis of our study lies in systematic ethical reflection.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

The Three-Dimensional Community

If, in moral conduct, African thought puts a special emphasis on interhuman relations, this does by no means obliterate God or exclude the role of God in morality. In the traditional African conception, God is an unquestioned postulate, even though God is rarely mentioned. One knows once and for all that God is first and that without God nothing comes about and nothing survives. Myths, legends, tales, etc. evidence that God is not absent from the individual's life. Many African names incorporate without ambiguity God's action. The most obvious examples are in Rwanda and Burundi, where theophorous names are particularly frequent: Habyarimana, Nzeimana, Ndikumana, etc.

By way of illustration, *Imana* indicates God and *Habyarimana* means "God alone begets." When given to a child, this name signifies that life originates in God alone, not in human strength. Similarly, among the Bahema of Congo-Kinshasa, there are children called "Byaruhanga," which means "God's property." This name may be given to a child born after its parents had come to believe they would be deprived of the blessing of children; but precisely at that moment God intervened (Bujo 1992, 19; 1998a, 75). The idea of God as the originator of life and thus of everything humans do is so fundamental that among the traditional Banyarwanda and the Barundi parents will never go to bed in the evening without leaving a little water in a jug. This water is commonly called "Utuzi tw'Imana," "God-Imana's little water." God creates life at night, and after this work of creation, God washes God's hands in this water specially set aside (Mulago 1965, 109–110).

Most of the time in everyday life African morality takes place without necessary and constant mention of God, though God is by no means absent. African ethics concentrates its attention in a very special fashion on the individual and the community. Africans know that humans are indebted to God for all their undertakings and that, by attempting to articulate their morality within an interpersonal relation with fellow humans and the cosmos as a whole, they ultimately praise the same God (Bujo 2001, 1–71). Insofar as one promotes life in this world, one does God's will as one's ancestors have handed it down to one. The tradition received from them is that to please God and the ancestors is to take into account the three-dimensional community: the living, the dead, and the not-yet-born. This community with its threefold dimension constitutes the anthropological foundation of ethics as a whole. According to this conception, the community, unlike society, is an organic whole. It is not based on some kind of contract, but it is a bond rooted in a covenant. This covenant generally implements a reality grounded either in a natural or symbolic common origin. This alludes to the fact that beyond the "natural" blood relation it is possible in Africa to become a member of a family or a community by acts other than birth. For instance, a blood pact does not necessarily mean the material exchange of blood, but it can also take on symbolic forms.

Beyond this last consideration, however, it must be strongly emphasized that, in general, African tradition does not forget the common origin of all humans, which precisely grounds a common membership. Consequently, there is the obligation to see every person as a member of a universal human community in which every individual moves and attempts to be moral. This is what the Baluba of Kasayi in Congo-Kinshasa bring to light through their expression "Muntu-wa-Bende-wa-Mulopo," which means "Human from Bende from God." In others words, every human being comes from Bende, who comes from God. *Bende* here becomes synonymous with the common origin of humans and of the cosmos, an origin that makes sense only with reference to God (Tshiamalenga-Ntumba 1995). The consequence of this affirmation is that the community based on this kind of thinking is not only three-dimensional but four-dimensional as well, since it includes God as ultimate foundation.

However, let us underscore once more that in its everyday life African morality does not thematize this dimension one can call "theandric": its full attention goes to the community of the living, the dead, and the not-yet-born, as if God did not exist (*etsi Deus non daretur*!). The foundation of the morality in this "tripartite" community does not have as its starting point a Cartesian or Kantian philosophical concept. Reason with its *cogito ergo sum* is not what defines human beings and their moral action. Interpersonal relations shape the three-dimensional community as well as the individual and constitute as such a base for ethics itself. The Cartesian principle *cogito ergo sum* falters. Another principle supplants it right away: *cognatus sum, ergo sumus*, because I am related to the others, not only I, but also we, together, exist. The individual as a human being is not a monad but exists in openness to the other.

Beside the three-dimensional community, in daily terrestrial life human beings as persons can only live within a bipolarity implying a tri-polarity. In other words, masculinity necessarily relates to femininity, and both imply in turn a third dimension, the child. The human being, as human, is whole only as man and woman summoned by the child, who is the representative of the world of the not-yet-born and at the same time the messenger of the community of the ancestors. Here to some extent is the relevance of the African conception for determining concrete norms; we will come back to this issue in the last part of the entry. For now, we must underscore another important dimension in African anthropology, namely the problem of the relation between humans and the cosmos.

Cosmic Unity or the Human as a Relation to the Surrounding World

In African religion and ethics, everything in the world is intimately connected. For this reason, humans and the rest of creation have a dialectic relation. All the elements in the universe imply each other and interlock. One cannot touch one of them without causing the whole to vibrate. Humans are not only part of the cosmos, but they are also the summary of its totality, so to speak. "At the same time earth and sky, spirits and cosmic forces, past, present, and future, the human really is a miniature version of the universe, a microcosm within the macrocosm" (Mveng 1985, 12). In Black Africa humans belong at the same time to the world of the living, the dead, and the not-yet-born. They can identify with spirits, animals, plants, minerals. They know that between them and the cosmos there is a vital flux making up the solidarity of creation as a whole and ultimately connecting them to the supreme being, God, the source of all life.

Thus, in the traditional rites and in African medicine, one cannot simply talk of symbolic acts. They are much more about an encounter between life and life: on the one hand, human life, and, on the other, "cosmic" life (plants, minerals, etc.). In this encounter, humans attempt to decipher and to master the tension opposing life and death. If they wish to secure life's victory over death, they must secure allies in the cosmos and identify their opponents. In this sense, for instance, the cosmic elements used in traditional medicine, even if they are minerals, dry wood, animal bones, etc., are not impersonal or inanimate realities. They contain and convey life to the one who utilizes them (Mveng 1985, 11–13). The transmission of vital energy, however, does not only concern the strictly medicinal realm; it is also about nature as a whole in relation to the abundance of life in all its ramifications. This explains the respect the African manifests towards earth, plants, water, etc.

As an illustration, there is a widespread practice in Africa concerning sacred trees. The Bahema of Congo-Kinshasa, for example, have the practice of the *ficus*, which they plant on the tomb of the head of the family. This tree is sacred and represents the one who is buried there. Its branches symbolize the

deceased's many descendants. Thus, it represents the life of the family in the African sense. Consequently, it is strictly forbidden to desecrate the tree by cutting it down or by removing any of its branches, twigs, and leaves (Bujo 1996a, 77ff.).

There are many more examples of the importance of certain trees in the lives of African peoples. People's attitudes towards these trees prompt them to cultivate respect towards nature and to strengthen their vital ties with it. Such respect is not limited to one category of trees alone, as such trees are only the representatives of the cosmos in general. For a casual observer, this is primitive, irrational thought that perhaps goes against modernity and development, since for the Western rationalist world the cosmos no longer contains any secret and mystery. Those, however, attempting to penetrate African culture will marvel at its ancestral wisdom. The life–death tension is predominant in the world, and cosmic nature is a companion one has to associate with in order for life to triumph over death.

With this in mind, we must now tackle the issue of the invention and the articulation of ethical norms.

Elaboration and Articulation of Norms

Since community is of the utmost importance for African moral action, the elaboration of norms and their application can only unfold within the community's frame. In what follows, we will not be able to present at full length the way ethical norms come into being and unfold in Africa. We will be content to indicate what we take to be essential in order to understand moral action in Africa. To do so, we will begin with *palaver* (the African traditional council dealing with community matters) as an institution where norms are born and brought to bear. We will then examine the relation between communal action and personal life. This will imply a brief presentation of the concepts of person, freedom, and individual conscience.

Palaver as the Locus Where Norms Are Born

In order to understand palaver's role, one has to keep in mind the function of words in African communities. The word is powerful, and it contains highly explosive elements in Black Africa. A word can be medicine just as it can be poison; it has a life-giving power just as it is capable of bringing forth death. Words are something drinkable or edible; one chews and digests them. Badly chewed and digested, they can destroy the individual and a whole community, whereas in the opposite case they bring life (Bujo 1996a, 25ff.).

In this context, palaver functions as a time during which people reexamine the chewing and digestion of received words. First, there is therapeutic palaver, which is a dialogue between the traditional healer and the patient or his or her circle. As noted, the community is a collection of relations where everything holds and influences everything else. Therapeutic palaver aims at detecting the causes of illness or malaise in general, based on the articulation of the relations experienced in the community. Thus, therapy will not consist in administering medicines without taking into account the patient's life context, but the aim will be to return life to him or her above all by recreating a collection of more life-nurturing relations. To do so, the sick person, the doctor, and the community as a whole must hold a palaver where one manages together to digest the badly chewed and undigested bad words in order to deprive them of their

deadly venom and to give them vital and life-nurturing force. The administered medicines will be able to take effect only after good relations are restored.

Besides this therapeutic palaver, one ought to mention, second, family palaver, where people deal behind closed doors with the problems pertaining to the family in the African sense, that is, in its threefold dimension of the living, the dead, and the not-yet-born. This form of palaver, just like the one concerning "supra-family" and administrative life (we will talk about this later) can be irenic or agonistic depending on whether it deals with non-contentious or contentious cases (Bidima 1997, 10). Family palaver is the foremost place where domestic ethics elaborates, grounds, reinforces, and develops. Family palaver covers a wide variety of topics because it seeks to contribute to the growth of the life of the family in all its dimensions. The problems it deals with can therefore be about sharing property, reflecting on which attitude to adopt in view of the future, appointing or removing a person responsible for a given area, tackling family feuds of all kinds – the list could go on endlessly. Even apart from contentious cases, family palaver aims at helping to maintain or restore healthy and harmonious relations within the community. In other words, it is about bringing together again the antagonists where there is strife in order for them to learn to listen to each other, and thus it is about managing to develop a new lifestyle where people are ready to support each other in the harshness of life.

Seen from this perspective, palaver also takes on the role of therapeutic and medicinal authority besides its ethical function: while it concerns itself with establishing or abolishing or strengthening ethical norms, palaver takes the individual in his or her dimension of totality and attends to his or her moral and physical health. No wonder, therefore, that most palavers, even the ones that are not related to family, end with a celebration of reconciliation around a meal, for instance, where everybody finds their way back to the initial fellowship.

If a family palaver fails to solve a problem, particularly in the case of a feud, the community can appeal to an extra-family or even an administrative palaver. This palaver is not just a kind of appeals court dealing only with cases beyond family authority. The supra-family and administrative palaver also takes up totally new cases concerning the good beyond isolated families. This palaver has a more political character and even applies to several clan communities. Here, too, we are not dealing exclusively with agonistic palavers but also irenic palavers, as defined above.

While the traditional doctor (male or female healer) and the family's sage (the elder in general) are in charge, respectively, of therapeutic and family palavers, the situation is different with extra-family and administrative palavers. Here, the chief or the king, but also a member of the counsel of elders, can be the one who is in charge of the session when the palaver takes place. It is important to underline that at no time is the person who presides over the palaver allowed to be arrogant and authoritarian so as to humiliate or silence participants, male and female. On the contrary, he has to be attentive and ready to listen to everyone in order to discover the sapiential aspect of what they have to say. "Sapiential" also means that a palaver's discourse uses poetic language, symbolism, proverbs, parables, stories, etc. What takes place in a palaver refers to life's existential foundations, which these various kinds of language must translate.

One cannot help noticing a well-known difference from Western styles of argument. We have already seen how the African conception differs from Cartesian philosophy and its *cogito ergo sum*. It is *cognatus sum, ergo sumus* that is decisive in African ethics: "I am related, therefore we are." This ultimately means that African ethics is not based on the concept of Western natural or moral law, but in the framework of the community. The community is actually the place where norms take shape. In all of this, life in its

widest sense is what functions as the hinge for the elaboration of ethical norms. Everything that contributes to maintaining, strengthening, and perfecting individual as well as communal life is good and right. Whether it is an ethical judgment on property, marriage, or sexuality, etc., palaver will determine if it is appropriate for life in abundance for all.

It is interesting to note the differences in argumentation that lead to the grounding and securing of norms in comparison with certain Western models. If, as an example, we take the discourse ethics of Habermas (1983, 99), anyone able to express themselves and to act is entitled to participate in the discussion. In discourse ethics, one can only have a discussion with people able to argue at a rational level. Concerning, for instance, the interests of children and of the generation to come (one can also add the dead and the cosmos), one could argue only in an advocative fashion, that is, speak on behalf of those unable to "reason." African ethics based on palaver follows another procedure because it is not conditioned by rational argumentation so defined. If among Ghana's Ashanti the rule is to exclude no one from palaver, this goes beyond the rule applying to discourse ethics. Even if discourse ethics talks of the unlimited communication community, in fact it is about a community of individuals endowed with intellectual capacities and able to speak (Ndjimbi-Tshiende 1992, 247). By contrast, the rule of the Ashanti (a rule similar to those of several other African ethnic groups) really embraces everybody, including the handicapped, even if they cannot express themselves at the level of language. They can, however, communicate and make themselves understood through symbolic actions and gestures, for instance. Such actions and gestures are of no importance for discourse ethics, whereas they can be decisive for palaver.

Another difference from discourse ethics concerns palaver's religious dimension. God and the world of the ancestors are an integral part of palaver, whereas the argumentation of discourse ethics excludes them. Integrating God and the world of the ancestors does not deprive the palaver's participants of their ability to be critical, but reason must not be turned into an instrument of oppression and omnipotence. In a world where the life–death tension prevails, truth can only be analyzed in an existential and sapiential manner; rational malice cannot manipulate it. Along the same lines, not only God and the ancestors are actively involved in palaver, but people also go so far as to include in it the cosmos as a whole. The Ashanti explicitly state that government agents and any behavior in the community must be consistent with the law of nature as well as with the ancestors. In palaver, one has to ensure that this rule is observed (Ndjimbi-Tshiende 1992, 246–247). For the Ashanti and for Black African communities in general, humans are really the synthesis of the whole universe (Mveng 1979, 234).

In addition, discourse ethics is content with grounding ethical norms, keeping them at the "formal" level without caring about their concrete application. In other words, it is more concerned with macro-ethical problems, and it is vague about micro-ethical questions that deal precisely with the applicability of "formal" principles to concrete cases of daily moral action (Bujo 1993, 33). By contrast, African ethics does not stay at the level of formal principles, but is concerned at the same time with the applicability and the application of the norms proposed in the course of palaver.

The dimension of sin is another characteristic radically setting apart palaver from discourse ethics. In an ethics where religious matters, God, and the ancestors play a predominant role, it is normal to ask about interpersonal relations involving faults, sin, and sanction. One will easily understand, therefore, that particularly agonistic palaver will usually end with a celebration of reconciliation between all the members. This is often the case with therapeutic palavers, too. In fact, the medicines the traditional doctor administers can only demonstrate their efficiency and restore health if there are good relationships

and harmony in the patient's community. Diseases often arise from tensions of all kinds between a community's members, who eat up each other's vital energy. Reconciliation contributes in a decisive way to restoring health to the sick and, by way of prophylactic measures, preventing other ills among still-healthy members (Bujo 1996b, 9–25).

So far, we have described only one type of Western ethics, namely discourse ethics. Another kind, however, is closer to African ethics. It is called communitarianism. Even though communitarianism is represented by several trends, it is nevertheless possible to bring out their common characteristics. Overall, communitarianism strongly opposes the kind of individualism that liberalism advocates. The criticism of liberalism by communitarianism's major representatives is that it has an atomistic conception of the individual: it does not place individuals in their original communities, that is, the context of their life environments (Reese-Schäfer 1994). An individual without ties to other humans, however, does not exist; this determines every human's way of thinking and moral behavior. One of the important consequences of this thesis is that one cannot formulate abstract ethical principles applicable to all humans of all nations and at all times. There is no *single* ethics; rather, there are several, according to the different communities that exist. Unlike discourse ethics, communitarianism emphasizes the ethics of "the good" (*bonum*, *euzèn*), which does not stay at a purely formal level, but tries to fill ethical principles with substantial content capable of orienting active subjects' daily lives.

If we compare communitarianism with African ethics, we find commonalities but also differences. Both models underscore the contextuality of the individual, who is always to be understood based on the community in which he or she lives and acts. Communitarianism and African ethics also merge with respect to *bonum*: they do not expound it only at the level of principle and without giving it a content applicable in concrete life. In Africa, this *bonum* revolves around the fullness of life.

These commonalities, however, do not erase important differences. Even if both models talk of community, one gets the impression that for communitarians the concept does not sufficiently set itself apart from that of society. Community is more organic than society, and society has a composite and artificial character because it proceeds from the will of individuals seeking a unity.

Western anthropology leaves a fundamental mark on communitarian thinking. It is true that communitarians strongly oppose the atomization of the individual and that they stress the bond between individual and community. Nevertheless, if one compares their conception of community with the African conception, it appears that, as far as moral action is concerned, the individual, though bound to environment and group, is not bound in his or her personal decisions to the extent of referring to his or her community. In other words, the community can shape the individual, but it does not accompany them in their personal dealings: ultimately, decisions belong to the private sphere, in which the community must not meddle. By contrast, in African ethics community is so important that one goes so far as to involve its deceased members in a decision to be made: this is not a passive attitude but, rather, an *active* participation of the whole community which must help the individual before, during, and after a decision in order to put it into practice – always as a community.

At the same time, the communal character of African ethics does not necessarily turn it into a kind of fiction and dogmatism but provides leeway for innovations and creativity: traditions that no longer encourage abundant life must be abolished and new ones must replace them. That is what palaver is all about. In addition, African communitarianism knows how to avoid ethnocentric paralysis in the sense that the various communities are not shut off from each other, they are not atomized entities, but they remain open to other cultural approaches and spheres. The best illustration of this is the *luba* conception

of Kasayi in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but it is easily applicable to other ethnic groups. As mentioned above, for the Baluba, every person is a "Muntu-wa-Bende-Wa-Mulopo," a "human being from Bende who himself is from God." Therefore, every human is from God and entitled to respect no matter his or her clan, ethnicity, or nation.

With regard to ethical questions, this means that norms have a universal character while remaining plural. Every human as an individual is required to encourage the abundance of life, but also to take into account each community's characteristics and realities. This is precisely what African ethics attempts to do by using palaver in order to secure norms and put them into practice. This ethics, which has a sapiential character, cannot be confined to a narrow focus on particularity. By dealing with confined, contextual, and singular cases, it knows how to find rules with a universal dimension. The predominant approach does not consist in moving down from the universal to the particular. It is just the opposite. The universal is thus the result of a concrete and particular experience. In studying African proverbs, for instance, one realizes that what a sentence puts into words is the result of several concrete experiences which ultimately make it possible to reach generalizations applicable to everyone.

Although African ethics has some characteristics in common with Western models such as natural law ethics, discourse ethics, and communitarianism, it clearly differs from them in other respects. Above all, its relational character, in all its aspects – notably God, the spirits, the world of the living, the dead, and the not-yet-born, and even the cosmos as a whole – gives it its own originality.

However, another question arises. If community shapes so much of African ethics and if every decision and every implementation cannot take place without it, to what extent can one still talk of individual responsibility?

The Concepts of Person and Freedom

It is not uncommon to hear criticism of the influence that the group exerts on the individual. Some consider it to be inadmissible oppression that runs counter to human rights because of its failure to respect individual freedom.

Undoubtedly, unfortunate and deplorable events have tarnished African tradition. However, this tradition's ideal should not be confused with such breaches, which must ultimately be corrected in the light of the ideal itself. Again, African morality is essentially based on interpersonal relationships. This means that there is no atomized activity removed from other humans who constitute a life community even beyond death. In this context, it is impossible to talk of freedom in the sense in which modern Western philosophy conceives it. Western philosophy sees the essence of freedom in each individual's highly personal self-determination. This is the whole issue of Kantian morality and its keen sense of autonomy. This is also the central topic concerning individual conscience in Roman Catholic morality based on natural law. It is, finally, the whole concern of human rights activists who want to protect individuals from the tyranny of groups.

As for Black African ethics, since the individual can only exist within the "us," it is impossible for them to fulfill their potential outside, beside, or against the community. In order to understand this conception, one must examine the notion of person in Africa. This notion is based neither on the philosophy of being (*naturae rationalis individua substantia*) nor on cognition (*cogito ergo sum*), but on a process that unfolds through the interdependence between the individual and the community, which comprises not only the dead and the not-yet-born but also the cosmos and God itself (Bujo 2001, 85–89).

This is what the principle of "cognatio" (*cognatus sum, ergo sumus*) expresses. What is peculiar to this principle is that the reality it expresses does not depend on the community's consent or recognition in relation to the individual. It is something so existential and so fundamental that *not* abiding by it can only lead to the destruction of the individual and the community. The interdependence of both parties concerns more than the biological continuity and the spiritual heritage that relate us to each other or one generation to another. In the Black African conception, it is especially important to stress the uninterrupted interaction between all of a community's members (alive, dead, and not-yet-born). Thus, to be called a "person" does not require an ontological membership but an active participation, not in the Western sense of "performance" but in the sense of mutual, interpersonal relations ("being-with"). In other words, individuals become persons provided and to the extent that they do not isolate themselves in their actions, but act together with all the community's members.

Participation in this common life is so essential that even the dead depend on it for safeguarding the growth of their being as a person. Becoming a person is thus a continuous and perpetual process, which does not end at death. Personal identity in the beyond depends on ties to the earthly community and to the one still to come; it increases to the extent that from the beyond one lives in interaction and in harmony with the members of the three-dimensional community. If we look at it close up, this conception also explains the veneration for ancestors in Black Africa. Even if they can no longer suffer or die biologically, they continue to have certain human needs, such as hunger, thirst, love, the sense of justice, peace, etc. They can be worry-free in all this only if the community of the living does not forget them or cause them any harm.

In addition, in order to ensure happiness forever, continuity in the descendents has to be secured. For this reason, the not-yet-born occupy an important place in the community. The ancestors make it their business to watch over this continuity and to provide the living with everything necessary for their well-being. In case the ancestors forget, the living will remind them and complain about it, if necessary, by threatening not to bring them food or drink (Nsuka 1970, 264). A prosperous progeny is indisputably one of the conditions ensuring the well-being of all. Thus, one cannot ignore the not-yet-born; they already deserve to be called "persons" because, even before they take shape, they embody the living and the dead in such a way that they are the future and carry everybody's hopes.

The articulation of community and individual must be seen as a chance for achieving and completing individual freedom. In Africa, if one cannot fulfill oneself as a person outside the community, individual freedom is possible only through participation in the community's life within "being-with-the-others": my freedom as an individual can only be real and total if I free the community at the same time. In the same way, the community as a whole can enjoy true freedom only if it frees me as an individual. Strong and abundant life for all is possible only in this continual interaction. Seen from this angle, African freedom is never conceived to be something that opposes the individual to the community. The golden rule, rather, is *the individual with the community so that all are with all*. In Western societies, one tends to see too much of the negative side of freedom, in the sense of freeing oneself from obstacles that prevent self-fulfillment. Freedom cannot only consist in *being free from*, but it is also *being free for* and *being free with*. This "being for and with" gives a further dimension to freedom, since it implies sharing life with all.

It is obvious that in a community where the individual must never exercise self-determination without taking into account other members, questions concerning individual conscience will not pose themselves as they do in Western morality. For some Western thinkers, the individual conscience is the ultimate decision-making authority and one must respect it unconditionally. In Africa, on the contrary, the

issue of individual conscience has to be discussed in relation to palaver, which is the place and the authority where the community reexamines the words hidden in each person's heart. These chewed and digested words must resurface in order to be ruminated collectively, so that they can prove their innocence. Even if chewed and swallowed, one does not know if the words have also been digested. If it is not the case, they could, if uttered rashly, destroy the community instead of putting it together. For this reason, it is palaver's task to control them and accept them only if they are able to give life abundantly. Ultimately, these tried and sifted words constitute the individual conscience. This conscience is the result of a process based on the ancestors' and the elders' experience, yet regularly subjected to a new examination.

The ancestors' words and deeds, the norms they set, are made available to the current generation so that it has life and continues to look after the deceased, and also so that it prepares the future of the not-yet-born. In order to have a clear conscience, it is not enough to know the ancestors' words and deeds, or the norms they set, and to apply this knowledge following a private decision. The community's regular evaluation becomes, so to speak, the norm, "normalizing" individual conscience. If this is the case, the individual conscience is not the highest court of appeal for moral decisions; rather, communal conscience, above all, measures and determines the individual conscience.

This conception of communal conscience is of immense importance because in the end it excludes the fundamentalism, based on privately internalized principles, whereby everyone can make their own decisions and commit acts which can go so far as to be seriously detrimental to the common good. Individual freedom that is not integrated into the community is a bomb that can explode at any time and cause tremendous damage. Based on the above example of conscience, individual freedom does not necessarily lead to personal fulfillment. It also contains a certain amount of tyranny against the community. Communal freedom, by contrast, if it is used in a controlled way, is a necessary safeguard against tyranny in the world.

The Relevance of African Ethics

In what sense is African tradition still of interest in the modern world? Is it a bygone tradition lost in the mists of time? On the contrary, African ethics is of interest to the modern world in at least three areas related to the three-sided community: the practice of human rights, questions concerning the elderly, and issues relating to abortion and euthanasia. In what follows we will not go into the details of these complex debates. Our presentation will be limited to very basic information (see Bujo 1998b, 36–53; 1993, 17–25).

Human Rights

The above reflections must make us attentive to another understanding of human rights. The Western interpretation, which begins with the individual, seems to have little impact on the African anthropological conception. Indeed, for Africans, it cannot be about absolutizing the individual's rights while neglecting the community dimension. Any right deserves to be called a right only to the extent that it does not lose sight of the common good. One of the typical examples is the right to private property. In Africa, the property of the individual belongs at the same time to the community as a whole. It falls to

the same individual to manage it well for the general good. In this connection, it is interesting to observe that in many African communities the notion of poverty is somewhat different from that in the Euro-American world. In Africa, the goal is not to possess things but to form relationships. One is not poor because one possesses nothing material, but true poverty consists in having no human relations, after having lost one's parents or other family members, for example. Even with regard to material things, the point is not to "possess" them in the Western sense but to have relationships with them. Certain African languages where the verb "to have" is missing express precisely that. So, in Swahili, one talks about "kuwa na" (to be with). It is the same thing in Lingala, which says "kozala na" (to be with). This relationship to material things primarily aims at promoting human relations. One sees how the right to private property in Africa must first focus on the community without neglecting the individual. Children's right to education calls for a similar argument. Children do not only belong to the parents in the Euro-American sense, but also to the whole clan community. The right to education must therefore involve this community as a whole and not limit itself to the parents alone. When in modern Africa one talks of human rights violations, it is absolutely necessary to take into account the context as we have just described it.

Issues Concerning the Elderly

In modern society, particularly in the West, young people no longer seem to be interested in the elderly other than as a burden to get rid of. Advertising praises eternal youth. As everything centers on profitability, the elderly are relegated to oblivion and anonymity, since they prove unable to perform as society requires.

The value of African tradition could usefully be reasserted here. In Africa the elderly are treated with great respect, and by virtue of their long experience are considered a source of wisdom. Even if they are no longer able to generate or bear biological life, they continue to strengthen and increase the life of the whole community through their great wisdom. When one talks of teaching through experience, it is not at all about transmitting technological knowledge, for instance, because younger people can be experts on this. The experience African tradition talks about is at a more existential level; this experience is what provides technology itself with its soul, so that it is not know-how devoid of wisdom. A technology devoid of wisdom is dehumanizing and leads to death. From the African point of view, a society that dispenses with the experience of the elderly ruins itself because it will not be able to identify the forces of life and death in the cosmos. Even supposing that an old person is mentally frail and unable to benefit others with their experiences, this does not degrade them to the level of a "negligible quantity." In Africa, everybody knows they are carried by the elders, even by those elders who are now invalids. We have life in its various manifestations thanks to them. Even if they can no longer hand down their wisdom to us, it is our duty to demonstrate our gratitude and to share with them our presence in order to increase their vital force on their painful path to the ancestors.

Issues Concerning Abortion and Euthanasia

The subject of the elderly closely relates to discussions about the beginning and end of life. Stormy debates on the status of the embryo reveal many divergent opinions on the determination of the precise moment one can begin to talk of a *person*. The various arguments often hinge on the determination of symptoms

indicating cognitive potentialities and other identifiable human performances. In this sense, one talks of the appearance of the "large brain," which is supposed to be a sign that the embryo has evolved towards an "autonomous" human being.

In the African tradition, it would be futile to look for such a debate. If interpersonal relations make up the person, it is appropriate to determine on this basis whether or not the embryo enjoys the status of an individual human person. For a traditional African, there is no doubt that a fetus or an embryo is steeped in interpersonal relations. He or she belongs to the world of the not-yet-born and is fully integrated into the community of the living and the dead. The fetus or the embryo lives and is encompassed within the love of the visible and invisible community. He or she is the hope of the living and of the dead, who survive in him or her, not only on the biological level, but also as he or she enriches the community in every way to increase life in the broad sense of the word. In other words, the fetus or the embryo, still incapable of providing services, is the ancestors' messenger, and he or she connects them with their descendents still on earth. Seen from this point of view, there is a continuous interaction between the living, the dead, and the not-yet-born, and this too constitutes the embryo as a person whose life must absolutely be respected.

In close relation to this issue is the case of the dying. The discussion which dominates the Western scene as far as euthanasia is concerned does not exist in this form in most of the African traditions. In Black Africa, caring for the dying is crucial. "Caring consists in staying in living touch with the dying person and in conveying to him or her the feeling that he or she is still someone even in this condition, where his or her physical strength abandons him or her," and that he or she keeps developing as a person through his or her pain (Bujo 2002, 19). Dying persons restore their being as a person through interpersonal relations with those caring for them, but in turn, the sick and the dying help the people around them to become aware of their own personality, with its highs and its lows. Thus, through the way they accept their suffering, the sick and dying contribute to the edification of the living, whose personality grows, too. Thus, a dying person's sickness and last days are a chance for everybody, the sick and the dying and those caring for them, to enrich each other and to become even more conscious of their respective identities.

If one refers to this African conception, euthanasia as it is understood in the West, far from protecting human rights, in fact violates them because it annihilates a person's identity. In its original meaning, euthanasia should consist in helping the dying to feel accepted by his or her family circle, as the African tradition tries hard to do.

Conclusion

Our study is only an overview, which by no means claims to exhaust the ethical questions in Black Africa. From what has been said, however, it appears that African ethics has its own logic, which deserves to be respected in intercultural and interreligious dialogue. At a time when the world centers on globalization, denying African culture its identity and wanting to level it to a monoculture or a global ethos, are a kind of neocolonialism, African ethics aims to promote life in abundance. This is possible only if one respects diversity within cultures. Far from being an impoverishment, diversity is an unprecedented chance and treasure, whereas globalization is a cultural cloning seeking to impose a monoculture, which can only be dictatorial and oppressive. By contrast, the world will be able to enhance life and find peace only if we respect the plurality of the cultures in dialogue with each other.

Acknowledgment

The author acknowledges with gratitude the translation of this entry by Philippe Eberhard.

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CHAPTER 85

Trajectories in African Ethics

Laura S. Grillo

When confronted with conflicting demands, inexplicable contradictions threatening the integrity of one's worldview, or faced with the moral uncertainty that contradictions elicit, recourse must be made to moral deliberation in which one's actions are consciously evaluated and determined by principles and priorities. West African religions offer such a discipline in the form of divination, a process that invites reflection on personal actions and their consequences, and consideration of their place within the dynamic patterns of cosmos, not just as a backdrop of human action, but as an integral and determinative part of it.

West African Divination: Moral Philosophy and Ethical Enterprise

By common definition, divination is a technique used to determine the future and to make authoritative pronouncements about it. In the context of West African religious traditions, this is not its primary objective. Rather than merely projecting the future, divination inquires about the significance of the present. Its aim is not prediction, but diagnosis. Divination is sought at moments of crisis, when a person becomes acutely aware of a disjunction between an ideal model of reality and the experience of human existence, when what "is" does not conform to what "ought" to be. Clients come to diviners when confronted with the disquieting experiences of disease, conflict, and inexplicable misfortune to ask, "Why me? Why now?" The divinatory inquiry never yields an unambiguous answer, but presents its finding in the form of another puzzle – a cryptic message encoded in the cast of the diviner's accoutrements (sticks, shells, seeds, bones). Its interpretation draws the client into a reflection about the self in relation to others and to one's own hidden desires. The divinatory consultation invariably culminates in a prescription for a sacrifice, that aims at reestablishing a dynamic equilibrium among individual, society, and cosmos.

West African religions are not concerned with salvation but are focused on health, fecundity, and power – the forces that sustain life and community. These are the values that constitute "the good." The purpose of a divinatory consultation is to root out the source of suffering and alleviate it, restoring social harmony and physical health. These are understood to be mutually dependent and sustained by the ancestors, the guardians of the moral order.

Divination is therefore at the core of a coherent religious system and operates as a pivotal institution. It brings ultimate meaning to bear on the troubling events and circumstances of its clients' everyday

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

lives. Its techniques subject seemingly random experiences to the framework of cosmic order elucidated in myths, and show them to be the reiterated patterns of precedent established by ancestors and culture heroes. For example, in the practice of Ifa, the renowned Yoruba divinatory system, the diviner (*Babalaow* or "father of secrets") recites a verse (*odù*) correlating with the pattern cast by a random throw of cowrie shells. These verses relate how, at the founding of the world, the divinities or other mythic persona resolved dilemmas similar to those facing the client. The sacrifices they performed then become the clients' prescriptions for action in the present. Divination demonstrates that the archetypical actions effected by the primordial forebears still reverberate in the microcosm of the created world and echo in the lives of contemporary humanity. It is premised on the notion that "every concrete being is implicated within the whole [cosmic] system [and it is divination's] reading of the signs that defines this system" (Bastide 1973, 34). Divination is first and foremost a highly pragmatic enterprise. It addresses the immediate and pressing concerns of actual life crises and decisions.

Like ethics, divination addresses the interface between a system of values and the contingencies of experience to which it must be applied. The work of divination is not about articulating the principles and propositions of a moral philosophy, but rather about applying discrimination and discernment to concrete moral problems. Participation in divination and the practice of ethics alike require more than mere conformity to cultural standards of good and evil, right and wrong. Both call for a deliberation of the subtler question of how to apply principles in support of the right and good to the exigencies of everyday existence, and how to adjudicate experience in light of these ideals.

In what follows I first present two well-known cases of West African divination. Arguing that these ritual practices epitomize ethical engagement, I will underscore how divinatory participation demonstrates two key aspects of ethical agency: *responsiveness* (to the immediate contingency of experience and the human beings involved) and *responsibility* (to critical values about good and evil and to social commitments to forge a personal destiny in keeping with these values). To consult a diviner, a deliberate action that invokes personal deliberation on one's most heartfelt desires, hidden motives, personal accountability, choices, and their ramifications, is to practice ethics. The ambiguity of power – spiritual as well as mundane – makes deliberate ethical agency all the more necessary. This inquiry will allow us to trace current trajectories, showing divination to be a vital strategy for coping and for asserting moral purpose.

Dogon of Mali: Responsiveness to Cosmic Dynamic

Dogon divination is generically called "divination by the Fox" and includes the reading of actual fox tracks left across a divining table that has been traced in the sand. The origin of this practice is reflected in Dogon myths.

According to Dogon cosmogony, Amma's first attempt to create the world failed (Griaule and Dieterlen 1965; Pelton 1980). The elements remained stagnant and sterile. Amma set them into motion by emitting the vibration of his first word. This churned the elements within the cosmic egg to form the original pairs of twin primordial beings. But the world as we know it was created in response to the restless determination of Ogo, one of these beings. The impatient Ogo broke away prematurely from the cosmic egg (or womb), tearing away a piece of the placenta which he scratched and stretched to form the earth. Next, he stole some primordial grain which he used to attempt to create a fecund world of his own making. When

this failed and without his intended twin partner, Ogo attempted intercourse with a mound of this placenta-earth, but still failed to produce fecundity. At every turn Amma intervened to thwart Ogo's rebellious efforts. The havoc that Ogo sewed upon the intended cosmic order nevertheless gave shape to the world. Rather than destroying the mutated universe, Amma repossessed the new creation by consecrating it through sacrifice. Then, to ensure the ongoing manipulation of the cosmic elements and the earth's fecundity, Amma created human beings.

In creating men, Amma began with the formation of the clavicle. Its resemblance to a hoe alludes to their purpose on earth – to work the fields and cultivate grain. Agricultural labor recreates the original generative act, Amma's stirring of the first elements. Ultimately, to punish the ever-subversive Ogo, Amma reduced him to the abased form of the fox, Yurugu. But in a last magnanimous gesture, Amma granted Ogo the favor of serving humanity as the bearer of divinatory pronouncement. Because the cunning and duplicitous Ogo-Yurugu, as the mediator of divinatory "speech," retains an important measure of generative power, it is said that he "stole speech" from Amma. Just as Ogo tore and stretched the cosmic placenta to create the earth, the Dogon diviner etches into sand the table of signs, called *kala*, literally meaning "torn." The table represents the world and each person's situation in it. Once the tracks of a fox's pawprints are found traced across these tables, the divinatory interpretation begins. So Ogo, the trickster, is the inaugurator of divination and in the form of Yurugu the fox, is its herald.

From this mythology about the mutually dependent origins of cosmos and divination, we see that Dogon divination cannot provide a simple code for behavior, since its founding mediator is the unpredictable trickster. And precisely because this mythology does not represent a totalizing view of cosmos as fixed and determined by a High God, Dogon divination does not offer a vision of a preordained order either. Instead, from its very inception and by its practice, Dogon divination recognizes that the cosmos is characterized by change, by inexplicable ruptures of order. Full of moral vagaries and indisputable transgression (such as Ogo's incestuous relations with his placenta/Earth-Mother), the myths offer no overt prescription for moral action, nor even a didactic warning against the violation of norms. Instead, the repercussions of Ogo's behavior are extended into the present through divination.

The fact that divination is mediated through the unreliable and deceitful Fox can be interpreted as an implied commentary on humanity's precarious situation within a world of constant permutation. Actually, the anomalous figure of this trickster may be considered an ideal foil for provoking moral reasoning. Through his play with boundaries and mischievous exploration and transmutation of reality, tricksters comment on all forms of social and cosmic order, including moral order. For this reason, Dogon divination does not offer a facile solution to a client's problems, but an opportunity to puzzle out choices and their possible ramifications.

In seeking signs and guidance from within the phenomenal world, Dogon divination is responsive to the symbolic coherence within creation as well as to the creator from whom it is indivisible, for Dogon myth makes clear that Amma *is* the cosmic egg and the vibration from which all creation derives. Moreover, the mythology points to the ongoing *responsibility* human beings bear as determining agents of Amma's dynamic world. It suggests that without the deliberate, ongoing manipulation of the elements, the earth would remain as stagnant and sterile as Amma's earlier, failed attempt at creation. From this view, human beings are charged with an ethical duty of cosmic proportion. Both cosmic and social well-being depend on the fulfillment of their duty in sustaining the fruitfulness of its patterns and rhythms. Therefore, divination can be understood as an ethical act, for the working harmony of the cosmos ultimately rests on a vigilant participation in the dynamics set in motion at the primordium.

I have characterized Dogon divination as evincing *responsiveness* to the coherence of a cosmos, underscoring that this natural world is a milieu in which human action figures significantly as a force that sustains its creative dynamic and therefore "the good." In the discussion of Yoruba divination that follows, we focus on the active engagement of *responsibility*, and divination as the means of negotiating moral identity and forging ethical agency.

Yoruba of Nigeria: Negotiating Moral Identity and Ethical Agency

The ancestors feature prominently in traditional African religions as the guardians of moral order. They ensure conformity to standards of social behavior and enforce moral obligations by inflicting misfortune or suffering upon living kin who transgress these norms. While troublesome and sometimes even serious, such affliction is not considered an "evil," but chastisement aimed at correcting immoral behavior. It is through divination that the specific wishes of the ancestors can be discerned, and it is through the sacrifice prescribed by divination that they are appeased: "Yoruba religious practice depends on two factors, descent and divination. In combination they produce a very fluid religious system" (Drewal and Drewal 1983, 247). Interestingly, the ancestors are not concerned with ethics in the sense of personal virtue. The moral order is a responsibility that humans bear for the proper functioning of the whole, but adherence to the good does not ensure personal reward but life itself. Moral problems are posed less as a choice between good and evil than an alternative between life and death (Thomas 1982, 141).

Where the natural order is viewed as a moral order, events cannot be considered to occur at random. They happen in order to promote an ethical purpose and the distribution of rewards and punishments. Further, from such a perspective, all circumstances and experiences are morally significant (Shweder 1991, 157). However, it does not appear that there is *always* such a clear-cut correlation between moral rectitude and the facts of life in West African systems of thought. Not all suffering and misfortune can be ascribed to the neglect of duty or the sanctions of the ancestors. There is also an acknowledgment of scandalously unjust reversals of fortune in which the cause is not a moral failing of the sufferer. One explanation offered is a bad prenatal destiny, a choice for which the person is not truly deemed accountable but must nevertheless struggle. However, when projects fail despite all efforts and precautions or when health inexplicably shrivels, such meaningless suffering – the essence of evil – is traced to the malevolence of witches. The concept of "witch" in West African traditions is a complex one. People identified as witches are often those who display anti-social sentiments such as anger or jealousy, or whose behavior conveys that they are too self-sufficient: they are reclusive, arrogant, or ungenerous. Not only is it possible that the wicked may prosper, but indeed, inordinate prosperity is suspect as an indication of witchcraft! The source of evil is located in the human world, and lurks in the heart of the hidden person (Marwick 1987, 424). It is diviners who can identify the witch plaguing a client and who, on occasion, may cause the accused culprit to confess and relent. Diviners and witches are often represented as opposites and agonists: witches operate in darkness and secrecy, diviners practice by day in public places; witches veil their activities and obscure their power, the diviner is to serve as a medium of revelation so that the invisible can be given form for all to see; witches intercede to cause sickness and impede success, diviners intervene to diagnose illness or the cause of misfortune, prescribe remedy and protection, and promote the flourishing of destiny.

A closer look at how people use the term "witch" and conceive of witchcraft reveals that in fact an opposition between "diviner" as a force of "good" and "witch" as source of "evil" is too simplistic. Most traditional African societies hold to the belief that certain people are able to use supernatural means for their own ends. Their power is great, but ambiguous. It can be used for good or evil, to protect or destroy life. Yoruba tradition maintains that life-sustaining "power" (*ase*) is an ambivalent force. Its ambivalent nature requires that it be harnessed by culture for the greater good (cf. Drewal and Drewal 1983). So witches derive their power from the same supreme creator god who invests the entire cosmos with its creative impulse. Witches choose to exercise it for evil (see Abimbola 1977).

Many interpreters of African cultures offer a socially pragmatic basis for belief in witchcraft, emphasizing the frustration and aggression that arises within the restricting conditions of a "closed society," one that relies on harmonious relations. Fear of accusation and its repercussions ensures that standards of appropriate moral conduct are scrupulously maintained. However, the ramifications of both accusations and confessions of witchcraft belie this explanation. Rather than serving to alleviate hostilities, the identification of a witch usually increases social tension. Adherence to beliefs in witchcraft actually undermines moral behavior, since it encourages subterfuge and suspicion about others. Belief in witchcraft, in other words, entails a moral system that acknowledges the existence of moral ambiguity and the ambivalent and hidden quality of personal motives, and calls for a process that will attend to these more complex problems.

Because power is ambiguous, the potential for witchcraft is understood to be innate and unconscious. The election of divination as a means of confronting one's hidden motives is an ethical act, for it ensures the proper and responsible direction of personal destiny. The Yoruba recognize that evil intentions are not readily apparent but belong to that occult dimension of the human being to which only divination offers access. "God forgot to split the feet of a duck, and a crane uses its leg as a tail; but no one can recognize the footprints of a cruel man" (Clarke 1939, 249). Divination is a means to explore otherwise unexamined motives and hidden dynamics that reveals one's moral "footprint." Moreover, divination strengthens that inner core of deliberate intention that provides protection as well as moral resolve. Abimbola represents the Yoruba approach in this way: "When a person is troubled by the *àjé* (witches), he is encouraged to call on his own *orí* [literally, 'head,' the seat of the self and personal destiny revealed through divination] which he chose for himself shortly before he left *òrun* (heaven) for the earth" (Abimbola 1977, 82). Sacrifices are made to the *orí* to promote the flourishing of destiny, for the type of *orí* chosen before birth – the very nature of one's destiny – remains unknowable, a mystery that can only be guessed at the end of one's life (Abimbola 1973, 87). It is left to each person to make every attempt to enhance the full potential of his or her allotted destiny through wise choices and proper action; and for this, divination is an essential guide.

Every divinatory inquiry entails an implicit awareness of the competing interests of the public persona and the inner self. The tension between individual and collective, inner and outer self is an ethical dilemma, and while it can never be finally resolved, the ongoing permutations in the dynamic can be negotiated. While clients of divination may come with personal decisions and seemingly private ills, the process necessarily calls upon clients to "formulate and continually revise their moral identity," that is, one established in concert with that of the community, both social and spiritual (Johnson 1993, 126). In order to resolve a dilemma, divination situates the individual within the nexus of relations.

In calling upon the client's sense of responsibility to self and other, divination radically contests a view of a moral person as essentially an atomistic, rational ego, applying universal principles or absolute

mandates uniformly. Divination involves an ongoing negotiation between individual and society, and rests on the assumption that no absolute moral law is universally viable. Furthermore, it undercuts the view that "traditional" societies enforce a univocal decree of requirement for action.

Trajectories for West African Ethics

In the context of West African traditions, divination is the core of a pragmatic religious system. In the ethnically heterogeneous context of the city, though, diviners and their clients do not necessarily share a common ethnic origin. Here, divination cannot rely on standard conventions to make its practices coherent and persuasive. There is no common mythic model upon which experience can be predicated and the ritual cannot necessarily exploit a common symbolic lexicon.

Nevertheless, in the West African metropolis of Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), amid skyscrapers and traffic jams, diviners are, in fact, very present, strategically placed on street corners and in marketplaces, or operating in recessed courtyards and consulting rooms off bustling streets. Clients come with their most pressing concerns, confident in the efficacy of divinatory techniques to cast their misfortune into manageable terms. The lively presence of divination in Abidjan (as in other West African cities) is an indication that such ritual is not a thing of the past but vividly relevant in the contemporary scene. Extracted from the traditional milieu, does urban divinatory practice still operate as an ethical system in which responsibility and responsiveness are critical components?

The indigenous population of Côte d'Ivoire is comprised of over 60 distinct ethnic peoples. In addition, the long-term political stability and relative economic prosperity drew immigrants and refugees from all over West Africa. The techniques of urban divination are as varied as the many ethnic neighborhoods that comprise Abidjan. While traditional practices flourish, signs advertising clairvoyants and "consultants" who use palmistry, astrology, or tarot also lure the urban clientele. The impressive array of alternative divinatory techniques being practiced in Abidjan strikingly represents the kaleidoscopic quality of religiosity in this city in creative flux and recombination. The prevalence of divination in Abidjan reflects the urban plight even as it provides clients with a means of addressing the acute distress that a modern metropolis engenders. Clients are compelled to seek out divination in light of the social dysfunction of "under-development" and the alienation of the city. Urban diviners are often themselves economic refugees, no longer functioning as ritual specialists in the service of community, but as paid professionals who cater to a clientele of individuals. The promising talents of diviners advertised on billboards are presented like other commodities on the market. The practices reflect the capitalist and individualistic milieu in which they now operate.

These trends do not mean, however, that the ritual process has undergone degeneration to the degree that it no longer holds value as an ethical enterprise. While there is no effort on the part of diviners or their clientele to appeal to an entire, cohesive tradition, urban divination is genuinely grounded in its traditional techniques, and these have always been innovative and adaptive. Even the most consistent of divinatory systems, such as Ifa which requires that every diviner undergo rigorous training and ritual initiation before being admitted into the coterie of specialists, has always included innovation. For example, Ifa diviners invent new *odù*, interpretive verses associated with the ideograms cast by the random fall of kola nuts (William 1966, 408–421). This seems to defy the common assertion that the verses constitute a fixed canon of the Yoruba divinatory technique. Moreover, many traditional divinatory

forms exist in which there is no systematic interpretation of signs. Diviners readily admit that even among those who use identical techniques there is no consensus about the meaning of the patterns cast, and that the rules of interpretation are few. What is consistent and authentic in both traditional and urban contexts is the appeal to the practice of divination itself and to the underlying premises that support it.

Contemporary clients continue to perceive a need for protection and release from the tyranny of invisible forces, for even in the city there persists the conviction that, along with the empirically demonstrable facts of underdevelopment, it is the elusive powers of spirits, witches, and spells that undermine life. Divination provides a sense of empowerment by enabling the client to consider the crisis at hand from the overarching vantage point of cosmic dynamics. It allows the client to envision possibilities for control and relief to problems that might otherwise remain beyond the purview of his or her ability to act (see Jackson 1989). As Guedou Joseph, a practitioner of Fa from Benin put it, "God says, 'get up and lift your heavy load and I will help you load it onto your head' [where it can be carried]. When you make sacrifice you lift your burden, and God places it on your head."

Urban divination offers clients a critical alternative to Western, materialist appraisals of the problems of modernity that plague them. Rather than capitulating to the economic rhetoric of development theory to explain the inevitability of the paucity of jobs, the lack of access to adequate healthcare, corruption, bureaucratic mismanagement, and other facts of daily existence, urban West Africans turn to divination as an explanatory frame. It asserts that circumstance must be interpreted in terms of less tangible realities and that destiny must be negotiated accordingly (see van Binsbergen 1995). The potent appeal of urban divination is that it revivifies underlying precepts and values, even as it asserts an alternative interpretation of the miseries that plague the typical inhabitant of the city.

In the urban sphere ancestors play a significantly reduced role. They are neither the source of divinatory messages nor recipients of propitiatory offerings. Rather, it is personal spirits, more anonymous and nebulous, who intercede in the negotiation of destiny. Urban divinatory prescriptions are more individual and therapeutic than political. For example, rather than being asked to sacrifice a goat in a public ritual and distribute meat to relatives involved in a dispute, a client might be asked to wash her face in milk, and leave a kola nut at a crossroad. Furthermore, urban diviners repeatedly assert that a client makes sacrifices not to appease either personal spirits or ancestors, but rather to empower his or her own soul or spiritual double. At first glance, this adjustment seems to reflect adaptation to the anonymous urban situation, where moral precepts can no longer be sustained by adherence to traditional values or community life. However, it is ultimately no different from the Yoruba appeal to one's own *orí*, or "head," as the seat of personal destiny that must be propitiated in order to properly unfold. Divinatory sacrifice is so pervasive that beggars install themselves at busy crossroads where they are certain to secure daily alms. Reinforced by mutual good will, sacrifice elicits a visible acknowledgment of a trans-ethnic African identity. It binds the hybrid population into a visibly coherent moral community.

By validating the reality of essential common postulates like witchcraft as the source of evil and the corrective power of sacrifice, divination has contributed to a popular sense of transnational affiliation across political boundaries. These "traditional" notions are increasingly becoming the hallmarks of a "new amalgam" identity which is clearly being forged today among urban West Africans from various countries, who readily assert that there is no difference among them (Jules-Rosette 1979, 226). This new sense of identity does not fall back on the largely bankrupt notion of citizenship that has had little to offer contemporary Africans whose nations are rife with civil wars, on a continent where the extent of

refugee migration lends new meaning to the term "African Diaspora." The highly visible and vital practices of urban divination rely on a worldview that transcends ethnic boundaries and reinforce an ethos that binds and sustains community. Divination redefines problems in terms of a familiar interpretive framework and transcribes the dynamics of power into idioms that have currency across West Africa. Drawing on this overarching schema, urban divination represents a vital link to the indigenous religious world of meaning even as it shapes contemporary social reality.

In the urban situation every instance of divination is a deliberate undertaking, for it is the client who decides to initiate an inquiry. The client retains a large measure of control over the entire ritual process, from the choice of a diviner to participation in the interpretation of the signs, including the decision whether to accord it any authority at all. No prescription is enforced. It is up to the client whether to perform the recommended sacrifice, or to ignore the prescription and perhaps consult yet another diviner. Thus, divination calls for a constant appraisal of the choices and ramifications of action open to its participants. At the same time it provides for the kind of deliberation and decision making that give principled direction to action. Ultimately, however, divination recommends the individual to the community through sacrifice. In this way the divinatory process straddles the stereotypical thought/action dichotomy in an important way. Its ritual is not an unreflected exercise of repetition, and its foundational beliefs are not unquestioned. Instead, through divination, belief is exercised and practice is deliberated.

In the alienating context of contemporary urban life, where the negotiation of daily existence is increasingly difficult and unpredictable, divination is perhaps more critical than ever as a mechanism by which a sense of communal identity and moral purpose can be asserted, and a sense of personal agency is grasped and affirmed. This makes it easy to predict that divination will certainly continue to assert itself as a critical component of urban life and a vital affirmation of what may be considered a distinctively West African ethic.

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8 Religions of the Americas

CHAPTER 86

Indigenous Peoples

Vine Deloria, Jr.[†]

Religion as a distinct and separate activity of life does not exist for most indigenous peoples. They are a wholly empirical people, deriving their understanding of life from their experiences and the traditions of previous experience handed down in stories and practices. They formulate a general perspective on the rhythms of the natural world and derive practical principles to serve as guidelines for human behavior. From observation they know that everything in the universe has life and they set as their goal achieving a knowledge that will enable them to blend with other forms of life within the cosmos. They do not, as a rule, distinguish between things wholly physical and intangible experiences that we may call fantasy, hallucination, or even spiritual revelations. Dreams, apparitions, and unusual events that they may experience in the course of living are regarded as essential elements in their lives, a valuable source of information that can be obtained in no other way. Yet in their daily lives much care is taken to distinguish between purely secular behavior and the unusual event that reveals the sacred dimension of life.

This entry explores the moral outlook of indigenous people in North America. Of course, one must realize that crucial distinctions among these communities and other indigenous people around the world would need further attention. Yet by drawing on the resources of Native-American tribes, the wisdom and also present challenges facing indigenous people can be discerned and explained. The entry concludes with the threat posed to these peoples.

Moral Identity and Moral Order

Concern for moral identity seems to be grounded in the conception they hold about the creation of the world. Yet even in the simplest stories of the creation event one finds that the narratives are already structured by a sense of morality and purpose. The Creator and his/her assisting spirits are already bound to respect certain limitations on the exercise of their powers. We often find the kinship patterns directing the behavior of the major divine actors in the creation drama so that the universe cannot exist unless there is already an orderly structure within which the supernaturals can act. These relationships are not restricted to humans, but assist in defining the manner in which birds, animals, and other forms of life behave and relate to each other.

For an impressive number of indigenous communities, humans are regarded as the last creatures to be created. The other creatures have already arrived or have been created and know how to live in the

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Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

physical world using the special talents and knowledge given them before humans enter the picture. Sometimes, without any antecedent, the birds and animals themselves create the world or act as cooperative partners with the spirits to do so. We are, therefore, the junior members of the web of life and we must learn from all other creatures. Some of the songs of indigenous peoples recite and celebrate the strength and knowledge of the animals, the wisdom of the birds, the rhythmic growth of the plants, and other attributes in which other forms of life have faculties superior to our own.

A primary talent, it seems, of indigenous peoples consists in the ability to describe the cycles of life experience in spoken words and ceremonies that express what all creatures feel at a given moment. We can also reflect on the nature of the world and seek cooperative relationships with animals and plants that enable them to reach their highest possibility of fulfillment. Our role becomes apparent to us when, in a great catastrophic event, such as an earthquake or flood, we find the birds and animals coming to us, looking for guidance and safety, as if we were capable of resolving the crisis.

The other creatures provide us with examples of how to live in different landscapes as individuals, families, and groups of families. By watching how birds and animals feed themselves we can find food in the most obscure places. The Sonoran desert of Mexico and southern Arizona, for example, appears to be without redeeming qualities as a food supply, yet the Indians who lived in the area knew over a hundred plants that were nutritious and edible by closely observing what the birds and animals ate and, most important, when they harvested their food. In the deep forests, adopting the diet of the bears and small water animals led to the discovery of edible foods and medicines. We have always relied on the examples of other creatures to show us how to live productively on the earth. Today, these practices are being formalized in a new science, zoopharmacognosy, the effort to learn how animals use different roots and plants to cure their illnesses.

Indigenous peoples particularly noted the social behavior of other creatures. Buffalo, for example, graze in certain set patterns with the adult bulls in advance of the buffalo family, younger males always on the outside of the family group, and the cows and young calves in the center. In the harshest blizzard the buffalo will form a wedge with the older animals on the outside of the group, the younger in the center, with the animals most in jeopardy from the blizzard changing places occasionally so that no single animal must bear the brunt of the icy wind beyond limits of endurance. In migrating, this pattern is always used so that the younger animals are protected from predators. When an individual is injured, buffalo – like elephants and other animals – gather around and try to assist the stricken member of the family. The Plains Indians copied this pattern in their hunting migrations with but one change. The elder men having experience and powers led the tribe so that their advice could immediately be sought should trouble occur.

While some animals seem to cede the leadership of the group to the male who demonstrates physical superiority, the real leader of the herd or group is not always the strongest male but often the male that has some kind of charismatic status within the herd. Close and continued observation of a herd can reveal this nearly hidden phenomenon. From this behavior we learn that in the animal world it is the appropriate behavior, considering all conditions, that provides the real leadership. We also learn that animals on the outside of the herd or on the edges of the prairie dog town are sentinels or scouts whose duty it is to alert the group in case of danger. Many indigenous peoples pattern their social and political activities after these ways of the animals, and often they come to believe that they and the animal are one spirit because they can harmonize with the animals so well. One level of their moral vision is that of *imitation*.

Moral Understanding and Interspecies Communication

Mere imitation is sufficient to ensure that humans fit into the environmental food chain with the animals. But the question arises how the non-human creatures *know* the things they do. How do their actions and reactions mirror the experiences we have? How do they have the same kinds of emotions, love, loyalty, jealousy, and sacrifice that we have? Do we gain their knowledge only by imitation or is there another way to establish a personal relationship with other forms of life? Eventually, indigenous people concluded that other creatures were peoples also, distinguishable from us primarily by a different physical shape and apparent destiny but capable of enjoying a great variety of emotional experiences that we recognize in ourselves.

Here the quest for a better understanding, the distinctive characteristic of our species, comes into play. Indigenous peoples sought to learn the most closely held secrets of the birds and animals, so they spent a great deal of time watching them and meditating on what they had observed. How did animals respond to certain life-threatening situations? How did they protect their young? How did the burrowing animals store food for the winter? How could animals identify minute changes in the weather and take precautions long before humans became aware of the changes? Often, meditation laid the groundwork for an encounter with a bird or animal. In dreams, animals and birds might appear and give humans a song, instruct them in how to gather medicines, or offer to provide protection in dangerous ventures. These communications were as real as if they had been experienced in the secular daytime event. They were always empirically verified when the human sought to make use of the information given in a dream.

The understanding of the nature of the organic world is radically changed when a bird, animal, or plant speaks to a human. While this event could occur in dreams or visions, it was also possible to encounter another creature during the daily chores and receive instructions that could immediately be put into motion. A woman might be out gathering roots and berries and hear a voice calling to her, a voice she had never heard before. After searching diligently to locate the source of the communication she might find a plant that she had not known previously. The plant might express its desire to help her. It might tell her how to harvest its fruit, how to make it edible, or how to prepare a broth or soup for nutrition or medicinal purposes. There was a berry bush on the Great Plains that produced sweet berries when approached downwind but sour berries when the harvester approached upwind. Such a radical change in the usefulness of the fruit of the plant might be discovered accidentally, but it also might be part of the instructions given by the berry bush.

In most episodes of interspecies communication, the non-human participant tells the human that he or she has been under observation for some time and has proven worthy of the bird or plant's friendship. The human must have shown a morality consonant with the morality of the cosmos, a morality recognized and cherished by other creatures: the practice of showing respect for the non-human. The non-human therefore trusts the human to use its knowledge or assistance in the proper way. At the deepest level of life, and with a strict adherence to the cosmic order, other creatures seem to have a great affection for us and are always ready to communicate with us. If we are worthy in their eyes, they adopt us.

Countless stories describe how humans came to have a natural technology through the intercession of non-human beings that taught the humans how best to use them or call upon them. Thus, the cedar told the Pacific Northwest peoples how to make canoes, the ground turnip and camas root told the women how to harvest and cook them, remembering always to place a pinch of tobacco in the hole where they had once taken root. Squash, corn, and beans, the Three Sisters, told the Iroquois that they must be

planted together if they were to blossom and bear a plentiful harvest. The cottonwood told some young boys to advise their parents to use its leaf as a pattern for the tipi. The buffalo told the Blackfeet to change their way of hunting lest their numbers decrease and they disappear.

From Imitation to Participation

At the stage where there is interspecies communication the morality that had once existed at the level of *imitation* now becomes a *participatory morality* in which humans and non-humans are fulfilled. The occasional confrontation with the non-human beings proved such a benefit that the people looked for other ways of opening themselves to more communications with the other creatures. This desire was expressed in the practice of the vision quest, which became almost universal among indigenous peoples in North America. Here humans humbled themselves before the living universe, fasted for days asking for guidance in the life ahead, and sought friendship with whatever creature might take pity on them.

During this experience the petitioner might simply hear a voice announcing that the higher powers were pleased with the human's effort and encouraging one to live a good life. Sometimes an animal or bird would tell the human that his or her sincerity had touched their hearts and so they would give a song to sing when needing their assistance. Thereafter, unless the gift was misused, the human could call upon the other creature for help and guidance. The human receiving this gift has all the positive powers that are innate to humans and the capability of calling on an animal helper to solve problems that humans alone cannot solve. A human with a spiritual helper, then, is held to a higher standard of morality than a person lacking such a relationship. But the power was always exercised on behalf of the community.

Often, people would create societies composed of other people who shared experiences with a certain animal. Thus the Fox society had members who had enjoyed a positive relationship with that animal and sought to display his observed virtues in their own lives. They were forbidden to kill or eat the animal that was helping them and therefore had to trade for furs, hides and other body parts with those hunters who had no relationship with the fox. In a typical village all the local animals would be represented by humans who had personal relationships so that the community as a whole benefited.

This benefit included those people who had special relationships with the winds, thunders, and powers of the four directions. It was therefore necessary for the community to be aware of the limitations placed on them by these relationships and not to cause undue harm by violating one of the prohibitions. The non-humans could punish the humans when an agreed boundary was violated, when the plant or animal was not accorded respect, or when the powers were misused. Since the community benefited from the positive side of the relationship it could also suffer from a violation by an individual. At such a time the injured non-human of the incident would usually inform a spiritual elder of the community and measures would be taken to resolve the issue. Since climatic elements had immense power, the people took special care not to offend them or to repair the damage of the relationship as quickly as possible.

Most important in understanding this web of life and the sharing of knowledge is that the individual bird or animal knew the limits of their relationship and judged the human accordingly. Strangely, individuals of the species seemed to have an intimate knowledge of the promises made earlier to a human by another member of the same species. We seem to have here a variant of the 100th monkey

phenomenon in that when a human desired assistance from one of his non-human friends, spiritual help came from a local individual of that particular species. Otherwise, birds and animals pursued their normal lives. Sometimes a different bird or animal would appear and inform the human that it also carried the responsibility for performing certain tasks and therefore had come to perform the promise. We are here undoubtedly talking about a higher spirit manifesting itself through the medium of a bird or animal, rather than those creatures themselves having superior minds or the inclination to deal with human necessities.

The Spiritual Lives of Sacred Places

Mountains, lakes, rivers, buttes, and mesas were found to have spiritual lives of their own and a superior knowledge of what had come before. When humans approached a natural feature they would often meet, in human form, the spirit of that place. They would be told the limits of their relationship with the location. Finding sacred locations was not difficult because geological uniqueness seemed to be part of the sacred nature of things, indicating that there was individuality in physical features also. Thus, the spectacular Spider Women's Rock in Canyon de Chelly attracted the Navajos and was recognized as a sacred site, the Hopis held springs sacred, and the Bear's Lodge (Devil's Tower) was understood as a sacred location for many Plains tribes.

The actual listing of these locations in North America would be quite long, although many tribes shared sites for ceremonial purposes. The Cheyennes and Sioux both regarded Bear Butte near the Black Hills as a special place to do vision quests and seek spiritual guidance. The Medicine Wheel in Wyoming was a special location for many of the local tribes and they marked this spot of primary power by creating a large circle with spokes to indicate the center. Other sacred locations were so ordinary that unless a human knew the history and geographical boundaries of the site, they could not be located by guesswork. Over many generations, then, it was possible to understand a vast landscape and how different sites related to each other. Four impressive mountains marked the boundaries of Navajo land and it was known that a special "dome" of sacred power existed within these boundaries.

There were, by the same token, places where the people discerned and avoided some kind of evil or forbidding force. The Yellowstone geysers of Wyoming, the Badlands of North and South Dakota, and several canyons in Utah immediately come to mind as sites where people discerned a negative presence. In the Pacific Northwest some lakes were regarded as extremely dangerous and to be avoided at all costs. There were many stories of how people disappeared while using the lake and these were sufficient in warning people of the dangers at some locations. Often these lakes were the places where water monsters appeared, so that it is difficult to tell whether it was the story of the monster or the lake itself that was hostile.

Medicine men relate that special piles of stone were placed around the perimeter of bad places to warn people away from them. Sites could also attract ghosts of people long dead who had suffered a tragic fate at a particular location. As a consequence of the ability to discern evil locations and spirits, the people had to become intimately acquainted with the complete powers of a particular landscape and limit their activities accordingly. A location where some great tragedy had occurred might be avoided because that tragedy might be reenacted by the spirits of the people who died there. Ghostly reenactments of a tragic event were not unusual.

Elders say that in very early times the spiritual leaders of their tribes were introduced into the secrets of sacred places by learning special ceremonies that enabled them to go inside mountains and rivers as if they were a normal part of the physical world in which they lived. The Cheyennes spoke of a cave at Bear Butte into which they could go to converse with the spirits. Secular observers could not find the cave and there was no physical evidence of its existence. However, when a certain ceremony was performed, the Cheyenne medicine men seeking advice from the spirits could easily find the cave. It did not otherwise exist in our physical world. The Sioux had a similar experience with the Bear's Lodge (Devil's Tower) and medicine men maintained that another world with trees, lakes, and rivers existed within that structure.

Many tribes related how the Little People lived in springs and waterfalls and could take humans to their homes underwater without injurying them. Since people abducted by the Little People could not return except under unusual circumstances, people were generally afraid to risk themselves at these locations. The Little People could come out of their world into ours and perform most of the daily routine functions that we do. Indeed, some Crows and Shoshones relate how they have encountered Little People while hunting in the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming. They seem to have a physical reality in these encounters.

That large inanimate natural features could have a sentient existence and intellectual life created yet another level of morality to which people were bound. The Black Hills, for example, were set aside for the benefit of the animals and they were believed to gather there on occasion to celebrate their existence. People could go into the Hills to gather lodge poles and foods, but they were not supposed to disrupt the other creatures in their use of the place. This higher morality of the *unity of life* is characterized by the requirement humans exercise *self-discipline* and *provide* for the birds and animals. It was roughly the equivalent of our game preserves today, but had considerably more status in the eyes of the people.

An Ethics of Life and Current Challenges

What were the forces in the natural world that possessed such power as to change, in an instant, the lives of all the living beings? Noting wind, rain, snow, and fire, observing the infinitude of the starry heavens, and finding there energetic powers of immense intensity, humans sought to understand the larger cosmos. Remembering the place where wind and snows originated they identified the four directions as having immense powers and in large part determining the fortunes of human beings. Even these directions seemed to possess personality and thus it was that they personified the directions, often representing them as human figures and personalities. Since these powers were far superior to those of the most knowledgeable humans, rituals were structured so that the powers of the universe were first addressed before human concerns were voiced. In the Southwestern United States the people created the sand painting that reproduced the bounded cosmos in miniature. In the Plains and woodlands the ceremonial pipe was raised and pointed to the four directions, then to the sky and finally to the earth. By recognizing the spiritual context in which appeals for help and prayers of thanksgiving were made, the people conformed to the requirements of a *moral universe*.

The power that was first discerned to exist in every entity in the world and enabled them to move was understood as representing an ultimate *unity of life*. The difference between species was one of structure only and people classified the organic world by the means of locomotion – flying, crawling, creeping, and

walking creatures. Birds and animals seen together in benign relationships gave testimony that among the other beings friendships existed similar to the benefits that people received from each other. Each apprehension of non-human relationships revealed the deeper life of the spirit.

Morality, then, was a function of the universe but manifested in the knowledge and behavior of all living things. The "ethics" of indigenous peoples thereby includes within its vision *imitation*, *participation*, *self-discipline*, and *unity of life* wherein human existence is set within a wider reality of sacred places, interspecies communication, and manifold powers. The point of this "ethics of life" was to allow all creatures to fulfill their destiny insofar as they could do so without disruption of other forms of life. There were, to be sure, predator–prey relationships in the food chain, but they were understood as having been reached by mutual consent between humans and the other creatures. We live on the game animals but we contribute our bodies to the earth to become soil in which grasses grow to feed the animals.

Once this chain of being was disrupted, indigenous peoples were unable to fulfill their duties toward the rest of creation. It was and is disruption by conquest, social displacement, racial and ethnic bias, and economic and technological development that threatens indigenous ways of life around the world. The only morality that has become adopted in this threatening situation is from the civilized invader, a morality wholly foreign to the world in which we really live.

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CHAPTER 87

Origins of Ethics in the Religions of the Americas

David A. Clairmont

In tracing the origins of ethics in the religions of the Americas, one faces a number of challenges. First, one is faced with identifying what falls inside the broad label "religions of the Americas" and what falls outside it. For example, should one include only those communities that predate, in terms of historical continuity, the arrival of European colonial powers or should one include recent communities in the Americas that understand themselves to be distinctively American expressions of cultures from around the globe? Second, even if one were to restrict investigation to those cultures with longstanding geographic or cultural continuity in North, Central, and South America, how should one go about selecting what is "representative" of the great religious and wider cultural diversity of this vast region's indigenous peoples? Should one investigate only communities that predated colonial invasions and maintain a strong cultural presence in one region of the Americas, or should one also consider the communities that existed at the time of first contact with colonial powers but no longer survive intact as they once did? Third, even if one were to select a community with such historical continuity, one is still faced with the task of making sense of the ethical significance of a community's "origins" since these communities, like others across the globe, are not static collections of religious beliefs and practices but change to negotiate new social, political, economic, and moral challenges with each new period of their histories.

One way of thinking about ethical "origins" is to examine different ways that individuals and communities think about the importance of *that which comes before*. Naturally this would include some consideration of how the first nations of the Americas considered the importance of their own cultural histories and community values in the face of challenges to their group identity and ways of life posed by the arrival of colonial powers. In each set of challenges, we are able to observe the presence of the complex questions with which these communities struggled but also the central place that negotiations of religious and other cultural values played in that process. The purpose of this entry is not to provide an overview of the earliest expressions of religious views of the Americas' first nations. Rather, this entry considers the idea of ethical origins and the ways that some indigenous communities of the Americas thought about, fought to preserve, and yet scrutinized their histories in light of new challenges occasioned by contact with other indigenous communities and with other peoples arriving on their shores.

In the examples discussed below, our focus will be primarily on the religions of the indigenous peoples of North America. Roger Iron Cloud and Raymond Bucko summarize that "Today there are 561 federally recognized tribes, while other groups continue to seek recognition. At the time of European contact, according to estimates, the number of Natives in North America was between 1.3 million and 10 million people.

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The 2000 census places the number of Native people who self-identify as solely Native American at 2.4 million (1% of the total population), with 4.3 million more who self-identify as "Native American and other" (1.5% of the population). A third of the Native population is under eighteen years of age. More than half of all Native Americans live away from reservations" (Iron Cloud and Bucko 2009, 119). Since it is not possible to chart the origins of each of these tribes, even if one were to limit the scope to North America, the approach followed here will be to offer examples that give some sense of the specific religious and wider cultural contexts but also that offer insights that could be useful in understanding other indigenous communities of the Americas. When speaking of these communities collectively, we shall refer to these communities under one of three broad designations currently used by scholars and by the members of these communities: First Nations, Native Americans, and indigenous peoples.

In the preceding entry in this volume, which examined the meaning of ethics in the lives of indigenous peoples, Vine Deloria, Jr. offered the following assessment:

> The 'ethics' of Indigenous Peoples . . .includes within its vision *imitation*, *participation*, *self-discipline*, and *unity of life* wherein human existence is set within a wider reality of sacred places, interspecies communication, and manifold powers. The point of this 'ethics of life' was to allow all creatures to fulfill their destiny insofar as they could do so without disruption of other forms of life. There were, to be sure, predator–prey relationships in the food chain, but they were understood as having been reached by mutual consent between humans and the other creatures. We live on the game animals but we contribute our bodies to the earth to become soil in which grasses grow to feed the animals. Once this chain of being was disrupted, indigenous peoples were unable to fulfill their duties toward the rest of creation. It was and is disruption by conquest, social displacement, racial and ethnic bias, and economic and technological development that threatens indigenous ways of life around the world.
>
> (Schweiker 2022, 749)

Building on Deloria's insight in conversation with other scholars who have written on the ethical dimensions of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, this entry investigates how "what has come before" provides moral guidance in the development of character (the focus on imitation), in the development of community (the focus on participation), in the development of identity (the focus on self-discipline), and in the development of metaphors for understanding the truth about the world (the focus on unity of life). In each case, the approach will be to examine a different indigenous tradition of the Americas to illustrate how these traditions rely on what is prior to carry out the work ethics – broadly speaking, the project of living a good life in the company of others who have gone before us, who are present now, and whom we will meet again in some way in the future.

The *Character* of What Has Come Before

One way of understanding the importance of what has come before in the ethical outlooks of the indigenous religions of the Americas is through the idea of character. In the life of any community, events occur that occasion the people's response. In his article "Weathered Character: Envy and Response to the Seasons in Native American Traditions," Tod Swanson argues that "the moral life of traditional Indian groups centers around the formation of a powerful well-weathered character, that is,

of a disciplined personality capable of responding appropriately to the unpredictable in seasonal movement" (Swanson 1992, 281). Drawing examples from the Papago people of Arizona, the Páez of Colombia, and the Quichua of Ecuador, Swanson suggests that character is expressed in terms of appropriate or fitting response to the events – natural and those set in motion by personal choices – that occur in the life of a community. For example, discussing the Páez account of character, Swanson quotes one of the teachings of the Páez religious and military leader Manuel Quintin Lame (1880–1967) in his book *Thoughts of the Indian Schooled in the Colombian Forests*. "Behold the star that rises in the east called 'the Sun'; behold the concert of the major stars which form the clock that is fixed above our heads; behold the harmonious . . . singing of those choirs of the forests; behold the internal order of the woods when it is the turn of the torcaza dove [to sing] . . . of the alondra . . . of the concert of grasshoppers who perturb the ear with their strident song" (Swanson 1992, 280). Describing the process of drawing moral lessons from seeing and hearing the events of the natural world, Swanson argurs that for the Páez, "moral character is a memory scarred by hard knocks, repeated interruptions, and adjustments to the procession of smells, tastes, sounds, and colors that mark times of day and year. It is this memory that orients mature persons so that they can respond in appropriate timing to the 'internal order of the woods' which is the 'word of God in the mountains'" (Swanson 1992, 281). Following this Páez counsel produces character because the process of listening and responding has a twofold effect.

First, to respond appropriately means not only to fit into a naturally occurring order but also to learn when, how, and how much to act in response to what is transpiring. For the Páez, "bad timing is related to envy and to gluttony. It stems from the desire to fill a space that at that moment belongs to someone else or to some other species. The 'choirs of the forest' are models of the moral life because they have learned when to sing and when to be silent in relation to the other singers" (Swanson 1992, 280). So, whereas acting with appropriate response contributes to the formation of virtue, acting rashly, excessively, or in a way that is insensitive to one's surroundings contributes to the formation of vice. Second, while virtuous character can be recognized by those outside the community, specific virtues are cultivated by particular people given the events they hold in common and share with their families, wider kinship networks and tribal comminutes. For example, as Swanson explains, "The Papago [of present-day Arizona] (their name, Tohono O'odham, means 'Desert People') have a Desert People character because the limits of their endurance have been stretched and fixed by the seasonal movement of their particular part of the Sonoran desert. By contrast the Pima, or River People, are recognized as a distinct people (even though they speak the same language) because their limits have been fixed by the different environment of the Gila River" (Swanson 1992, 293). Although this may seem to be an observation simply about each group's response to the particularities of their geography, Swanson's point is precisely that this attunement to place has a pedagogical effect on character more generally. Drawing on examples from the Lakota people of present-day North and South Dakota, Deloria argues that elements of the natural world can themselves provide this kind of guidance: "Many Indigenous Peoples pattern their social and political activities after these ways of the animals, and often they come to believe that they and the animal are one spirit because they can harmonize with the animals so well. One level of their moral vision is that of *imitation*. . . Indigenous peoples sought to learn the most closely held secrets of the birds and animals, so they spent a great deal of time watching them and meditating on what they had observed" (Deloria 2005, 554). In this way, the origin of good character may be found in the process of imitating and responding appropriately to one's surroundings. Character is shaped through imitation and response to what has come before in the place that one lives.

The *Community* of What Has Come Before

Another way of understanding the importance of what has come before in the ethical outlooks of the Indigenous religions of the Americas is through the idea of community. Shaping present practices through the process of handing on wise teachings from elders and other reliable guides is central to the formation of moral communities. Yet continuity of present practice with past models is not the only way that a community draws on its ethical origins. Equally important is shared historical experience which highlights particular elements of that past tradition that are important for the community's survival and flourishing.

First, community mediated through past examples comes primarily from stories and there is a close connection between the passing on of stories and the development of virtues noted earlier. As Joseph Marshall explains reflecting on his upbringing in Lakota culture, "I knew growing up that at some point I was supposed to be the things I learned in the stories: compassionate, honorable, and brave. . .I knew this because the storytellers lived the lessons they imparted in their stories, and they practiced what they preached. They were compassionate, they were honorable, and they were brave and wise" (Marshall 2001, xiii). Stories passed down from elders or storytellers from kin groups serve as both moral and practical guidance. Not only do stories have the capacity to illustrate in a vivid manner virtues that allow the community to flourish, so the same stories often involve practical lessons for survival under conditions of environmental adversity or persecution.

Yet the community itself is not only a collection or mediator of virtues but is itself a form of excellence to be taught and emulated to future generations. As Roger Iron Cloud and Raymond Bucko explain,

> In Lakota society community and kinship are one. The name Lakota itself means 'allies' and Lakota are related to each other through birth, marriage, or adoption. ... "Kinship was the all-important matter. Its demands and dictates for all phases of social life were relentless and exact; but on the other hand, its privileges and honorings and rewarding prestige were not only tolerable but downright pleasant and desirable for all who conformed. By kinship all Dakota people were held together in great relationship that was theoretically all-inclusive and co-extensive with the Dakota domain. Everyone who was born a Dakota belonged to it; nobody need be left outside." Both by tradition and in contemporary society today Lakota do not distinguish themselves primarily as a nuclear family or even as a Nation (although this is important politically) but as a *tiyospaye*: an extended family. These units lived in a balance between communal dependency and individual autonomy.
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> (*Iron Cloud and Bucko 2009, 121–122*)

As Albert and Sylvan White Hat explain, the strength of the bond of *tiyospaye* is also considered a virtue and is related to a more general sense of connectedness (*mitakuye oyas'in*) which speaks about the strength of bonds not only among extended family but among the various aspects of the natural world, between creator and creation, and between past, present, and future (Bowen 2005, 126).

Second, shared historical experience also allows present community to unite around a sense of ethical origins. As Beatrice Medicine states, "The common theme that all Native American cultures share is the post-contact decimation of peoples, the destruction of native life-styles and languages, and the subordination of aboriginal peoples in what has been called a 'civilizing' process toward a superimposed 'superior'

mode of life. The subjection to a dominant, white, racist society is the common experience for Native Americans in the present day" (Iron Cloud and Bucko 2009, 119). Reflecting on the teaching of Joseph Marshall, Robin Byerly states that "who and what we are as individuals, as a community, as a society, and as a nation, are the strengths and weaknesses with which we face and live life. And what we contribute to the identity of the whole begins with each of us individually. Our journey toward wisdom begins the moment we are born. Every experience and the consequences we suffer or the rewards we reap shape us into who and what we are. Life itself is a process of curing and hardening" (Byerly 2015, 5). Lakota culture recognizes that awareness of shared historical experience brings some virtues into clearer focus at certain times than at others, even if all the virtues upheld by the community are necessary for the good of the individual and the group in the long run. As Lakota elder and professor Sylvan White Hat, Sr. argues, over the years Lakota teachers have identified a number of virtues that are important for sustaining community life: *unsiiciyapi* (humility), *wowacintanka* (perseverance), *wawoohola* (respect), *wayunonihan* (honor), *cantognake* (love), *icicupi* (sacrifice), *wowicake* (truth), *waunsilapi* (compassion), *woohitike* (bravery), *cantewasake* (fortitude), *canteyuke* (generosity), and *woksape* (wisdom) (White Hat 2014; Marshall 2001; Caldwell 2017). He explains that some virtues are foundational to all others such as *unsiiciyapi* (humility) while others have a special relation one to another and a fittingness to certain kinds of events or people. For example, *wowacintanka* (perseverance), *woohitike* (bravery), and *cantewasake* (fortitude) share certain similarities but each has distinctive characteristics which can only be illustrated through stories. As Marshall explains, *wowacintanka* is taught through stories in which ancestors survive in unlikely circumstances or when immediate family members overcome difficult situations for the good of the community (Marshall 2001, 20–36). Similarly, *woohitike* (bravery) and *cantewasake* (fortitude) are related virtues but while the former is illustrated through stories of resistance to invasion and assimilation the latter is illustrated through the examples of family members who endure changes in living conditions and overcome despair in response to apparently hopeless situations (Marshall 2001, 141–179).

The *Identity* of What Has Come Before

Closely related to community in establishing the importance of what has come before is the construction and maintenance of identity. Continuity of a person with their culture in terms of basic values, shared events, and overarching narratives is central to a sense of belonging to that culture. Identity is a feature of both individuals and of communities realized over time through processes of internalization in light of tradition and externalization in dialogue with other people and cultures. One of the central ways that identity is linked to what has come before in the religions of the Americas is through continuity of practices, especially in the face of external threats that sought to destroy traditional cultures and cultural influence. Often this happened at Christian mission schools, where students were forced to abandon their native languages, behaviors, clothing, art, music, and food. For example, Karen McKellips discusses the effects of nineteenth-century educational programs on Cheyenne and Arapaho children. She explains, "Cheyenne and Arapaho children before this time had learned much of what was needed to function in their societies through play and imitation of the activities of their elders. . . For the Cheyenne, piercing the ears of a child was 'symbolic of opening the mind to learning, understanding, discipline, and knowledge' . . .Through the open ears a rich oral literature passed from generation to generation the philosophical aspects of life as a Cheyenne" (McKellips 1992, 12–20). Contrasting the practices at

St. Labre Indian School in Ashland, Montana with traditional Crow and Cheyenne educational practices, Donna Peterson discusses how "Pre-Columbian Indian education always involved the entire community. Before children could be recognized as mature tribal members, they mastered survival skills, such as hunting, fishing, curing meat, tanning leather, and making clothing. They also cultivated an appreciation of their cultural heritage and acquired spiritual awareness. Directed practice through imitation helped hone a child's talents" (Peterson 2015, 105). As the influence of Crow and Cheyenne children's traditional cultural practices were systematically removed through European educational systems, so too were their connections with their families. As Raymond Bucko explains, "Under a joint effort by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League of America, 25 percent to 35 percent of all Indian children were adopted by non-Native American families. ...This practice was intended to strike at the heart of Native American cultures. To remove children from their families was to undermine the foundation of Native American culture" (Bucko 2007, 76). Whether through forced removal to church-sponsored boarding schools or to European families through involuntary adoption, Native American children were robbed not only of their family connections but also of their families' connections to ancient tribal lands. Noting the vital connection between Indigenous knowledge and the lands of Indigenous communities, Leanne Simpson argues that "Knowledge comes from the land through the relationships indigenous peoples develop and foster with the essential forces of nature. These relationships are encoded in the structure of indigenous languages and in indigenous political and spiritual systems. They are practiced in traditional forms of governance, and they are lived in the hearts and indigenous peoples. Without intact ecosystems, indigenous peoples cannot nurture these relationships" (Simpson 2004, 378).

Indigenous communities responded to attacks on original identity through various forms of resistance: the active maintenance (or in some cases later revival) of traditional language study, the practice of storytelling, and the continuation of traditional religious ceremonies. Yet tribes and their tribal governments have also used available legal means to reestablish land and family connections. For example, many tribes have disputed government interpretations of older treaties that restricted hunting and fishing on tribal lands while other legal developments such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 requires the return of human remains and other items central to Native American tribal culture to be returned to the tribes (Bucko 2007, 78). In these cases, identity is an important expression of ethical origins since what has come before in the community's way of life has been deliberately attacked and even forcibly removed, resulting in the need for Indigenous communities to defend their rights to family and cultural continuity.

The *Metaphor* of What Has Come Before

One last expression of ethical origins to consider in establishing the importance of what has come before is metaphor. Often moral guidance that comes from earlier generations is passed down not in terms of moral principles or laws but through metaphors that link the actions of the human community now to actions of revered persons from the community's past or to divine beings that serve as models for human behavior. A metaphor is not a one-to-one correlation between seemingly disparate concepts but a creative association opening up new pathways for thinking and acting. Discussing the Hopi of present-day Arizona, Maria Glowacka and Emory Sekaquaptewa, discuss the meaning of the terms "*wukwnavoti* or

'ancestral knowledge' (literally, 'old,' *wuy*; and *navoti*, a noun derived from the verb *navota*, 'notice by means of any of the senses, learn, hear'), passed down through generations in oral, visual, and other expressive forms. *Wukwnavoti* encompasses customary practices and their usages that have been tested by the ancestors and proven beneficial to human continued existence, cultural institutions, and ritual and domestic activities" (Glowacka and Sekaquaptewa 2009, 169–170). That which the community's ancestors pass down through these various forms communicate *"qatsivötskwani* (literally 'the path of life that will be [morally] straight'), to fulfill their destiny as a people and to achieve the perfect world symbolized by the concept of spiritual entities, the *katsinam*" (Glowacka and Sekaquaptewa 2009, 166). Although these images can be understood as communicating the guiding principles affirmed by the community and modeled by the spiritual entities governing the world, they are not communicated as moral principles translatable into universal moral laws applicable to any context. Rather, they operate within a specific cultural provenance and function metaphorically to draw effective associations that guide community life.

As Glowacka and Sekaquaptewa continue, "These life-guiding principles have great ancestry, having been preserved in collective cultural memory through the verbal messages of narratives and songs; pictorial images on objects such as ceramics, baskets, kiva mural paintings, and rock inscriptions; and expressive forms (movements, attire, paraphernalia, etc.) associated with ritual performances that are intimately tied to physical places of cultural significance" (Glowacka and Sekaquaptewa 2009, 166). Many words, songs, art forms, food and clothing can function as metaphors, since they all point beyond the specific use of the object in question. The reference might be to stories, or rituals, or the quality of heart (*unangwa*) of certain ancestors, or to the gifts of rain or other life-sustaining forces that transform the desert landscape into an image of paradise – a land of flower light. What unites these diverse references is that they point to a form of life that unifies the community in a twofold sense. These places, people, and practices draw the community together around a vision of a good life, in harmony with others and with the *katsinam*. Yet the community is also unified across the generations. Recalling again the wisdom of the ancestors, Glowacka and Sekaquaptewa emphasize that

> *Wukwnavoti* encompasses customary practices and their usages that have been tested by the ancestors and proven beneficial to human continued existence, cultural institutions, and ritual and domestic activities. ...Customary practices, such as planting, performing ceremonies, grinding corn, decorating pottery, and preparing ceremonial paraphernalia, serve the rejuvenation and perpetuation of life and are referred to in the Hopi language as *natwani*, or 'life-promoting practices.' The term *natwani* is composed of two words, *naa* ('self') and *tuwanta* ('to test '), and in its cultural meaning refers to testing oneself in one's beliefs on a predestined path of life and testing one's worth as a member of the collectivity.
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> (Glowacka and Sekaquaptewa 2009, 170)

In each of these practices, it is the metaphorical sense of places, people, and practices that links the community to what has come before. When we relate a story or teach a young person a craft or a ritual, we are linking them with a past that they have not seen. Yet they do see the effects of that past in their present through the presence and lessons of those who have endured and who have struggled to live a good life in the face of challenges posed by the land, by other people, and even by the results of one's own actions. Our words and actions can have power through metaphor since they can stand for or point to something more

than what we set out immediately to accomplish. Interpreted within a cultural context, what we say and the artifacts we create can link us to the past through reminders of what a community did to survive and can link us to the future as they offer examples for future generations. These practices are time-tested even as they tested those who have passed them on for the well-being of those who will come after us. As Deloria noted, these practices have the capacity to express a unity of life horizontally, vertically, and across time.

Conclusion

Character, community, identity, and metaphor all express ways that the religions of the Americas have drawn on what has come before to guide the life of the community through imitation, participation, self-discipline, and unity of life, values that Deloria suggested were elements of ethical living shared by many Indigenous Peoples. Given the problems involved in presenting the "origins of ethics" for such diverse groups of peoples, we have examined the work of a number of scholars from these communities to suggest that what is important in the idea of ethical origins is not establishing the earliest point of departure so as to pass on a static vision of a beginning but the process of relating to earlier tradition in forming the values, guiding principles, and practices that guide community life today. The other entries in this volume will explore other communities' attempts to do something similar – to honor the old ways and return to them for guidance and encouragement in the face of recurring challenges from the legacy of colonialism and the new challenges of inter-cultural conflict and cooperation arising with each new generation.

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CHAPTER 88

Modes of Interpretation of Indigenous Religious Ethics (of the Americas)

Garry Sparks

Introduction

The study of the religious ethics of Indigenous peoples in general, and particularly in the Americas, is arguably more complex than with other religions. In addition to the challenge to render moral understandings from Native religions, the histories of approaches have also confronted their own ethical challenges. As a result, the material on Indigenous religious ethics is comparatively sparse and still an emerging field (as Richard Brant (1954) and Christopher Vecsey (2013) have noted, albeit with regard to Native American philosophical ethics in particular). The ethical problems confronting the study of Indigenous religious morals are part and parcel of those in the approaches to the wider study of Indigenous histories, cultures, and religious worldviews as well as the ethical concerns raised by Native peoples (e.g. ethnic discrimination, environmental and sexual abuse, etc.). In the past few decades, trends in the methods of approach and modes of interpreting the worlds of Indigenous peoples have aimed to address both subjects – the ethics of Native peoples and the ethics toward and with Native peoples.

This entry will summarize a set of ethical issues pervasive within studies of Indigenous peoples followed by a general historical overview of dominant approaches toward religious ethics of Native peoples in the Americas since the sixteenth century, which is the history from which these methodological and interpretive ethical problems emerge. Most of this earlier work was conducted by missionaries. Their methods – whether proto-ethnographic, philological, and etiological – were informed by their aim: to fit Indigenous understandings into non-Indigenous (i.e. Western European) thought analogically, to reframe a radically unfamiliar thought-world in relation to the already familiar. By the late twentieth century, an increasing shift to understand Indigenous worlds more on their own terms as well as to redress many of the ethical issues in approach fostered recent turns by scholars toward dialogical and "multinatural" modes. Finally, as an example of these shifts, a specific set of terms from K'iche' Maya moral discourse will illustrate the religious ethics of a specific Indigenous American people.

Ethical Problems in Studies of Indigenous Peoples (Religious Ethics)

The methodological challenges in studying Indigenous American ethics are four interrelated, and in some cases mutually reinforcing, problems. The first concerns the issue of authority, namely how and

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

who can speak on Indigenous worldviews. Increasingly, since the 1970s, European-tradition scholars have deferred to the emic perspective, as argued most notably by the Lakota intellectual Vine Deloria, Jr. There are three commonly-recognized criteria Indigenous peoples accord someone insider status. In the United States for example, insider status requires official enrollment in one of the 574 legally recognized American Indian nations, which is largely based on percentage of direct lines of familial descent or Native "blood." Within that, deference is given to those members who have elder status and are understood to adhere to distinctively traditional beliefs and practices (i.e. non-European, non-Christian, premodern, etc.). However, quasi-insider status can sometimes be conferred on non-Native persons adopted into a family or nation (such as through the *hunka* ceremony among Lakota). A third criterion requires knowledge of an Indigenous language. Unlike other scholarly fields (such as Arabic for Islamic studies, or Greek for biblical studies or Classics), proficiency in Native languages is too often not seen as a requirement by non-Native peoples for studying Indigenous worlds even in the academy. By contrast, for many Indigenous peoples a scholar's ability to "speak 'our' language" is indicative of an eligibility to speak not just *with* but also *about* (but still rarely *for),* to help translate Native worlds to "outsiders." In this sense, language proficiency signals a value of solidarity and respect, or harmonious equality, between Natives and non-Natives as well as approaching the study of Indigenous religions on par with the study of historically dominant religions. Furthermore, it evinces the extent to which many Indigenous peoples understand language as epistemologically essential to their world.

A second problem concerns the categorization of some religions as "indigenous," "native," "autochthonous," "endogamous," "primitive," "archaic," etc. With the nineteenth-century development of "world" religions, such as by the World's Parliament of Religions at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, non-dominant religions were often widely considered less consequential or even less civilized. And while many Indigenous peoples were geo-political expansionists prior to contact with Europeans (such as Mexica (Aztec), Inka, Comanche, Lakota, K'iche', etc.), they did not build modern empires and, thus, non-world religions were those of "conquered" peoples of Africa, the Americas, and even parts of Asia or of peoples with little material culture left of their pre-contact religious worlds. A residue of this categorization resides in current survey textbooks on religion where there is usually at best only one chapter on Indigenous religions as a type of religion (e.g. shamanism or animism) or grouping together largely diverse and historically unrelated traditions based on a geography (e.g. indigenous African religion or Native American religion) or ethnic constituency (e.g. the Maya religion) even though a label of European religion or English-speakers' religion would be rejected as overly simplistic, all religions (such as Christianity) are indigenous somewhere, and each "world" religion gets its own chapter rather than typological grouping (such as in a single chapter on monotheism or native religions of Asia Minor).

A related third problem is that because of this typological treatment in the field of religious studies, Indigenous religions are often construed as a distinctive kind of religion that can be understood in terms of some shared underlying principle such as animism, totemism, or shamanism – despite distinct geographies, histories, languages, and cultural demographics. At its most extreme, this approach has also even denied them recognition or status as a "religion" on par with other religious systems by treating them instead as magic, superstitions, folklore, etc. – a Native "spirituality." As a result of this history of typologizing, many modern approaches have presented religious and ethical systems of Indigenous peoples either as static, frozen-in-time, or less "developed" – and, thus, supposedly emblematic of some original religion from which all other religions evolved – or as distinctively mixed, hybridic, or syncretized and, thus, implicitly impure and inferior compared to a "world" religion of a "civilized" people.

Finally, a fourth issue concerns the problem of source material. Aside from the archeological record, such as of the Classic Era Maya (ca. 250 CE–ca. 850 CE), there is little to no pre-contact Indigenous religious texts. Information on Native religious ethics culled from cosmogonic and theogonic stories, ritual and moral prescriptions, songs and prayers, and even the tracings of worship sites all bear traces of engagement with (even if in reaction against) an imperial religion like Christianity. Folklorists, ethnographers, ethnohistorians, and their consultants are rarely critically trained in the histories and diversity of Christianity, and thus unaware of how previously non-Native presuppositions have already affected their material, methodologies, or interpretive lenses. Even attempts to filter out Christian aspects, and thus to identify a less syncretistic and more purely pre-contact Native religious worldview – such as in Richard Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* ([1932] 2008) or even Elisabeth Burgos Debray's *I, Rigoberta Menchú* ([1983] 2010) – were predicated on romantic understandings of Native Americans, and the works fail to reflect on how their authors' romanticism grew from a European Christianity, let alone how such an approach denied Nicholas Black Elk and Rigoberta Menchú Tum their full intellect and agency as, respectively, Lakota and K'iche' Maya Catholics. Furthermore, due to early Christian missionaries and Native people's strategies of cultural adaptation and appropriation in both Indigenous and Christian symbols or the crafting of neologisms in a local language by missionaries, many seemingly ancient aspects of an Indigenous religion can be traced to some engagement with Christian missionaries, a fact which is rarely recognized. For example, recent critical histories by Natives and non-Natives focus on some of the major ethical themes among Native peoples in the wake of mission work, such as sexuality (as in Ramón A. Gutiérrez (1991) and Richard White (2010)), ethnocide (as in George Tinker (1993)), or land and sovereignty (as in Rolena Adorno (2007)).

While there are no easy or definite answers to these thorny issues (as evinced in this entry and the extent to which it also perpetuates some of them), scholars, teachers, and students can no longer be excused for ignoring them. They are among the more perennial ethical problems raised by Native peoples concerning studies of Indigenous histories, cultures, religions, and ethics. The turn by scholars from an analogical mode for a dialogical mode within the past few decades exemplifies the effort at redress – methodologically and interpretively – collaboratively with Native peoples.

Colonial Modes of Interpretation: Analogical

The initial mode of interpretation of morals of Indigenous peoples of the Americas was largely predicated on the establishment of analogies between what was understood by turn of the sixteenth-century Europeans and the wholly unfamiliar peoples they encountered. While explorers like Christopher Columbus (who related the peoples, land, and waterways of the Caribbean with the garden narratives in Genesis) and Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar (who related Maya buildings on Cozumel to Muslim mosques) made such analogies, early Christian missionaries, namely mendicants, employed an analogical mode more systematically, through a variety of approaches, and with an acute focus on religious beliefs and morals.

In general, the concern for Indigenous religious morality throughout much of the missionary literature consists of three Classic themes of sexual ethics (e.g. incest and polygamy), cannibalism (i.e. ritual and dietary), and idolatry (i.e. atheism or demonology). Notably, these were also the same criminal charges – incest, cannibalism, and atheism – made against early Christians by the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity to which some of the first Christian apologists, like Athenagoras of Athens (ca. 133–ca. 190),

replied. Ironically, via appropriation of wider Roman culture in the wake of Christianity becoming the empire's official religion, these same charges continued to be made but by Church jurists against suspected practitioners of remnants of local or indigenous European religions, such as with the witch trials of the medieval era. Early Europeans to the Americas, like Columbus, also tended to divide local populations along such ethical lines, such as his portrayal of Taínos as divided between the humble Arawaks and the cannibalistic Caribs.

Such approaches appear, for example, in arguably the first book by a European written in the Americas – Hieronymite friar Ramón Pané's *Relación* or *Account* ([1498] 1999). Arriving with and staying behind after Columbus's second voyage (1494), Pané attempted the learn the language and customs of the Taínos and wrote what is akin to an ethnography in which he both compares them with Iberian Muslims and investigates their supposed idolatry. This ethnographic reportage on Indigenous religious beliefs, practices, and ethics continued with the *Relación* by explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca ([1542, 1555] 2003) on the Native peoples from Tampa Bay to the Gulf of California. As one of four shipwrecked survivors (three Spaniards and one enslaved African, Mustafa Estebanico de Azemmour), Cabeza de Vaca documents a nine-year journey (1527–1536) along the Gulf of Mexico and Rio Grande, and from being enslaved by Native peoples to learning local languages and rituals, which they mixed with Catholic prayers. Within Cabeza de Vaca's account is a notable shift toward a discourse, practices, and symbolism of healing, pairing local ideologies of illness and health with the therapeutic Christian soteriology, namely the metaphor of salvation.

With the arrival of mendicant missionaries, namely Franciscans and Dominicans in the 1520s and Jesuits by the 1570s, onto the *terra firma* of the Americas a more strategic use of analogical interpretations of Indigenous worldviews began. The humanism heavily present in the leading Iberian universities (e.g. Valladolid, Salamanca, Alcalá de Henares, Seville, and Coimbra) but also convent colleges since the late fifteenth century brought a highly philological approach. Whereas the proto-ethnographic approach found since medieval traveler accounts that documented the customs, practices, and laws of local peoples of foreign lands continued with these mendicants, the humanism of Desiderius Erasmus, Diego de Deza, O.P., and Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, O.F.M., added a value to seek and preserve ancient written sources as part of the *ad fonts* movement, a critical and historical understanding of texts, a systematic analysis of rhetoric toward both Classical languages (e.g. Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and even Arabic) and vernaculars (e.g. Castilian, Nahuatl, Otomí, Yucatec, Zapotec, Quechua, etc.), and an appreciation of a text's wider cultural context for more meaningful translations *ad sensum* rather than *ad verbum*.

Furthermore, in addition to various differences between them, these early mendicants subscribed to competing theories of semiotics that influenced their translation and interpretation strategies. Specifically, the return of Francisco de Vitoria, O.P., from Paris introduced the scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas at the universities of Valladolid and Salamanca by the 1520s. Mendicants, largely Dominicans and later Jesuits but also some Franciscans, schooled in Thomistic realism and a more formalized analogical mode of thinking saw signifiers as distinct from the signified, which was understood to relate to universals. Loanwords (e.g. *Tz'aqol B'itol,* "Framer, Former" in K'iche' Maya) or neologisms (e.g. *nimajaw,* "great lord" in K'iche' Maya) fashioned from one language could mean the same as or similarly enough in another language (e.g. *Dios*). By contrast, other mendicants, namely Franciscans and Augustinians, schooled in nominalism denied the existence of universals and understood an indivisible, or at least more highly contextualized, relationship between a sign and its referent. Nominalist mendicants were more skeptical of appropriating Native terms for Catholic theological and moral doctrine,

resorting more often to neologisms or indigenizing terms from Spanish or Latin (e.g. *Tyox* from *Dios* for use in Kaqchikel Maya). With Thommaso de Vio Cajetan as the head of the Dominican Order during the years of first contact between missionaries and peoples of the Americas and his efforts to promote Aquinas's use of analogies of proportion as a formal method in his treatise on the *Analogy of Names* (ca.1511), Salmanticenses missionaries were more optimistic about the ability to establish commensurability analogically between Indigenous and European religions whereas nominalists were more suspicious and judicious.

However, despite their differences in theories of interpretation, for colonial-era mendicants ethnographic work proved instrumental for their philological work, in which they developed the first multilingual grammars (*artes*) and lexicons (*vocabularios*) on Indigenous languages, and historical work. Many of their studies on American languages – like Nahuatl, Zapotec, Otomí, Yucatec, and K'iche' – not only were qualitatively superior to many of the first studies on European vernaculars by their contemporaries but also predated by decades if not centuries some of the first dictionaries in European languages, like Finnish.

While not a distinct genre as by the nineteenth century, the ethnographic descriptions of Native understandings of proper relationships between people, elements, and forces of the natural world and the wider cosmos including time, ancestors and other non- or semi-material beings appear throughout the lexical entries and as discourse examples in their Native-language grammars. But they also appear in the jeremiads in their sermons and catechisms written in Native languages. More explicitly and extensively, they appear in the encyclopedic *historias* on a particular people or region, or comparatively between Native Americans and other known peoples of the world (such as ancient Greeks, Egyptians, or Jews) for a new kind of comprehensive global history (such the *Apologética historia sumaria* (ca.1555–ca.59) and *Historia de las Indias* (1561) by Bartolomé de las Casas, O.P.). Among the most notable for the study of Native religious ethics and exemplary of this ethnographic and philological approach is Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún's *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (also known as the *Florentine Codex* (ca. 1540–ca. 1571)), specifically Book Six on Nahua "Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy" (1969). Written in both Spanish and Nahuatl by Nahua scribes, this volume consists of a collection of traditional Mexica (Aztec) prayers expressing normative concerns regarding health, politics, kinship, commerce, agriculture, and so on. Along with other collections, such as by Andrés de Olmos, O.F.M., in 1533 and 1556, mendicants like Sahagún recognized that Indigenous moral concerns were articulated through a formal and intensely poetic high-register of speech called *huehuehtlahtolli,* "ancient word," understood by Mexica and other Nahua as the language of, by, and for ancestors and the divine.

In her examination of Franciscan literature in Nahuatl, *The Slippery Earth* (1989), ethnohistorian Louise Burkhart documents how some mendicants aimed to establish analogies between indigenous notions of pollution, wellness, hygiene, excess, absence, center, balance, and so on with biblical concepts of sin and Aristotelian virtue ethics. The culling out of Native moral discourse from mythic stories, aphorisms, and prayers rendered in traditional rhetoric resourced the translation of Catholic ethics by mendicants. On one hand, the antiquarian approach of collecting Indigenous religious narratives and sayings, often treating them comparably like Aesopian fables, to read a set of morals continued with later colonial mendicants (such as Dominican friar Francisco Ximénez's copy of the K'iche' Maya *Popol Vuh* or "Book of the Council" ([ca. 1701–1704] 2007)) but also later professional scholars like folklorists and anthropologists, both non-Native (such as Richard B. Brant's *Hopi Ethics* (1954), Paul Radin's *The Trickster* (1956), Elisabeth Tooker's *Native North American Spirituality of the Eastern Woodlands* (1979), Alfredo López

Austin's *The Myth of the Opossum* ([1990] 1993), and Christopher Vecsey (2015)) and Native Scholars (like *American Indian Myths and Legends* (1984) by Alfonso Ortiz with Richard Erodes).

On the other hand, colonial-era Jesuits working with Indigenous peoples in the Andes, Southern Cone, and Rio de la Plata region took the analogy between health and salvation to a more explicitly medical or etiological approach. Andrés Prieto, in *Missionary Scientists* (2011), documents how Jesuits among Quechua, Aymara, Mapuche, and Guaraní saw the key to religious conversion as contingent on missionaries' abilities to not only master Native languages but also become the religious and moral authority by becoming the authoritative medical practitioner in an Indigenous community. Their ethnographic and linguistic studies of Indigenous religious ethics were not simply metaphorically related to construals of illness and salves but also to Native understandings of botany, herbal medicine, and therapeutic techniques so that a Catholic priest could displace the village "medicine man."

Late- and Post-Modern Modes of Interpretation: Dialogical

Later strategic readings of clerical records on Native morals often in Native languages as well as of documents by Indigenous authors mostly in Indigenous languages represent a wider shift toward a dialogical mode. This interpretative shift followed and aided two interdisciplinary movements in the latter half of the twentieth century: ethnohistory and new philology. The first, ethnohistory, aimed to reread the historical record, often resourced by modern ethnographies on Native peoples to fill in gaps (albeit at the risk of anachronistically projecting or "up-streaming" later Native worlds into the past) for perspectives of Indigenous peoples. Where only texts by non-Indigenous authors, such as trial records, existed inversive strategies of critical analysis inferred what the Native understandings might have been. For example, White (2010) culls out Native understandings of ethical relations through examination of colonial French and Jesuit records on marriage, trade disputes, and warfare where written Lakota accounts have not survived. Likewise, recent ethnohistorians, like David Tavárez (2013), mine colonial Spanish inquisitorial records of heresy trials against Zapotec and Nahua to construct their religious worlds based, in part, on an inverted read of mendicants' distorted portrayals of Native "idolatry."

However, ethnohistorians who focus on milieux like in early colonial Mesoamerica also have available documents written by Native elites by which to balance out European accounts. By the 1970s historians, namely James Lockhart and his students, began to learn the Native languages – such as Nahuatl, Zapotec, Yucatec, K'iche', Kaqchikel, Quechua, and so on – to work with an augmented paper-trail and revise historical understandings by pairing the Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives or, when contradictions were found between the accounts, privileging the Native record in an effort to correct the long dominance of a Eurocentric historiography. Like many early Christian jurists in Late Antiquity, most of the earliest post-contact Native literature appear in legal genres, such as land deeds, wills, affidavits, and petitions, most likely taught to them by mendicant missionaries influenced by theories of natural law and rights from schools like Salamanca. Within the Native literature ethical concerns and concepts focusing on familial relations, posterity, distribution of property and titles of status, and cosmic commitments to the divine, ancestors, and one's own afterlife (or afterlives) are measured by implied ideal norms, with failings casuisitically detailed, and in their authority grounded via Native stories of origin of their community, lineage, or even the cosmos.

Undergirding these two late-twentieth century shifts was the linguistic turn in philosophy, history, and many social sciences, specifically the dialogical turn as explicated by Dennis Tedlock with Aashiwi (Zuñi) and K'iche' Maya texts (1983, 1995) and Bruce Mannheim with Quechua texts (1995) drawn from, for example, the literary and language theory of Mikhail Bakhtin and his notion of dialogism. In contrast to what Bakhtin called monologism and the tendency to have a single narrative or interpreting voice dominant or Tedlock's concern for analogism where the missionary's or ethnographer's voice talks above, beyond, or after a text's various (including Indigenous) voices, dialogicality is defined as talking back and forth, through language, and meaning is not fixed but rather constantly negotiated (Tedlock 1979). The various voices implicitly if not explicitly imbedded that composed a text are held in tension. Native voices within Native authored texts as well as within non-Native authored texts are to be heard by aligning and juxtaposing contemporaneous historical but also with archeological and ethnographic records, by learning Native languages, and by reading texts with Native speakers. The Indigenous religious ethical systems and discernments emerge from the multivocality, or heteroglossia, within the record but also of and with present-day Native intellectuals.

This dialogical turn and the effort to include more Indigenous voices has been further aided by the recent increase in published Native American intellectuals on religion and ethics. In addition to Vine Deloria, Jr. (2006), this also includes now George Tinker (2008) along with Clara Sue Kidwell and Homer Noley (2001), Winona LaDuke (2005), Raymond Austin (2009), and Viola Faye Cordova (2007) with Thurman Lee Hester, Jr. and Laurie Anne Whitt (Waters 2004) as they explicate religious themes like sin, justice, solidarity, and sovereignty but often by focusing on Indigenous religious ethics but particularly with and through environmental, legal, educational, and medical concerns.

Multinatural Relations: Example of Three Sets of Maya Moral Construals

Bakhtin's notion of dialogicality, while not understood as "two interlocutors" but rather "across language," entails the entextualization of the multiple voices not only between people but also within one's own head, an inter- and intra-subjectivity. For appreciation of religious understandings of Indigenous peoples of the Americas, like the Highland Maya, such contruals of multiple voices or selves within (and not merely roles, identities, or perspectives of) a moral agent helps to understand how some Native religions may not adhere to the idea that a person only has one soul. Likewise, such as with the Highland Maya, many Indigenous peoples of the Americas extend ethical norms to non-human "peoples" or "nations" of animals, plants, natural forces and elements, celestial objects, the semi-material stewards of cosmic phenomena, ancestors, and co-creators of the cosmos to whom the peoples of the world hold an "original debt" (rather than an original sin). According to Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2011), based on his research with Indigenous peoples of the Amazon, such a Native ontology is better understood as a "multinatural perspectivism" where humans are to live in right relationships with animals and ancestor spirits – and the domains of such relationships may overlap such as with a person having (or one of a person's soul being) an animal spirit companion (*nawal* in K'iche') – but they are not of the same nature. Viveiros de Castro contrasts such an ontological multinaturalism with the multicultural relativism in so-called modern Western thought that currently influences many current ethical and legal relations between non-Native people. This recent ontological turn in studies of and with Indigenous

Americans, building off of the dialogical turn, has led to the use of Viveiros de Castro's Amazonian-informed heuristic to other Native peoples from the Arctic circle to the Mesoamerican highlands.

Unfortunately for Anglophone readers, most of the recent literature on Indigenous religious ethics is not available in English since it is written by Indigenous intellectuals – namely from Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil, and Bolivia – whose secondary language is Spanish or Portuguese. The recent religious and legal literature by the K'iche' Maya of Guatemala is particularly illustrative given the fact that they have a virtually unbroken literary tradition in their Native language dating at least to the 1550s, such as the *Popol Vuh* ("Book of the Council") and Native notarial records like land deeds and wills, but are also among the survivors of the human rights abuses, including genocide, of the 1970s and 1980s. From which three sets of differentiated but interrelated moral terms predominate in their high-register of ritual and moral discourse and serve to depict K'iche'an ethical discernment for a notion of restorative justice but does not necessarily align with ethical and metaphysical construals of the Abrahamic religious traditions or globalized legal theories (Sparks 2018).

Most notably, a key concept in K'iche' ethics is a doctrine of maintaining or reestablishing a sense of ordered harmony or equilibrium within a moral agent and between others (human and non-human). While the K'iche' do not have a single term like other Indigenous American peoples do for similar concepts – such as *hózhó* among the Diné (Navajo) – it is implied within their moral discourse. Like the *huehuetlahtolli* of the Nahua, *tzij* (literally "word" or "truth" in K'iche') often consists of high-registers of speech that employs formal rhetoric, different kinds of poetic parallelisms, and archaic turns of phrases (some of which can be found in ancient glyphic texts) and take a variety of genres, such as advice or counsel giving (*pixab'*), prohibitions (*awas*), and shaming (*yajanik*) reserved for public ceremonial occasions or private consultations by a *chuchqajaw* or spiritual guide, such as a daykeeper (*ajq'ij*). Ethical discernment entails the addressing of the various perspectives of moral subjects (including, for example, victims and accused but also their wider communities of relations and influences) and mediating among the network of subjective positions. Rather than simply "good" or "evil," moral agents, especially spirits and animals, are understood as more capricious. Religious, social, and ethical discourse is composed not of such mutually exclusive concepts but rather dualisms of complementary opposites.

For example, therapeutic and aesthetic norms dealing with notions of health, nutrition, clothing, and patterns of design operate along a balance between "hot" (*q'aq'*) and "cold" (*tew*) qualities. Understood metaphorically, this set of terms has little reference with either temperature or flavor. For example, maize is "hot" and beans are "cold" regardless of whether cooked or spicy. Notions of physical, psychological, spiritual, or social illnesses are construed as imbalance between "hot" and "cold" elements in one's life, excesses or deficiencies that a traditional healer can diagnose and counterbalance. Like a scale between "hot" elements on one end and "cold" elements on the other end within a person, household, or ecology, any tilting too far to either end is understood not as "evil" but rather "not good" (*man utz taj)*. A day's meals are to have both "hot" and "cold" foods, weavings are designed and displayed attentive to "hot" and "cold" colors, and emotions, bodily functions, physical activities, and words carry "hot" and "cold" forces.

Similarly, the notions of "positive" (*wikiq'ab',* "right-hand" or counter-clockwise) and "negative" (*moxq'ab',* "left-hand" or clockwise) express an ideal relationship of balance within divisions of the human body, domestic sphere, and cosmic dynamics. For example, the night sky rotates in the "positive" direction and so too should how farmers wind bean vines around maize stalks and weavers wind yarn into balls. Before and after meetings or religious ceremonies people greet each other by moving in a

positive direction around the circle. A daykeeper may receive twitches or "signals" in the blood on the left or right sides of her or his body, just as the directional spinning and movement of the flames in a fire offering ceremony, that convey positive or negative messages from God, saints, spirits, and ancestors regarding imbalances in relationships, offenses, warnings of adverse results, as well as suggestions for recompense and restoration of proper relations. While a state of harmonious balance between the "hot" and "cold," and the "positive" and "negative," is referred to as "good" (*utz*), the imbalance between any of these two poles is not usually called evil *(itz)* but rather "difficult" *(k'ax),* "dirty" *(tz'il),* or "ugly" *(tzel),* or simply "not good" (*man utz taj*).

These three pairs of moral or normative terms construe how K'iche'an Maya convey how they ought to relate and work with themselves and others, including animals, natural phenomena, and divine entities nominally along symbiotic lines of reciprocity and mutual respect if not also deference. While, on one hand, the aspects of the ethical life can tilt too far either to the "hot" or "cold" or the "positive" or "negative" sides when an offense, debt, or illness results to, thus, be rebalanced through corrective actions and a loose analogy with virtue ethics made by non-Maya interpreters. However, on the other hand, while such imbalances are "not good" the balance between "not good" and "good" can only tip too far to the former's end and never too far to the side of "good." In this sense, the ethical life according to K'iche' Maya, at least for humans, can never consist of too much "good," justice, peace, health, or respect.

The recent interpretive turns – namely dialogical and by extension ontological and metaphysical in fields like contemporary anthropology, ethnohistory, Native-language studies, as well as religious studies – aim to address ethical issues raised by Native peoples in the methods and modes of how their worlds are studied. The more Indigenous religious ethics are studied and interpreted with and by Native people – and concertedly with a specific people rather than always more generally – the more traditional analogies with other ethical systems, such as with presumed universal contrarian binaries between good and evil, emerge as more multivarigated and inclusive of Native ethical terms and concerns.

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CHAPTER 89

Enduring Indigenous Religious Practices in the Americas

Santiago Piñón, Jr

Introduction

Whereas much scholarly attention has been given to Christianity in both its Catholic and Protestant forms in the Americas, the global interactions of religion in the Americas that are remnants of indigenous religious practices are still largely neglected. For instance, in *Latin American Religion in Motion*, edited by Christian Smith and Joshua Prokopy (2004), eleven of the fourteen chapters are devoted to various forms of Catholicism and Protestantism. In Michael Löwy's *The War of Gods: Religion and Politics in Latin America* (1996), the focus is on liberation theology, the Catholic Church, and politics, but there are no hints of other religions or religious people who may have been interested in the political issues the book addresses.

In this regard, an interesting and more promising approach is found in *Migración y creencias* (Migration and Beliefs), edited by Olga Odgers Ortega Ortiz and Carlos Ruiz Guadalajara (2015). It traces how various religious practices can be found in various regions of the Americas due to migration and the crossing of many borders. Many of the essays mention indigenous religious practices, but these are mostly focused on indigenous people practicing Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. A focus on Islam should be unsurprising given the Moorish influence in Spain prior to the colonialists' voyage to what would later be referred to as the New World.

Theoretical Considerations

Rather than follow the same trajectory as such scholars of Christianity's global interaction in the Americas, I focus here only on those particular religions and practices that are more obscure in that they deviate from the common understanding of what is accepted as Christianity, and on those religious practices that are a form of resistance. Some resist domestic abuse, which is based on patriarchical ideologies, others resist the commonly held social hierarchies that result in gender inequality and economic disparities. Still others resist authority in its many forms, whether ecclesial or political. Common to all of them is an anthropocentric concern – that of survival.

Because being centered on survival, the question of ethics of these religious adherents and practices becomes especially relevant and important. Some ethicists adopt an anthropocentric perspective that

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highlights what is morally right or wrong for humanity (e.g. Joseph Fletcher). Others prefer a theocentric approach that focuses on a divine authority to determine what is morally right or wrong (e.g. Immanuel Kant). This entry considers both approaches.

While there are benefits to the anthropocentric and theocentric perspectives, perhaps a more fruitful way of understanding global encounters between Christianity and indigenous religions syncretizes anthropocentric and theocentric concerns. In all of the following examples indigenous people adopt various forms of Christianity, but often do so simply for the sake of survival or respect rather than conviction or choice (Deloria 2003). Conversion to Christianity often takes place under duress, such as the threat of annihilation. Yet such conversion does not actually demand that the convert renounce his or her previous religion. In fact, many indigenous people continued and continue their previous religious practices even after adopting Christianity (Clatterbuck 2017). Whereas Western conceptions or claims of truth require the denial, or announcement of the falsity, of other perspectives and positions (de Sousa Santos 2015), indigenous people maintain the truth of their claims, but also admit other possibilities (de Sousa Santos 2018). For instance, the oral history of the Mescalero Apache creation story narrates a particular understanding while maintaining the possibility of other perspectives (Mescalero Apache creation). As one considers global encounters of Christianity with indigenous groups one must keep in mind the complexity of such situations.

A difficulty in understanding Christian global encounters has to do with our knowledge – or rather lack of knowledge – of indigenous cultures and religions. For example, the only record that the Taino people lived in the Caribbean islands was composed by Ramón Pané, a Catholic priest (Taylor and Stewart 2013) – rather than an account by a Taino person. One therefore has to attempt to disentangle from such experiences the Western categories of what constitutes religion and a civilized society that have been superimposed on indigenous people. By the same token, such a portrait of indigenous culture may be romanticized by the one who has encountered these cultures. Moreover, much of the available information about indigenous people is the result of colonization. Tainos continue to exist in spite of almost becoming extinct as a result of genocide at the hands of the white European (Schroeder et al. 2018). Even uncontacted indigenous people have been affected by colonization either through direct exploitation or indirect observance, which has impacted the indigenous community (Arnold and Wallace 2011).

Another difficulty in considering Christian global encounters in the Americas is the prevalence of Christianity in both its Catholic and Protestant forms, which has left little room to hear the voices of other Christian adherents. Without a doubt, Catholicism and Protestantism in the Americans is deeply and often perniciously intertwined with colonialism. This is especially evident in the actions of Hernán Cortés, who would tear down indigenous sacred shrines and replace them with Catholic banners (Sánchez 2008). Protestants welcomed Indigenous Americans allegedly to share a Thanksgiving meal, but even this resulted in the loss of land during the first encounter, and the loss of life at the second encounter (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). Even with the prevalence of Christianity in the Americas there is still evidence of indigenous religious practices that have prevailed.

In spite of the threat and reality of genocide, indigenous people have survived by adapting and adopting the colonizer's religion (Clatterbuck 2017). While many people adopted both Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity, there are indigenous religious practices that are often unidentified.

How can one make sense of such religious practices? Scholars often use a semiotic approach, or the study of signs, symbols, and interpretations, to attempt to explain culture through common symbols. This "thick description" of culture seeks to give meaning to human actions (Geertz 1973). Yet a problem

sometimes associated with this position is the fabricated chasm between symbol and the meaning attributed to the symbol (Fiske and Taylor 2013). This attribute is either situational or dispositional (Heider 2013). Meanings assigned to the symbol are dependent on the attributor's situational or dispositional definition. A situational definition is reached when the symbol is understood in light of the context, or situation, of the individual/culture that owns the symbol. For instance, that an indigenous person adopts a respect for a "sacred text" such as the Bible may have been determined by the fact that ruthless Christians spared her life. On the other hand, Europeans considered indigenous people to be heathens because of their rejection of Christianity, then justified their massacre on the basis of this rejection, in essence blaming those people for what the Christians called an ungodly or sinful or heathen disposition (Todorov 1999).

The chasm between the attribute (here, godlessness) and the attributor (European Christians) (Asad 2009) creates that dualism that assumes there is little or no relation between the situation and the disposition of the individual. Westerners have imposed that idea on indigenous people; such a dualism is a foreign notion among many indigenous people. Indigenous people believe there is absolutely a connection between the situation and the disposition of the person, for the "interdependence of all things in nature determined their culture, that is, ethics, morals, religious expression, politics, and economics" (Cajete 2004). Religious ethicists must therefore take into account the mutual dependence between human beings and nature that indigenous peoples and religions affirm deeply. For example, they recognize the elements of nature, such as water, as sacred objects, for they sustain all forms of life (Burgos-Debray 1994). This relationship implies that the actions of people must be understood in relation to a whole – community, nature, world. Unlike ethics that recognizes actions as a reflection only of the individual, and vice versa (Mora 2018; Gustafson 1984), indigenous people insist that at the center of who they are and what they do is the community rather than the individual (Cordova 2004). The encounters between Christians and indigenous people are more than individuals meeting one another. They are communities who represent their respective religions. As such, a judgment made with regard to an individual is a judgment of the entire community she represents. For instance, when European Christians encountered and categorized particular indigenous people as heathens, they automatically included all indigenous people in the Americas in that categorization. Likewise, to describe white European Christians as responsible for the genocide of indigenous people encompasses all Christians of European descent.

Practical Considerations

Violent Encounters

The Christian encounters with indigenous people in the Americas have always been violent. That Columbus returned to Spain with six indigenous people and presented them to Spain's monarchs is evidence that the encounter was everything but peaceful. The queen understood that the strangers before her were not in Spain of their own free will. Acknowledging they were enslaved, she harshly rebuked Columbus, stating that he had no authority to enslave "Spain's subjects." Although the Spanish Crown officially rejected the enslavement of indigenous people in the New World, the Spanish conquistadores instituted the *encomienda* system as a way to force indigenous people to provide them with free labor. An *encomienda* is a system that provides indentured servitude. Legally, it is not slavery, but for all practical

purposes it is a form of enslavement. In exchange for manual labor, a master would promise to provide a Christian education and allow the servant to go free after a set number of years, of which the master conveniently did not keep track, resulting in countless years of indentured servitude. Although Latin America was the first to ban all forms of slavery, the legal prohibition to enslave indigenous people led to the introduction of African slavery into the newly conquered land.

In addition to the *encomienda*, the Spaniards also used a document known as the *requerimiento* to justify violence in the Americas. Before Spaniards could wage war, they were required to read the *requerimiento* to indigenous people. This text summarized the story of creation, various papal bulls, and demanded that the hearers acknowledge the authority of the Church, the Pope, and Ferdinand and Isabella as king and queen. The text also demanded that indigenous people listen to and respond to the Christian gospel. If they rejected either the ecclesial/political authority or the gospel, then the Spaniards felt justified in waging war against them.

The first public outcry against the Spaniards' cruel treatment of indigenous people took place in December 1511 when the Dominican friar Antonio de Montesinos condemned the Spaniards for their "cruelty and tyranny" against "innocent people." Among the congregants who heard Montesino's sermon was Bartolomé de Las Casas, who would eventually go through a conversion, get rid of his *encomienda*, and become the staunchest polemical defender of indigenous people. Reports and writings by Las Casas led to numerous debates over how Spain ought to act toward the inhabitants of the newly colonized lands. The most influential was the Valladolid debate (1550–1551) between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. The latter argued that war against indigenous people was justified due to what he called their "crimes against nature," which included cannibalism, human sacrifice, and other perceived immoralities. The former argued that the inhabitants were free people and should be treated humanely. Unfortunately, the most prolific and best trained theologian in the sixteenth century was unable to participate in the debate as he had died four years before that.

Embarrassed by the rumors that his countrymen were acting viciously and cruelly toward indigenous people, Francisco Vitoria, the Prime Chair of Theology at the University of Salamanca, began to lecture on issues that considered Spain's presence in the New World. His most mature work was *De los indios*, delivered in 1538–1539. Vitoria argued against Spain's rule, but nonetheless made allowances for Spain's presence in the Americas. Vitoria's work is important because it represents an "encounter" with the Americas without his actually having traveled to the New World.

In addition to significant Spaniards such as Las Casas' and Vitoria's concern about Europeans' violent encounters with the inhabitants of the Americas, indigenous people also exercised their own agency. For instance, after Columbus arrived in the Caribbean in 1492, he built a fort that he named La Navidad before returning to Spain. When he returned the following year, he found that the inhabitants had completely destroyed the fort and killed the remaining Spaniards. In every place that the Spaniards landed, indigenous people resisted the taking of their possessions and their complete annihilation by defending themselves. The extent of this resistance is especially evident in *La noche triste* (July 1, 1520) (The Sad Night), which resulted in Cortés and the native allies being forced out of *Tenochtitlan*, the Aztec capital. When Cortés returned the following year, he found that the Aztecs had succumbed to smallpox and other Western diseases. Although the Aztecs were severely weakened by disease, they bravely resisted until their final surrender in August 1521. The political conquest of the Aztecs allowed for the Franciscans to move freely throughout the New World. While some refer to the Franciscan arrival as the beginning of

the spiritual conquest, indigenous people and their religious practices/beliefs have endured throughout time. The following are a few examples that hint at indigenous practices.

María Lionza

Located prominently in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, is the statue of María Lionza, depicted with well-endowed exposed breasts. Holding a pelvic bone high above her head as a symbol of fertility, María Lionza is mounted on a tapir, a wild pig common in South America. She is the most prominent deity of a trinity that includes the Indian Chief Guaicaipero, and El Negro Felipe, who is a black slave. Each member of this trinity represents individuals who have experienced great oppression and injustice in Latin America. María Lionza is a "protective figure for society's underdogs, women, the native peoples, persons of African descent, the poor, and the disenfranchised" (Nichols 2006, 78). People in Venezuela are attracted to María Lionza because she is concerned with *lo cotidiano*, the everyday affairs of common people.

People dedicated to María Lionza are able to seek advice and assistance from the deity through mediums and mediators who ensure that she remains relevant to people. Similar to the patriarchy that was present in the United States in the nineteenth century, Venezuelans have social constructs that expect women to submit to and live into these oppressive roles. In addition to the hierarchies between men and women, there are also social and economic hierarchies that are established and often difficult to overcome.

Breaking gender stereotypes, women who follow María Lionza are empowered to speak as mediums by channeling the spirit of the deity. Mediators, or interpreters, are women who make known the desires and expectations of María Lionza. These women, mediums, and mediators break the stereotype that women should remain silent and stay out of the public life by speaking on behalf of the deity. This is especially apparent in both men and women seeking the assistance of María Lionza via the mediums and mediators (Nichols 2006). Mediums and mediators overcome economic barriers by charging fees so that others may access their gifts. Mothers/daughters, mediums/mediators, are able to change their economic status by working together and charging higher fees. Especially important is the fact that the deity is no respecter of persons, a fact evident by the deity choosing to speak through individuals regardless of their social or economic status.

In addition to the sessions in which individuals commune with María Lionza, devotees participate in all-day events. On Sundays, large number of people visit Sorte, a sacred mountain in the state of Yaracuy, and make their arduous way up the path in a pilgrimage that reflects their devotion and dedication.

More than twenty-five narratives describe the origin of the goddess, María Lionza. Some of these narratives portray the goddess as the daughter of an Indian chief, while other narratives depict her as a young Spanish woman who assists indigenous people. She is then glorified as a deity for her benevolent work. There are also narratives that reflect her care and concern for the environment. The thread that ties together these narratives is her constant care and concern for others, as well as nature.

The parallels between devotion to María Lionza and to Christianity should be obvious especially when one recalls that she is one deity among a trinity just as Jesus Christ as Son is alongside the Father and Holy Spirit in Christianity's trinity. The encounter between Christianity and indigenous people in Venezuela gives us insight into how the introduction of African slaves into the New World results in

some Afro-Latinos to look to María Lionza for spiritual fulfillment. One should be unsurprised that people are attracted to María Lionza, especially when one considers that the Aztec and Mayan pantheon included by male and female deities. These deities continue to show their presence in contemporary practices.

Santisima Muerte (Most Holy Death)

Another religious symbol that has recently gained prominence in Mexico and in the United States is *Santisima Muerte* (Most Holy Death). Andrew Chestnut, a leading scholar of *Santa Muerte*, argues that the saint can be traced back to Spain and the female version of the Grim Reaper known as *La Parca* (Chestnut 2017). In the eighteenth century, Catholic missionaries used the female Grim Reaper to evangelize indigenous people. Some scholars, such as Daisy Machado, identify *Santa Muerte* among the pseudo-saints in Latin America such as Jesús Malverde, a Robin Hood and Zorro-like figure who protects individuals who have marginalized by the law (Machado 2018).

Though there is some evidence that devotion to *Santa Muerte* was prominent as early as 1994, and maybe even earlier (Bastante and Dickieson 2013), both Chestnut and Machado identify 2001 as the key year that *Santa Muerte* rose in prominence. That was the year that an older lady turned her home into an altar dedicated to Saint Death. The house is located in one of the most dubious neighborhoods in Mexico, home to many individuals who are marginalized economically and to others who live outside the boundaries of law.

Santa Muerte is consequently often associated with Mexican drug cartels, sex workers, and human trafficking, although many others are also devotees. The prominence of *Santa Muerte* is evident from the many shrines to her along the Mexican/US border. Strong devotion to this saint is reflected in the economic impact she has at retail stores that sell various objects to show devotion to *Santa Muerte*. In many of these stores, *Santa Muerte* outsells the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico. In some *botanicas*, stores that sell herbs, votive candles, and so on, both Saint Death and the Virgin of Guadalupe are placed side by side on a personal altar.

Many drug traffickers and sex workers are attracted to Holy Death because of her non-judgmental approach. Her abilities are reflected in the votive candles of various colors. The most ominous color is the black candle which represents vengeance and protection. Drug cartels and human traffickers light the black candle and ask *Santa Muerte* to protect the cargo they are transporting, and also pray for the demise of their competitors. The most popular candle is red, which symbolizes love and pleasure. Individuals use this candle while they petition to *Santa Muerte* that their partner remain faithful. Votive candles are also available in other colors, each representing specific desires or requests of devotees, including financial stability, health, and so on. A seven colored candle is available which allows devotees to expand their requests.

Devotion to *Santa Muerte* is motivated by many reasons, making it impossible to identify a single factor for this saint's precipitous rise in popularity. Common among most devotees is the belief that Catholicism and Protestantism have failed to address the needs and concerns of many people. Also common is the resistance to authority figures, such as priests and ministers, and institutions, religious or legal, that try to dictate what beliefs and practices are acceptable.

Indigenous people may have been willing to accept *La Parca* from the Catholic missionaries, as argued by Chestnut, because the female Grim Reaper was similar to the ancient deity *Mictecacihuatl,* Lady of the

Dead and queen of the underworld (Fernández 1996). Along with her husband, *Mictlantecuthli*, she ruled the afterlife. Unlike Christianity that prescribes a final destination of either heaven or hell for all people, the Aztecs believed in a common destination, Mictlán, for all, regardless of the life that one leads. All people, regardless of social or economic status, will meet death. For many in the Americas, death is something that is not fearful. In fact, many believe that death never has the final word. Death becomes a transition into a different kind of existence. As such, loved ones are able to continue their relationship with those who have died especially during celebrations like the the Day of the Dead.

Día de los muertos (Day of the Dead)

The Aztec belief in the gods of death are reflected in the devotion to *Santa Muerte*, but also in contemporary practices such as *Día de los muertos* (Day of the Dead). The ancient practice coincided with the migration of the monarch butterflies. The Aztecs believed that the butterflies were the souls of their loved one who had passed away. Initially, the celebration was held throughout a two-month period, but with time that long celebration was reduced to the days between October 31 and November 2. Many indigenous people continued to celebrate *Día de los muertos* after the downfall of the Aztec Empire. Catholic authorities allowed the practice to continue as All Saints Day, amalgamating the two traditions. However, they prohibited it when they realized that indigenous people were celebrating a festival dedicated to the dead rather than All Saints Day.

The religious practices of *Día de los muertos* continue to this day, and are now even the focus of two popular movies, *The Book of Life* and *Coco*. We see the extent of the marketing of Day of the Dead in the widespread retail sale of paraphernalia to be used at school activities, home gatherings, and so on. In assuming that the Day of the Dead is a Mexican Halloween, many people today are unaware that this is an indigenous practice that can be traced to the Aztec devotion to the gods of the afterlife that has endured in spite of religious authorities banning the practice (Marchi 2009). While Day of the Dead was a very public celebration, there are others that have been more clandenstine such as *curanderismo*.

Curanderismo (Healing)

Curanderismo, often understood as folk healing and folk medicine, is often marginalized and discredited as not being real medicine (Gonzales 2012). As a healing tradition, *curanderismo* has roots that can be traced to ancient practices identified with pre-contact Meso-American indigenous people (Ortiz de Montellano 1989), and resists the Western split by viewing the individual as a body and spirit union (Smith 1974). Yet it is this same supposedly real medicine that has adopted what Foucault referred to as the "medical gaze" which disassociates the body from the person's identity (Foucault 1973). Many individuals of indigenous descent understandably resist the separation of the body from the soul/spirit (Clatterbuck 2017; Gonzales 2012; Tinker 2004). Recognizing the need to have a medical approach that overcomes this fracture of the person, medical schools like the University of New Mexico offer medical courses on *curanderismo* (Kesler, Hopkins, Torres, Prasad 2015; Salazar 2013; Chavez 1984). Yet, there are some who attempt to secularize *curanderismo* by focusing on the medicinal values of herbs without referencing spiritual and religious aspects of persons and life (García 1991; Wilson 2018). By contrast,

curanderismo incorporates the spiritual aspects of human existence, which resist rationalistic explanations (Hunter-Hernández et al. 2015). While there are studies that recognize that and how patients benefit from spirituality, it is usually understood merely as a coping mechanism and not as something that undergirds life itself (Unantenne 2013). As a spiritual practice, *curanderismo* can be performed only by those individuals who have been called by God and given the gift of healing.

A *curandero/a*, one who practices *curanderismo*, may specialize as a midwife (Gonzales 2012), herbalist (Tafur 2009), or exorcist (Ceja-Zamarripa 2007). Training, or *desarrollo* (development) to work in one or all of these areas begins when an individual recognizes they have this gift from God. Afterward, the individual works under the tutelage of a more mature *curandero* who will teach the apprentice how to conduct various rituals, and to use trances and possessions to make contact with the spiritual realm.

Some of the rituals that are conducted during a *curanderismo* session include lighting candles, offering prayers, and reciting the Apostle's Creed. The most popular ritual that is requested is the *limpieza* (cleansing). A *limpieza* is sought when an individual believes they may have *mal ojo* (evil eye), which manifests itself in flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, and the common cold. Many healers resist charging for their services but are willing to accept a donation. Often, patients are asked to purchase their own materials for the various rituals, materials that can be purchased at the local botanica (herb store) along with various teas, herbs, oils, incense, and candles. Botanicas also often serve as the place where curanderas can meet their patients for their sessions.

One well-known curandero was José de Jesús Fidencio Constantino Síntora known as El Niño Fidencio by his followers (Aponte 2012). El Niño Fidencio died in 1938 and is buried in Espinazo, Nuevo León, Mexico. The small village hosts a pilgrimage every March and October so that followers may enhance their faith and healing powers. Tradition maintains that El Niño had the gift of healing and cured various illnesses including tuberculosis and leprosy. During the festival, devotees expect to receive a blessing from El Niño through a medium.

Curanderas who are dedicated to El Niño specifically resist the Catholic Church by referring to themselves as priests, and often dress themselves in clerical garments common to priests. In addition to *curanderismo* resisting the advancement of science, it also resists how one normally defines medicine by maintaining a unity between body and spirit.

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Part II

Contemporary and Cultural Perspectives

1 Practices and Communities

CHAPTER 90

Practices and Communities (Christianity)

Todd Whitmore

> Now, the devotion to the Eucharist, especially Adoration, I was doing it every day, at the same time, twelve [noon]. Yes, so I would go there, every day, one hour. A kind of a question came, saying, "Whose work are you doing? What about the owner of this work? When do you have time with Him? Now you have divided all the days for the other people, you have not given a day with Me?" It struck me. So, I said, "Yeah, You are right. I think there is a point here." And then it dawned on me that I must extend the hours of Adoration. And so, I began to tell people, "You know, Friday is my day of reporting to the Lord. Because the work that I am doing is His, so I must report to him what I've been doing. And, then, it gives me a chance, also, to listen to Him." So, I started doing adoration on Fridays from morning, after my Mass. Instead of, after Exposition [of the Sacrament], go for breakfast and come back, I refused to go for breakfast. So, I would only expose the Blessed Sacrament there, I stayed there, no breakfast, no lunch. I would stay the whole day – from morning until 6:30 in the evening.
>
> Now I'm there in front of God, I'm an ambassador of humanity. Every human person is somehow being represented by me there in front. So, I must pray for the needs of every human person. And this has now grown, you know, all these years, in me. And you'll hear me at certain times tell people that my tribe is humanity.
>
> So, this devotion of Eucharist has become now part of my life. I feel it has given me a lot of strength. And, especially during the peace process [between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government], where I've been involved with many other people. It has always kept me focused. What I was absorbing from the Eucharist, was trying to influence also my relations with others. Even in the most desperate situations, I tell people, "Don't lose hope. Don't lose hope. Let us keep going. The Lord is there. He knows His time." So, the devotion also has given me the spirit of feeling together with really humanity as a whole. And, whenever anything happens anywhere in the world, I feel this is a part of us.
>
> (Archbishop Jean Baptiste Odama of Gulu quoted in Whitmore 2010, 65–67)

There are any number of ways a religious ethicist can interpret and assess Archbishop Odama's intertwining practices of Eucharistic Adoration and peacebuilding, both of which take place in the context of his formation in the larger Roman Catholic community in northern Uganda. Anthropologists have historically distinguished between interpretations that are emic or internal to the community in question and etic or external to that community. In what follows, I will present different spaces in which religious

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

ethicists and others have wrestled with issues of emic and etic interpretation regarding the practices of communities.[1] The first section will focus on the debate in Christian ethics in the United States at the close of the twentieth century. The second part will turn to more recent efforts in Christian ethics in the United States to turn to fieldwork in a way that complicates questions of emic and etic status. In these first two sections, I will lift up exemplar scholars for more detailed analysis. The last section of the entry will show how the turn to fieldwork to interpret practices and communities in theology extends beyond those scholars described as ethicists. Attention to this wider literature is important to get at the matter of practices and communities more broadly, and raises the question of whether the distinction between religious ethics and other theological disciplines has been overdrawn.

Christian Ethics in the United States at the Close of the Twentieth Century

In Christian religious ethics in the United States at the end of the twentieth century, the emic/etic distinction took shape in the form of a debate about the extent to which internally Christian (emic) concepts and symbols should shape interpretation of practices and communities, and to what extent the (etic) frameworks of social theory and the social sciences should have an interpretive role. For instance, should religious ethicists interpret the communal practice of Eucharistic Adoration in northern Uganda primarily or even exclusively in light of an emic doctrine of transubstantiation that involves the living Christ speaking directly to Archbishop Odama, or should they draw upon the literature in anthropology and psychology on "magical thinking" that views a risen Christ speaking as in important respects not real, even if beneficial in its effects on the Archbishop's peacebuilding? This emic versus etic debate as it pertains to practices and communities was sharply evident in Christian religious ethics in exchanges between Stanley Hauerwas and James Gustafson.

A stress on the practices of a (specifically Christian) community has been central to Stanley Hauerwas' work from early on. It stems from his concern that Christianity as it has taken shape in the United States has been absorbed by modern, liberal (in the classical sense) culture: "I am trying to save the church from the liberal project" (Hauerwas 1997a, 16). That liberal project is one of suppressing public articulation and embodiment of deep beliefs for the sake of a thin but, it is argued, relatively stable consensus. In acceding to this consensus, Christianity has, according to Hauerwas, lost all that has made it worth living. However, simply retrieving distinct Christian beliefs is not sufficient. "[N]o matter how orthodox it may be, theology divorced from the practices of the church cannot help but be ideology" (Hauerwas 1997a, 58). That is to say, if Christian belief is not embodied in distinctive practices, then it will, regardless of the intent of the believers, end up reinforcing the liberal status quo. "[F]ailure to attend to these material practices results in their being made part of quite foreign narratives and/or lost altogether" (Hauerwas 1997a, 7). Only when beliefs are embodied in practices can they resist absorption into liberal culture. "For that is the heart of the matter – namely, practices. Practices make the church the embodiment of Christ for the world" (Hauerwas 1997a, 68). Such practices, however, are not sustainable

1 Though the literature I treat here is centered on Christianity, I would not be surprised if there were strong analogues in other religious traditions.

apart from a community that engages in them. A person does not take them up in isolation. Practices can only be undertaken, in Hauerwas' words, "in good company" (Hauerwas 1997a, 9).

In interpreting Archbishop Odama's practice of Eucharistic Adoration, then, a Hauerwasian perspective would likely stress that it is part of a set of communal practices that displays the truth that the war in northern Uganda is not the last word on reality, that rather Jesus' claim, "I will be with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20) is true. This is why Odama can tell those in his care, "Don't lose hope. Let us keep going. The Lord is there. He knows His time." Odama's practice of prayer, together with that of his peacebuilding in the midst of war, are exemplifications of the truth that Christ is, and will continue to be, Lord of all creation.

Hauerwas does not draw from that group of disciplines typically identified under the rubric of the "social sciences" to further elucidate the practices of the community and their meaning.[2] He is very careful to say that his project of describing Christian communal practices is not sociology, at least as this is most commonly understood. At this point, Hauerwas takes up John Milbank's position as articulated in the latter's *Theology and Social Theory*, a work that critiques modern social theory and social science as presupposing a violent narrative that is inimical to the Christian narrative of love (Milbank 1990). Hauerwas takes from Milbank "the astounding claim that theology must be its own social science" (Hauerwas 1997b, 192). Thus, the Church is "not a site" for secular sociological inquiry (Hauerwas 1997a, 29).

At the root of Hauerwas's resistance to social theory and science is his concern that allowing such etic frameworks as interpretive rubrics for understanding Christian communities and practices involves the subsumption of what ought to be a theological enterprise under secular ways of construing the world. Citing Milbank as inspiration, he writes that sociology as it is usually practiced "is an attempt to make us believe that the way things are is the way things have to be. The world sets the agenda." The result is "the domestication of the gospel." Hauerwas wants the Christian community – the Church – to "claim its own sociology in a way that narrates the church's life" (Hauerwas and Willimon 1996, 68). In the terms of this present entry, Hauerwas' concern is that if the etic modes of interpretation are brought to bear on the Christian community and its practices, then all emic interpretation – and the practices which such insider interpretation limns – is in danger of being lost. In the case of Archbishop Odama, for instance, his practice of Eucharistic Adoration and its related belief that Christ is still Lord of all creation are necessary to keep in view in order to understand the risks he took to negotiate with the Lord's Resistance Army.

James Gustafson charges Hauerwas' etic-averse ethics as giving in to a "sectarian temptation" that is at once irresponsible and impossible. It is irresponsible because it refuses to engage in an exchange of mutual critique and wisdom with the other communities in a society that is pluralistic. "God is assumed to be the tribal God of a minority of the earth's population." Such a posture is also self-deceptive because communities cannot be pneumatically sealed in just such a pluralistic society. Christian communities are always in de facto interaction with other communities such that any given Christian is also a member of these other communities of interpretation. True sectarianism is impossible (Gustafson 1985, 92, 86, 84).

2 I put "social sciences" in scare quotes here because some of the practitioners of the disciplines in question – many in cultural anthropology in particular – do not understand their practice as one constituting a science as that is often understood.

Gustafson's use of the term "sectarian" displays his indebtedness to the social theory of Max Weber and the latter's typological method of sociological interpretation as retrieved by Ernst Troeltsch. Weber and Troeltsch distinguished between "church" and "sect" types of religious organization. As articulated by Weber and Troeltsch, "church" membership is a result of birth into the community, and the community in question participates in and is accommodating to the larger society; "sect" membership is typically through adult decision, and the community understands itself in opposition to society. In *Christ and Culture*, Gustafson's teacher, H. Richard Niebuhr, appropriated and complexified the typology (Niebuhr 2001). Gustafson himself appropriates the typological method in his *Christ and the Moral Life* (Gustafson 1968).

On this Niebuhrian-Gustafsonian read, what is relevant about Archbishop Odama's involvement in the peace negotiations in northern Uganda is less that it is a sign and outgrowth of his distinctive Christian practices – all of the types of Christian communities are shaped by what they identify as Christian beliefs and practices – than it is an indication of his being a part of a Catholicism that manifests itself as a "church" type of Christian community that engages with rather than withdraws from the world and its problems. Evidence of this "church" type activity is not only in Odama's peacebuilding with the government and rebels, but also in that he joined with leaders of other denominations and religions – Muslim, Orthodox, and Anglican – to form the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (ARLPI), overcoming decades of mutual suspicion and hostility in order to better address the problems that were besetting the world.

Gustafson's approach has its own liabilities, and that is its tendency to jettison key emic Christian claims in the face of social and natural science. In his major constructive work – the two-volume *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective* – his use of the sciences leads him to reject the ideas of providence, a personal God, and Jesus as the Christ (Gustafson 1981, 1984). In "The Sectarian Temptation," he is most direct: "Jesus is not God" (Gustafson 1985, 93). In this he is consistent with Niebuhr's "radical monotheism," and raises the question of whether both have appropriated not only Weber's typological method, but also his understanding of modernity – even modern religion – as disenchanted. The modern world is such that, in Weber's words, "there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play . . .This means that the world is disenchanted" (Weber 1958, 139, 350). For Weber, the Incarnation "stands in the way of a strict monotheism" (Weber 1978, 415, 467, 506). Gustafson's theology as inherited and developed from Weber, Troeltsch, and Niebuhr is a manifestation of Hauerwas' fear that appropriation of etic viewpoints through the sciences – both social and natural – will lead to the loss of what is distinctively Christian (Gustafson 1985, 93).[3]

Yet the liabilities of an almost exclusively emic approach to practices and communities will not go away. One of the frequent criticisms of Hauerwas' work is that the Church and its practices that that he describes – or rather prescribes – exist nowhere in the known world. When he joined with William Willimon to write *Where Resident Aliens Live*, he did so to address this criticism of their earlier work, *Resident Aliens*. Interesting about his response is that he thought he *already had* adequately detailed the Christian practices in the first volume. "We are surprised when many persons say, 'Where in the world

3 Gustafson himself acknowledges that his "stoical piety may be more Swedish, or even northern Swedish, than Christian." It is important to note, however that although Gustafson's work is not Christian, it is theological. In his effort to preserve God as the sovereign God in the face of the history of Christian anthropocentrism and contemporary science, he finds it imperative to reject a God who reveals himself in a unique way in Jesus Christ.

is this church which you describe?' Or 'The church you want doesn't exist.' We thought we had bent over backward, in our illustrations and narratives in *Resident Aliens*, to use examples that were ordinary, local, and typical, so as to underscore that sort of prophetic church we had in mind already exists, at least in glimpses" (Hauerwas and Willimon 1996, 17). His use of the terms "illustrations" and "examples" are themselves illustrative of the problem, and that is that without the careful appropriation of the skills and practices of the social sciences, Hauerwas' accounts of the church he wants can remain only anecdotal in vignettes, hardly something that is going to shape the hearing community's practices in any but the most superficial ways. To make his theology *work* the way he wants it to work – with its readers and listeners appropriating the practices he prescribes – he must provide the kind of "thick description" that Clifford Geertz calls anthropologists to undertake. Whether due to his formation in traditional modes of theology or his allergy to the social sciences, he never does. Neither does Milbank. Their theologies, therefore, are performative failures.

What is needed for the adequate presentation of practices and communities in religious ethics, then, is an approach that draws from ethnographic methodologies such as participant observation and the qualitative interview, and ethnographic literatures such as the works of Geertz, for theological purposes – that is, for witnessing to the world in writing as we have been witnessed to in the field. This way of approaching practices and communities in religious ethics is relatively new, and the aim of the next section is to detail its development.

The Turn to Fieldwork in Religious Ethics

In recent years, ethicists in the Society of Christian Ethics (SCE) have begun to turn to qualitative fieldwork as a way of attending to practices and communities. 2009 saw the formation of the "Fieldwork and Christian Ethics" interest group. In 2011, Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen drew together nine ethicists for an edited volume, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*. Scharen and Vigen co-wrote the first four chapters, one of which contested the, "Critiques of the Use of the Social Sciences in Theology and Ethics," and another that set out, "Theological Justifications for Turning to Ethnography." The remainder of the volume consists of chapters by others exemplifying what theologically-oriented fieldwork looks like (Scharen and Vigen, 2011). Both Scharen and Vigen have published book-length fieldwork-based texts, as have a number of the contributors to the edited volume, including Todd Whitmore, Melissa Browning, Emily Reimer-Barry, and Peter Gathje (Scharen 2004; Vigen 2006; Whitmore 2019; Browning 2014; Reimer-Barry 2015; Gathje 2006). For these ethicists, doing fieldwork is not just a matter of gathering data to plug into a theology; rather, fieldwork itself, together with the writing that arises out of it, *is* a way of doing theology. In Scharen and Vigen's words, fieldwork and the writing that stems from it, "is a way to access *both* human experience and knowledge of the divine. Thus, it can be more than a mere tool in the doing of theology; it in itself can be an *expression* of theology" (Scharen and Vigen 2011, 65). Though not part of the Scharen/Vigen volume, the work of Luke Bretherton, Jennifer Beste, and Michael Banner should be included here (Bretherton 2010; Bretherton 2015; Beste 2018; Banner 2014).

Unlike Hauerwas, these ethicists undertake social scientific fieldwork, using etic methods and constructs, to investigate the practices of communities. Unlike Hauerwas and Gustafson, they do not think that such appropriation of the sciences entails the loss of Christian affirmations on the part of investigator. Rather, these researchers use field methods to raise moral and theological questions in and for the

Christian tradition. With regard to Archbishop Odama and the practice of Eucharistic Adoration in the Acholi Catholic community in northern Uganda, for instance, careful investigation of the practice can raise the question of whether the fact that the Acholi belief in Jesus speaking through the Eucharist funds radical witness during a time of war undercuts Weber's claim that "magical thinking" stifles moral action. Perhaps, such investigation might suggest, modern Western Christianity itself has become too "disenchanted," and thus too immobile in the face of existential threat.

Initially alongside of, and now in conversation with, the above scholars, some womanist religious ethicists have undertaken field methods. The turn to field methods has been prompted in part by the appeal to the specific experiences of black women as a resource for doing liberationist-oriented theology. While, like black theology generally, the initial instances of this turn were informed by black music and literature – in other words, to sources that may have begun orally, but are now written down – some more recent research includes field methods to investigate the question of current practices within the community. This latter approach has the advantage of not moving too quickly to claims about the generalized "experience" of the group in question. Linda Thomas, writing in 2004, calls upon black theology, and womanist theology in particular, to appropriate field methods for researching and interpreting the living practices of their respective communities (Thomas 2004, 37–48). Angela Sims' oral history project on lynching and AnneMarie Mingo's similar project on black women in the civil rights movement are important instances of such field methods in Christian womanist ethics (Sims 2016; Mingo 2015).

It is helpful to look at Traci West's 2019 book, *Solidarity and Defiant Spirituality: Africana Lessons on Religion, Racism, and Ending Gender Violence* as a recent benchmark for the possibilities for the use of field methods in the doing of religious ethics. West takes as her starting point her concern about gender-based violence against black women and girls. Part of the reason is statistical. "In general, most studies have found that black females experience intimate partner violence, rapes, and sexual assaults at higher rates than white females" (West 2019, 40). However, what drives much of the statistical disparity is a social disvaluing of women of color. There are "standard associations of evil, sin, and ignorance with darkness" (West 2019, 230). Black women and girls stand at the vulnerable intersection between misogyny and anti-black racism. In an effort to learn how to better resist gender-based violence against black women and girls, West travels to Ghana, Brazil, and South Africa to learn from anti-violence activists in these locales.

A number of things make West's book stand out as an exemplar of what religious ethics can look like when it turns to field methods. Her methods hold up to scrutiny from a social science perspective. She interviewed 180 people in the three countries, with seventy-five of those interviews being two-hour, one-on-one exchanges. Meeting such standards of rigor is not for the sake of an apologetic theology proving itself to social science; rather it is important because the traditions of social science have thought long and hard about what makes for the adequacy of a claim about the practices of communities. Theologians can disagree with those standards of adequacy, but, if they do, they need to provide *reasons* for the difference if theology is to be understood as an *academic* discipline. In keeping with her methodological seriousness, West engages the wider ethnographic literature, and here not only on the topic of gender-based violence, but on the doing of ethnography more generally.[4] Theologians doing fieldwork sometimes fail to cite and enter into conversation with the wider literature, as if doing fieldwork is just a

4 West's main interdisciplinary interlocutor is the critical ethnographer D. Soyini Madison. For the text West engages, see D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance,* Third Edition (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc, 2020).

matter of hanging out. The reverse analogy would be if an anthropologist said, "I'm thinking about God; therefore when I write down my thoughts I am doing theology just as they are doing it in theology departments." We would rightly object that they need to engage the traditions of theological thought. West's interdisciplinary accountability is a helpful antidote to writing that presents itself as, but in fact is not, interdisciplinary.

West is aware that in order to adequately render her findings into writing, she needs to alter the usual genres of religious ethics, and she does so in an interesting way (West 2019, 16). Even though her rigor is first of all based on the number and extent of her interviews, she understands that those interviews are not simply a matter of gathering "data" to present in an abstracted way. Therefore, she presents the interviews as moments of encounter between different, even if in some ways overlapping, worlds. To do this, she appropriates the anthropological method of participant observation, or what she prefers to call "a participatory method of learning" of the interview encounter, and the written result is a kind of thick description of the encounters (West 2019, 230). An added benefit of this approach is that it allows West to write herself into the text in a way that highlights her affective responses to the witness and words of her interlocutors. West is clear that she is not providing – and is not trying to provide – a comprehensive ethnography of her interviewees. Her writing seeks to present her "engagement with the leaders and their community settings rather than . . .an ethnographic portrait of them" (West 2019, 20–21). Part of West's interdisciplinary awareness is her knowledge that not all qualitative research is, or ought to be described as, full-blown ethnography.

Placing the interviews in the context of the encounter between interviewer and interviewee not only generates a livelier text than would otherwise be the case, it also foregrounds what West calls the "productive frictions" that ensued and that are at the center of her book (West 2019, 191). These frictions occur, and can only occur, because West presents herself – and repeatedly so – as an outsider. In doing so, she counters two tendencies regarding the role of the emic and the etic in religious ethics. The first is the tendency in Christian ethics in the Hauerwasian tradition to align what is emic with what is Christian. This is because of its focus on developing and preserving specifically Christian practices. However, as West points out, many Christian communities have a longstanding practice of subjugating both women and people of color, and so deflect attention away from the problem of gender-based violence against black girls and women. Some of West's interviewees are deeply distrustful of Christianity for this reason. West is there to *learn*. If such an approach is thought of as other-than-Christian, we need only remember that the Gospel often has Jesus affirm persons not of the people of Israel – Syrophoenicians and Samaritans, for instance – as exemplifications of faithfulness. Exemplification by the "Other" can be, and for West is, an integral part of a "defiant spirituality." West's designation of herself as an outsider also sits crosswise with the efforts of some African-Americans to seek out Africans as a deeper exemplification of their own experiences. "Romanticized depictions of the organic connection for all peoples of African descent deserve our suspicion and distrust" (West 2019, 236). West offers instead the counsel that there is such a thing as "positive awkwardness" (West 2019, 235). "Appreciation of divergent forms of antiviolence knowledge can further a spirit of defiance [against gender-based violence] . . .It can provide release from any presupposition that common cause and trustful alliance must be formed out of political sameness and cross-culturally homogenized universal truths" (West 2019, 238).

West's interviews do specify many practices along the way – for instance, monitoring police and other official responses, holding religious leaders to account by exposing them to the realities of gender-based violence, and providing space for conversation among various parties – but she lets these unfold in the

course of the interviews rather than simply listing them, so as to counter any (mis)perception that the practices are easily transportable. With regard to any possible engagement with Archbishop Odama, West's emphasis on conversation between differing communities would likely indicate an appreciation of the way in which the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative has drawn together persons from different traditions to combat violence. Her approach would then ask how that armed conflict peacebuilding engages the issue of violence against women and girls, not just by the Lord's Resistance Army, but also by clergy and other men in the archdiocese. Odama articulates a universal vision of love: "I'm an ambassador of humanity." West warns that the "defiant Africana spirituality" that she is engaged with, "has to cultivate a degree of uneasiness with standard articulations of Christian love . . .Christian love rhetoric has traditionally enjoyed an unperturbed attachment to transphobic and misogynist denials of gender equality" (West 2019, 237). Representatives of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative have sought to address violence against women. Still, with West's placement of the lived encounter at the center of her method, it is impossible to know in advance what would come out of an interview she would have with the Archbishop. There would be no presupposition that because both are Christian and black that there would be automatic shared emic perspectives on gender-based violence against women and girls. West and Odama do share an emphasis on hope, however: "Defiant spirituality gives birth to hope," she writes (West 2019, 223); Odama's practice of Eucharistic Adoration leads him to tell the people of the archdiocese, "Don't lose hope. Don't lose hope." Probably, any encounter between the two would not be easy, but would also involve "positive frictions."

Beyond "Ethics"

Though West, Vigen, Mingo, and Whitmore have joined to co-edit the T. & T. Clark Studies in Social Ethics, Ethnography, and Theologies book series – another sign of the continuation of the turn to fieldwork in religious ethics – it is also important to highlight theological appropriations of fieldwork methods that do not present themselves under the rubric of "ethics." Mary McClintock Fulkerson's *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* is a frequent touchstone for religious ethicists doing fieldwork (Fulkerson 2007). More recently, Natalie Wigg-Stevenson's *Ethnographic Theology: An Inquiry into the Production of Theological Knowledge* stands as another exemplar text, as does Emily Hunter McGowin's *Quivering Families: The Quiverfull Movement and the Evangelical Theology of the Family* (Wigg-Stevenson 2014; McGowin 2018). Presenting their projects as simply theology and not theological ethics helps counter the view that ethics can involve fieldwork because it is an "applied" discipline, whereas theology "proper" is a form of speculative or theoretical knowledge that need not involve itself with on-the-ground inquiry.

Wigg-Stevenson's position at the University of Toronto, described as a professorship in "contextual education and theology," points toward the practice of "contextual theology," as initiated by Shoki Coe of Taiwan and later taken up by others (Coe 1973, 1974; Bevans 2002; Bergmann 2017; Moschella and Willhauck 2018). While not all contextual theologians use field methods to describe and interpret practices and communities, the orientation of this kind of theology opens up in this direction. This is also the case in what is called "practical theology," as it is practiced both in the United States and Europe (Swinton and Mowat 2006; Moschella 2012). Pamela Couture's *We Are Not All Victims: Local Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo* is an instance of religiously oriented fieldwork that places itself under the

rubric of practical theology (Couture 2016). The Ecclesiology and Ethnography Network, founded in 2007 by Christian Scharen and Pete Ward, and the journal, *Ecclesial Practices*, generate much fieldwork-oriented practical theology as well. Both Mary Clark Moschella and Jan Holton have taken an ethnographic turn from within the context of their institutional positions in "pastoral theology" (Moschella 2006; Holton 2016). "Lived religion" as a focus of study in the work, for instance, of Robert Orsi, though more often placed within the ambit of religious studies than theology, takes the fieldwork turn in a way that troubles the religious studies/theology dichotomy (Orsi 2005, 2010; Hall 1997). Work by Maureen O'Connell and Rebecca Spurrier straddle the areas of ethics, liturgical studies, ritual studies, and aesthetics (O'Connell 2012; Spurrier 2019). In a way similar to womanist theologians discussed above, Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Jeanette Rodriguez have employed field methods under the rubric of Latina, mujerista, and indigenous theology (Isasi-Díaz 1993, 1996, 2004; Rodriguez 1994, 2018). Looking again beyond the Americas and Europe, any treatment of fieldwork as a means to address the practice of communities has to include the work of Mercy Amba Oduyoye and the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (Oduyoye 2018).

Assessing practices and communities within a wider context of theological and religious inquiry accentuates two factors already present in fieldwork done under the rubric of religious ethics. The first is that such research questions any theoretical or institutional division between theology and ethics, a division indebted to a problematic assumption that theology can be done as if from nowhere, and that theological ethics is the "application" of theology to somewhere. Theology of any kind arises out of the lived context within which it is written. In other words, theology itself is a communal practice. Attention to the details of that practice can raise up for inspection any exclusions of groups of people in the doing of theology. The second factor, related to the first, is evident when we note the relatively high proportion of women, including women of color, in the turn to fieldwork. This suggests that such a turn is at least in part prompted by the previous marginalization of women and people of color from the production of theology as typically practiced. Such power dynamics can also suggest part of why so few leading white male theologians, even those who call for thicker accounts of Christian practice, have yet to turn in any rigorously accountable way to lived communal practices.

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CHAPTER 91

Islam – Communities and Practices

Kirsten Wesselhoeft

Scope of the Entry

Muslims reflect upon, learn, and practice ethics in a diverse range of communal settings, which include not only local entities such as charities, schools, and mosques, but also transnational intellectual currents and organized global networks. These communities serve as sites of knowledge production and transmission, providing the contexts for Muslims to deliberate how traditional sources and methods should shape their ethical lives, and how they will shape Islamic traditions in turn. Contemporary Muslim communities are not only arenas in which to cultivate ethical practices and virtues; they are also important ethical ends in themselves: the preservation of these communities, or the creation of new forms of collective belonging, is itself a significant ethical practice for many Muslims.

For the purposes of this entry, "ethics" refers to norms for how to live rightly or well, practices that aim to implement or cultivate these norms, and reflection on how those norms should be inhabited, formulated, and derived. In Islamic scholarly traditions, reflection on ethics encompasses and draws together moral philosophy, scriptural exegesis, jurisprudence, spiritual manuals, collections of hadiths (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad) or sayings of other holy figures, and etiquette manuals, as well as other genres. Muslims beyond the scholarly elite draw extensively on these texts in their moral deliberation. Equally important in their ethical development, however, are the communities in which ethics is modeled, taught, and debated, and the practices or habits that give life to moral norms and aspirations. These communities and practices are cultural visions of how to live rightly or well as a Muslim – visions that may be closely engaged with, or relatively disconnected from, Islamic textual traditions.

Individual Islamic communities not only foreground specific ethical practices; they also emphasize the appropriate attitudes for enacting these practices. For example, a study circle at a mosque might encourages not only the observance of regular prayer, but also the correct mindset that should animate that prayer. Likewise, members of a social activist organization might not only foreground the value of justice, but also encourage a particular embodied attitude in one's pursuit of justice. The range of practices, values, and dispositions that are fostered in Muslim communities are framed in terms of Islamic traditions. They may be drawn from the Qur'an or Muhammad's lived example; they may emphasize the methodologies of moral reasoning developed by classical jurists, or they may take inspiration from the lives and writings of significant Muslim thinkers, from Rabi'a of Basra (d. 801) to Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) to Malcolm X (d. 1965). Moral communities may develop markedly divergent interpretations of

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shared texts, including the Qur'an, and develop local ethical norms and practices that are not shared by Muslims elsewhere (El-Badawi and Sanders 2019). These communities are also the sites for sharp debate over ethical issues, determining the stakes of the disagreement and the forms of rhetoric that will be persuasive to that community's public. Ethical debates among Muslims do not take place in isolation, particularly in a world in which many non-Muslim entities aim to influence Islamic values. Muslim communities are shaped by moral projects and priorities that transcend religious identity, and Muslims pursue their moral development in non-Muslim spaces and institutions as well as Islamic ones.

Communities

Schools

One prominent setting in which Islamic ethics are explicitly taught is the religious school or seminary, known in many parts of the world as a *madrasa*. The pursuit of learning has always been a central Islamic virtue in and of itself, enjoined in the Qur'an and in numerous hadiths. In some contexts, religious schools for children and adults serve as sites of transmission of traditional norms and dispositions, often through an intimate pedagogy between teacher and student, and through physically embodied actions and attitudes. Ebrahim Moosa describes how the daily routine at a Deobandi madrasa in India integrates ritual worship, study, and recreation into a harmonious whole in which each everyday act inculcates piety (Moosa 2015). In his study of West African Qur'an schools, known as *daaras*, Rudolph Ware refers to an "epistemology of embodiment" that animates Islamic education in the classical style (Ware 2014, 37). In the Qur'an schools he describes, children learn reverence for the Qur'an and for the Prophet Muhammad through ingestion of the text as well as memorization of it. They learn humility and communal responsibility by seeking alms and food in the streets. Physical hardship is understood to be instrumental to the formation of disciplined character. As Ware writes, "Knowing was produced as much by the limbs as by the mind. . . .The people were the books, just as the Prophet was the Walking Qur'an" (49). This type of Islamic school functions not only as a local moral community, but as a link in an imagined community of tradition, bound together through the embodiment of the Qur'an, that stretches back to the Prophet himself.

Other institutions of Islamic learning are self-consciously modern, and Islamic values are studied as systematic and objective. These schools have been important sites of both tension and cooperation between traditional religious intellectuals (*'ulama*), religious reformers, and state elites, and their respective visions for Islamic morality in the broader public sphere. Whereas the *'ulama* worked with understanding of Islamic ethics derived principally from their interpretation of *shari'a*, religious reformers from different professional backgrounds tended to take an eclectic approach to moral pedagogy and rhetoric. Their projects of grassroots social reform began with the moral improvement of individual Muslims – a goal that depended on modern mass education, rather than specialized scholarship in religious sciences. Modernist projects of Islamic moral education that came to prominence in countries as varied as Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia were part of a worldwide turn toward "mass education of a moralistic sort" as a hallmark of nation-building projects at the turn of the twentieth century (Hefner and Zaman 2007, 33–34). In many Muslim-majority contexts, this link between nation-building and moral education had the effect of situating religious schools as at once sites of state-driven pedagogy and centers of religiously-grounded ethical resistance to state power.

In addition to their roles in these national and transnational political dynamics, individual religious schools function as communities of ethical reflection. Institutions as diverse as Al Azhar in Cairo, Darul Uloom in Deoband, India, or Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California form moral communities of students and teachers who dedicate themselves to reflecting on the ethical questions and methodologies of Islamic traditions. The prominence of such institutions, and the dynamism of the landscape of Islamic education today, speak to the centrality of the pursuit of knowledge as an enduringly central Muslim ethical practice.

Mosques

Mosques are much more than places for performing collective worship. They are sites of teaching and study, centers of spiritual retreat, nodes of charitable activity, masterful works of architecture, and vectors of political authority. Mosques function as highly symbolic moral communities for the faithful who frequent them, but also, in many cases, for the broader public, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

During the twentieth century, mosques became increasingly prominent as sites of popular ethical formation. As part of a global revival in religiosity during the late twentieth century, the "mosque movement" drew large numbers of men and women to mosques to hear lessons from religious teachers and participate in study circles (*halaqat*). This movement, also referred to as the "*da'wa* (religious preaching) movement," gave mosques a renewed cultural prominence as places where pious Muslims could access religious instruction outside of a formal curriculum of study. While it is linked to and in part the result of the educational reform movements discussed above, the mosque movement has been a grassroots development, rather than a top-down reform. Classes and study circles emphasize the relationship between Islamic knowledge from canonical sources, personal spiritual development, and the practicalities of daily life. The large-scale participation of women in this movement was a new development in many regions, where mosques had been male-dominated both in terms of their authorities and their publics.

In her influential analysis of female participants in the mosque movement in Cairo, Saba Mahmood (2005) describes mosque classes as the sites in which the moral authority of canonical texts is produced, as these texts are cited, commented upon, and connected to everyday life by the teachers and students. They are also sites of moral persuasion and debate among women, as religious teachers strive to instruct their audiences not only in correct behavior but in correct patterns of argumentation and justification, and attendees sometimes contest and challenge their teacher's reasoning. This atmosphere of engaged discourse is itself an important ethical practice developed in mosque study circles, which valorize interactive and personalized patterns of relationship with authoritative texts or individuals.

In contexts where Muslims live as religious minorities, mosques are often the most visible indices of Muslim presence as religious minorities in the broader cultural landscape. This makes them prominent settings for interreligious dialogue, interface with state authorities, and acts of anti-Muslim discrimination. Many European and American mosques must work to foster a sense of collective belonging across ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse congregations. Many mosque communities also work to present "Islamic values" as compatible with "American," "British," or "German values," to Muslims and non-Muslim audiences alike, by hosting public educational events and open houses, engaging in community service, or issuing public statements. In these environments, the moral work of mosque communities goes well beyond religious preaching, encouragement of ritual worship, or the cultivation of personal piety to include representation, dialogue, and advocacy.

Charities and Community Organizations

While mosques often conduct charitable and community service work, independent charitable organizations also constitute communities of ethical engagement, often outside of the structures of authority that typically characterize both mosques and schools. Related to the charitable endowments (*waqfs*) that have long been pillars of Islamic civilizations, contemporary Islamic charities anchor the Islamic practice of giving (*sadaqa*) in contemporary cultures of volunteerism. While some Islamic charities emphasize traditionally humanitarian values of empathy and benevolence, and Amira Mittermaier shows that many also exemplify a "*nonhumanitarian* ethics of giving" – that is, a practice of giving to the poor not out of compassion, but in order to give "to God," as a response to divine command and a recognition that wealth belongs not to rich or poor, but to God alone (Mittermaier 2019, 5–6). Lara Deeb (2006) described how community service organizations were primary sites for Lebanese Shi'a Muslim women to develop the qualities of strength and activism, modeled on pious women from the family of the Prophet Muhammad, that would fortify them for more public religious activity.

While most Islamic community organizations emphasize charitable activity, others focus on civil rights and political engagement. Like Deeb's description of the Lebanese Shi'a volunteer organizations, Muslim activist organizations cultivate the value of visible public engagement, often framed in terms of the struggle for justice, resistance to oppression, and the pursuit of knowledge and truth. For example, the Malaysian organization Sisters in Islam advocates for legal reform on issues of women's rights, both in terms of the religious establishment and the Malay state. Sisters in Islam and similar activist groups create moral communities that are focused on effective action in the existing political system, and are inevitably embedded in the norms and practices of their local political environments.

Transnational Movements

Muslim moral communities are not limited to local institutions where believers gather in person. For centuries, religious movements have linked Muslims from diverse social, political, and linguistic contexts in a shared set of moral and spiritual practices. Sufi orders, or tariqas, have united Muslims across long distances through shared teachings and patterns of devotion, and allegiance to founding teachers. Sufi tariqas spread through a genealogy of initiation; each teacher deriving authority from their own teacher, links in a chain of transmission going back to the Prophet Muhammad. As ethical movements, tariqas unite their members through shared ritual practices, such as *dhikr* and pilgrimage, through the disciplined cultivation of humility, abstention, and love, and through emulation of a teacher. While most tariqas have developed regionally, some have spread worldwide. Writing about a Sufi order that has spread from Pakistan to Europe, the Middle East, and southern Africa, Pnina Werbner emphasizes the intense bonds of love for the order's founding saint that animate a vast transnational organization. For these Sufi devotees, she writes, the journey of transnational migration becomes incorporated into a whole moral cosmology of journeys: the personal journey on the Sufi path, the saint's journey to found the order, and the pilgrim's journey to the shrine (Werbner 2004, 13–14).

In the contemporary period, the global reach of the Muslim community, or *umma*, has taken on particular importance for many Muslim thinkers. The *umma* is often discussed as a loosely unified global community, whose collective moral and spiritual condition should concern all Muslims. This global vision of Islamic ethics has inspired numerous transnational networks in the twentieth century. Two

very different networks, the Tablighi Jama'at, which originated in colonial India, and the Gülen or Hizmet Movement, which originated in Turkey in the 1960s, show how transnational organizations facilitate the spread of particular approaches to Muslim ethics across diverse cultural and political contexts. The Tablighi Jama'at is a grassroots revivalist movement that emphasizes austere piety, sincerity, and missionary activity (*da'wa*) directed toward fellow Muslims. The Tablighi movement practices face-to-face da'wa activity and codified manners of behavior and dress, and, like many Sufi movements, places particular ethical value on travel itself. The Tablighi missionary's travel represents and facilitates the movement within the self from worldly pursuits to religious concerns. By crossing political, cultural, and political boundaries, the Tablighi missionary demonstrates the transcendence and the universal efficacy of his or her message. Like the Tablighi Jama'at, the Gülen Movement places special value on international religious outreach and supporting fellow Muslims in their personal piety. Unlike the Jama'at, the Gülen Movement has a strong cultural association with Turkishness, and works through institution building, rather than through individual da'wa. Strongly anchored in Turkey, and led by US-based Turkish intellectual Fethullah Gülen, the Gülen Movement has founded schools and cultural initiatives around the world. These institutions provide services and education, and promote core values of service (*hizmet*), humanitarianism, and dialogue. Gülen institutions strive to reach non-Muslims as well as Muslims, articulating their values in universal moral language and emphasizing intercultural dialogue.

Beyond formally structured transnational organizations, Muslims also find moral community through looser global networks of individuals and organizations that share a common ethical orientation. One such movement has become known as the "progressive" Muslim movement, an amorphous intellectual and ethical current with nodes of local community scattered around the globe (Safi 2003). Progressive Muslims have no fixed doctrine or specific ethical practices, but share an orientation toward social justice and gender equality. Some progressive Muslims have founded gender-mixed and LGBTQ-affirming mosques, while others have cultivated literary publics as moral communities through novels, poetry, and film that express progressive Muslim values. They have found virtual community through list-serves and online forums, and have created activist organizations in many countries that seek to promote gender egalitarianism, pluralism, and justice, both in Muslim communities and in their broader societies.

Practices

Ritual Observances

Framed in Islamic jurisprudence as the fundamental responsibilities that Muslims owe to God, acts of ritual worship (*'ibadat*) are central ethical practices of Islam. Ritual worship is often summarized in terms of the "five pillars" of Islam, which are enumerated in several hadiths: the testimony of faith (*shahada*), ritual prayer (*salat*), giving alms (*zakat*), fasting during the month of Ramadan (*sawm)*, and making pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj)* if one is physically and financially able. Of these, prayer, almsgiving, and fasting feature most prominently as regular ethical practices in the lives of Muslims. Pilgrimage is a prominent ethical practice in its broader sense, which includes but is not limited to the hajj.

Many Muslims strive to perform the ritual prayer multiple times a day at appointed hours, which vary based on the position of the sun. Ritual prayer involves a fixed series of bodily postures and recited

Arabic verses from the Qur'an, and can be performed anywhere that is clean and undisturbed. Worshippers orient themselves toward Mecca, in present-day Saudi Arabia. The collective prayer, performed on Fridays at noon, is particularly important for male worshippers, although open to all. Ritual almsgiving, or *zakat al-mal*, is one of several forms of charity practiced by Muslims, in the form of an annual donation calculated as a fixed percentage of the believer's total assets above a predetermined threshold. This donation can be given to needy individuals or to eligible organizations, especially those who serve people experiencing poverty or oppression. Zakat is understood as an act of worship that purifies one's wealth and helps to protect the individual from greed. In this sense, and in the way it is calculated according to a formula, it is distinct from other acts of charitable giving, known as *sadaqa*.

The most widely observed Muslim ritual is the fast of the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. During Ramadan, most Muslims abstain from food, drink, and sexual activity between pre-dawn and sunset, with exceptions for people who are ill, traveling, elderly, menstruating, pregnant or breastfeeding. During the day, many try to maximize prayer, meditation, scripture reading, and charity, strive to increase their kindness, generosity, and patience, and make particular effort to avoid wrongdoing. While fasting is an individual practice, fast-breaking is communal. In the evening, Muslims gather at homes, mosques, and community centers for fast-breaking meals called *iftars*, festivities, and night-time prayers called *tarawih*. The spiritual and physical intensity of the Ramadan fast focuses on training the soul (*nafs*) to have control over desire, to empathize with those who go hungry and thirsty not by choice, and to become closer to God. Ramadan is often seen as an intensive school for the self, a season that cultivates gratitude, fortitude, and discipline, and creates a sense of unity among Muslims.

Pilgrimage is an orienting moral experience for millions of Muslims. While making the hajj to Mecca is an aspiration for many Muslims worldwide, only a minority of Muslims perform this pilgrimage, which is costly, challenging, and subject to bureaucratic regulation. For those who do, the ritual recalls not only the example of the Prophet Muhammad, but also the footsteps of Hajar, mother of Ismail, and her search for water in the desert. Repentance is an important part of the hajj, particularly on the Day of Arafah, when pilgrims visit the mountain where Muhammad delivered one of his final sermons in order to seek divine mercy. In addition to or instead of the hajj, Muslim pilgrims also visit a wide range of sacred sites, most of which mark the graves of holy individuals. In particular, millions of Shi'a Muslims make pilgrimage every year to the city of Karbala, in modern-day Iraq, to the tomb of Husayn, martyred grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. Thousands of other pilgrimage sites are scattered around the world, which Muslims of all sects visit in order to honor the deceased, seek closeness to God, and ask for blessings (*baraka*) for themselves or their family – health, marriage, children, or success in business (Arjana 2017). Pilgrimage is thus not only a pious act in and of itself; it is also a way to seek and to punctuate the good life.

Beyond the "five pillars," Qur'anic memorization and recitation, supplicatory prayers (*du'a*), and devotional remembrance of God (*dhikr*) are also ritualized practices of worship that mark the everyday moral lives of many Muslims, both within and outside of the mosque and classroom settings discussed above. Supplicatory prayer, or du'a, differs from ritual prayer (*salat*) in that it does not necessarily involve specific bodily postures, and the words of the prayer may be either recited or extemporaneous. Du'a punctuate everyday life as well as major life events. They are often offered before and after eating, while on a journey, when faced with a major decision, when ill, and when faced with great trials. Dhikr, or devotional remembrance, involves rhythmic recitation of the names of God, or short phrases of praise or supplication, as a voluntary act of worship that cultivates a spiritual state of closeness to God. Dhikr is

often performed individually, following daily ritual prayers or throughout the day, but can also be performed collectively and in unison. This latter practice is often associated with Sufi groups, which have developed specific traditions of *dhikr*, as a private group ritual and sometimes as a public performance.

Collectively, acts of ritual worship are a significant part of how Muslims strive to live rightly and well. For many, they are moral responsibilities owed to God, forming the starting point for the pursuit of moral excellence. They are also fruitful occasions for the development of social virtues, such as gratitude, generosity, patience, and mercy. Ritual worship is part of how many Muslims navigate moral challenges, including injustice, oppression, and ill health. While many of them can be performed individually, all acts of Muslim ritual worship link the worshipper to the moral community of Muslims in the broadest sense, the global *umma*.

Cultivating Character

A well-known hadith, often referred to simply as the Hadith Jibreel, reports a conversation between Muhammad and the Angel Gabriel in which Gabriel asks Muhammad to explain three levels of religious commitment – *islam*, faith (*iman*), and excellence (*ihsan*). Muhammad defines *islam* in terms of the "five pillars" detailed above. He defines faith, or *iman*, as belief in a core set of theological tenets – the existence of angels, the lineage of prophets and revelations, divine judgment, and divine omnipotence. Finally, Muhammad defines excellence, or *ihsan*, as serving God as though you could see God, in the knowledge that God, though unseen, sees the believer. This hadith is often cited as a model for spiritual development in which the performance of ritual worship, or *islam*, is only a starting point on the journey from worship to faith, and from faith to excellence. The cultivation of *ihsan* is often framed as a project of forming good character (*akhlaq*). Muslims have used specific practices of self-observation, self-discipline, storytelling, and emulation of exemplars in order to develop and refine character and excellence (Zargar 2018). Drawing on the hadith literature as well as classical Greek thought, premodern Islamic moral psychology outlined a set of internal practices of self-observation and self-discipline, known collectively as the "training of the self" (*riyadat an-nafs*). These practices, often followed under the direction of a spiritual teacher, aim to cure the ego of excessive desire and prepare the believer for death. The cultivation of character is also pursued through everyday practices that are integrated with cultural life, and can apply to the collective as well as the individual self. For example, Elizabeth Bucar describes how women's modest fashion cultivates the character not only of women who strive to dress piously, but also cultivates the collective character of the social body at large (Bucar 2017, 16–17).

Consumption

Muslim ethical thought has always been concerned with patterns of consumption, both of food and other material goods, and with the individual and social management of wealth. Ethical practices of consumption and abstention are observed both as ways of following divine guidance and as ways of pursuing justice and broader social good (*maslaha*). Ethical practices relating to animals include regulated practices for the raising and slaughter of animals intended for human consumption, whose meat is known as *halal*. Food ethics also include practices of abstention – from blood, carrion, intoxicants, and the meat of some animals, as well as from meat that was not slaughtered according to *halal* regulations. In the contemporary period, many Muslims have connected the longstanding concern for animal treatment and

stewardship of natural resources in Islamic ethical traditions to a broader understanding of "the environment as an ethical idea" (Gade 2019). As a set of lived practices, Islamic environmental ethics is interpreted quite diversely: for some, it entails vegetarianism, for others, land and resource conservation, for others, political mobilization.

Like the consumption of food, the consumption and exchange of material goods has always been a concern for Muslim moral thinkers. The jurisprudential tradition has produced voluminous reflection on the regulation of trade, contracts, and property through the guiding principles and aims of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'a*). In addition to the different forms of charity discussed above, key economic practices include the avoidance of interest (*riba*), uncertainty in trade, and gambling or speculation. In the context of global capitalist economies based on interest, debt, and speculation, Muslims have developed a range of ethical practices and orientations toward economic activity. Some choose or avoid specific financial products – choosing an Islamic investment firm that avoids interest-bearing investments, for example, or avoiding credit cards or traditional mortgages. Others seek to make consumer choices guided by their Islamic values and identity, such as participating in "halal tourism," consuming Islamic media, arts, and fashion.

Gender and Family

As in all moral traditions, Muslim ethical practices, virtues, and communities are experienced in gendered ways. Gender and family have also been important arenas of Muslim ethical expression. Men and women have differently embodied ways of performing religious virtue, experience religious norms in gender-specific ways, and have different ways of integrating their Islamic moral practice with the ethics of broader society (whether their society is Islamically-inflected or not). In Sufi tradition, certain virtues and practices are themselves "gendered" masculine or feminine, not in order to restrict them to males or females, but to use gender relations as an analogue for human beings to access relationship with God (Shaikh 2012). In male-dominated religious movements, including Sufi fraternities, virtues of brotherhood and chivalry (*futuwwa*) have been cultivated as part of a pious masculinity. In broader social contexts, gendered visions of virtue and moral practice have often emphasized chastity outside of heterosexual marriage, complementarian gender roles within marriage, and reserve or distance in mixed-gender relations, in order to avoid the possibility of immoral sexual conduct or desire. Many Muslim communities are sex-segregated (especially mosques) or otherwise homosocial spaces. Heterosexual marriage and child-rearing have been valorized for men and women, not only as institutions through which virtue and character can be pursued, but as ethical practices in and of themselves.

Since the colonial era, Muslim discourses on gender have for the most part been formulated, whether explicitly or implicitly, in response to widespread Western assumptions that Muslim women are oppressed and downtrodden. Contemporary Islamic understandings of gendered modesty developed in tandem with, and often in contradistinction to, Western ethical practices of gendered heterosociality. Gendered sartorial practices, including forms of head-covering for women, have been important ways to cultivate modesty and modernity as personal and societal virtues, shifting in meaning according to the political context (Bucar 2017). Modesty and other feminine virtues can be the basis for religious authority. As Joseph Hill describes, female spiritual leaders in Senegal foreground their feminine morality, including modesty, humility, motherhood, and domestic labor, as the basis for social power and religious leadership, a dynamic he terms "wrapping authority" (Hill 2018, 12).

Secular Practice and Muslim Ethics

As we have already seen, Muslim ethical practices and communities are entwined with heterogenous moral frameworks, including secular, liberal, and capitalist discourses and practices. The development of secular morality in Europe has increasingly been in explicit contrast to a certain understanding of Islam and Muslim practice. Secular political formations from France to Turkey to India have shaped the social possibilities and significance of Muslim ethical projects. At the same time, Muslims have taken up liberal and secular moral frameworks for their development as ethical subjects. For example, Nadia Fadil describes how European Muslims conceptualize not-fasting or not-veiling, not simply as the absence of an ethical norm, but as substantive embodied practices that shape their moral lives as liberal or secular Muslim subjects (Fadil 2011). Alternatively, contemporary Muslim theologian Sherman Jackson identifies the "Islamic secular" in classical religious thought: a domain of activity not regulated by Islamic legal norms but nonetheless framed by pleasing God and living well (Jackson 2018). Muslim ethical communities and practices continue to evolve, spreading through global currents, offering resources for new political and environmental challenges, and orienting Muslims toward the continuing conversation of Islamic ethical tradition.

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CHAPTER 92

Indian Religions

Ankur Barua

Hindu configurations of religious ethics are distinctive styles of cultivating, within the bounds of the temporal world, certain types of ethical virtues which are often presented as accompaniments on a pilgrimage toward a transcendental goal. Various forms of Hindu reflections on ethical living are an ongoing dialectic where worldly situations are read through the prisms of foundational scriptures, narrative materials, and mythic templates, and their pivotal concepts are at times re-envisioned or reformulated in the light of worldly modes of existence.

The Possibility of Hindu Ethics – Between Universalisms and Particularities

The question as to whether or not the classical Indic systems, which are often grounded in or which claim affiliation to the Vedic scriptures (ca. 1500 BCE), have ethical dimensions or cultures of moral philosophy was intensely disputed during the colonial centuries in South Asia. Starting from around 1800, various Western Orientalists, European writers, and Christian missionaries charged "Hinduism" with lacking solid ethical foundations, and pointed to socioreligious forms of hierarchical caste-based and gender-based discrimination as evidence for its indifference to the cultivation of other-regarding virtues. The following charge by Claudius Buchanan (1805, 33) is representative of this polemic strand of Western evaluations of the ethical insubstantiality of Hindu lifeforms: "The Hindoos have no moral *instruction* . . . The Hindoos have no moral *books* . . . They have no moral *gods*." From around this time, the supposed ethical indifference of the Hindus is connected to the motif of world-renunciation and the doctrines of *karma* and reincarnation, which are said to breed attitudes of cosmic pessimism, world-denying negativism, and fatalistic apathy. A galaxy of Hindu figures – sometimes characterized as "reformers" – such as Swami Vivekananda (1863–1901), M. K. Gandhi (1869–1948), Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), and others, engaged with such critiques by revitalizing certain strands of scriptural texts and configuring more pronouncedly this-worldly styles of Hindu living. From a definitional point of view, of course, the key question relating to these hermeneutical pathways is whether the premodern or modernized worldviews have specifically "ethical" components. For Christian missionaries and British writers around, say, 1850, the foundations of ethical understanding were provided by specific criteria – for the former, it was the Mosaic law, and for the latter, it was often forms of Benthamite

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Utilitarianism and notions associated with evolutionary theories. It is often argued in this context that there is no normative reflection on "ethics" in Hindu lifeforms where the descriptive codes, norms, and values which shape ways of living are instead deeply particularistic, and refracted by the caste-based and gender-based markers of specific individuals. A highly influential Sanskritic text in this context is the *Manusmṛti* (ca. 200 CE) which lays out a socioreligious template with differentially-layered ethical obligations, duties, and responsibilities for individuals of the four castes (*varṇa*), and for men and women. More recently, this "particularism" has been characterized by A. K. Ramanujan (1989, 45–47) as a form of context-sensitivity in ethical matters in the following way: "One has only to read Manu after a bit of Kant to be struck by the former's extraordinary lack of universality. He seems to have no clear notion of a universal *human* nature from which one can deduce ethical decrees like 'Man shall not kill,' or 'Man shall not tell an untruth.' . . . To be moral, for Manu, is to particularize . . ." However, this particularism in itself should not be taken as demonstrative of an absence of concerted engagement with ethical matters in Hindu universes. On a comparative note, a survey of Western ethics indicates that Utilitarianism and Kantianism, with their explicit universalisms or theoretical generalizations, do not exhaust the conceptual domain. For instance, thickly contextualized evaluative concepts such as ἀγαθός ("good") and ἀρετή ("virtue") in Homeric locations too are understood in terms of the fulfillment of one's socially allotted role (MacIntyre 2000, 16–22). Further, as is indicated by recent debates relating to whether there is a transcultural "human nature" which can ground universal patterns of ethical behavior, or whether ethical norms are ineluctably shaped by historical settings, Western ethical thinking is not necessarily connected with the quest for abstract principles or criteria. More to the point, as we will see, forms of classical and contemporary Hindu ethical thinking are structured by "descriptive" characterizations of idealized settings of life and by "normative" components of types of worldly living that are said to lead to human flourishing within "religious" visions of the ultimate good. We will study the following dialectic which structures ethical patterns of existence across various Hindu theological, cultural, and social universes.

Human beings have the potentiality to realize, through the pathways of various ethical disciplines, their true spiritual center of gravity – whether this is the universal self (*ātman*), or some mode of devotional communion with the Lord Viṣṇu or Śiva, and so on – which is beyond the hierarchical asymmetries of particularistic *dharmic* contexts.

Human beings are currently subject to the processes of *karma* and reincarnation, and accordingly their ethical patterns of living are situated within socioreligious domains of *dharma* which are marked by particularistic codes, obligations, and duties.

As we will see, this dialectic – between the attainment of liberation (*mokṣa*) which is beyond all worldly differentiations, and the cultivation of certain this-worldly virtues within the cycles of reincarnation (*saṃsāra*) – produces a volatile nexus across numerous Hindu sociocultural spaces.

The Vedic Origins of *Dharmic* Visions

The operative term in Hindu ethical reflection, as the dialectic suggests, is *dharma*, which encompasses a rich conceptual range centered around the notions of order, structure, and foundation at various ontological, ritual, social, political, and ethical levels. Therefore, as various scholars have noted, *dharma* should not be identified with, even if aspects of *dharma* can be partly correlated with,

notions of morality, propriety, conduct, justice, law, virtue, norm, duty, and others. Thus, the Ṛg Veda (ca. 1500 BCE) speaks of *ṛta*, which applies to the natural laws which structure the physical cosmos, the moral worlds of human existence, and the sacrificial order that binds humans to the deities. The term *ṛta* is connected to *dharma* in some places, and the plural form of *dharma* refers to the specific sacrificial rituals which are believed to maintain the cosmic order. The core theme in the concepts of *ṛta* and *dharma* can be characterized as "identity-through-interconnection": every entity is allocated a specific position, status, and role in an intricately woven harmonious web of deep interconnections, and it flourishes through an actualization of its identity within and through the whole. The whole itself is sustained by the Vedic sacrifices on earth (*yajña*) which are the theurgic instruments which reinforce the interlinkages (*bandhu*) between the hierarchically ordered and yet interrelated human and divine orders (Smith 1998). The intricate connections are constituted, according to a famous hymn in the tenth chapter of the Ṛg Veda, by a primordial sacrifice through which the body of the cosmic Person (*puruṣa*) was ritually dismembered into the natural elements, human social groupings (*varṇa*), the heavens, the earth, animals, and so on. The symbiotic interrelations between the sacrificial and the cosmic is indicated by the production of "natural" entities such as horses, goats, and sheep by the sacrifice, while these entities also become "sacrificial" implements for the maintenance of the "natural" order. The most famous verses of the hymn declare: "When they divided *puruṣa*, into how many parts did they arrange him? . . . His mouth became the Brāhmaṇa [priests]; from his arms the Rājanya [later Kṣatriya, rulers] was made; his thighs became the Vaiśya [agriculturalists]; from his feet the Śūdra [servants] was born." Through this homologization of cosmic structure with social role, the *dharma* pertaining to each part is connected to a sacral order within which individuals should seek their proper function. The basic template of the intertwining between the human and the divine orders is elaborated in various post-Vedic traditions where *dharma* is simultaneously affirmed as ontological description and normative injunction. Derived from the root *dhṛ*, which means "to uphold," *dharma* describes the stable operations of the physical universe – thus, it is the *dharma* of fire to burn and of water to quench human thirst. At the same time, *dharma* is to be expressed through the specific form of socioreligious conduct or duty called *sva-dharma* ("own-*dharma*"), which is also the *dharma* specific to the four stages in life (*āśrama*) – celibate student, householder, forest-dweller, and ascetic – and the four caste groupings (*varṇa*). This structure of *varṇa-āśrama-dharma* is a worldly concretization of the *dharma* that runs through and shapes the wider cosmos, and an individual's pathway toward spiritual fulfillment consists partly of the proper alignment of the "sociocultural" *dharma* and the "natural" *dharma*. In other words, a post-Vedic Hindu formulation of the question, "How should I live in the world?" would be, "What is the *dharma* within whose environs I should situate myself?"

The Dialectic of Living in the World and in the Spirit

Against this historical backdrop, we return to the central dialectic which shapes patterns of ethical reflection in Hindu universes – the fulfillment of the obligations and the cultivation of the virtues associated with *dharma*, and the spiritual transcendence of all worldly constraints through the quest for liberation (*mokṣa*). In working out these themes, various forms of Hindu discourses are shaped by the two principal bodies of scriptural texts – the Vedic literatures and the *Upaniṣads* (ca. 800 BCE) which are called *śrūti*

("that which is heard"), and the treatises on the *dharma*, namely, the *Dharmaśāstras*, the epic narratives such as the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and others which are collectively called *smṛti* ("that which is remembered").

From roughly the third century BCE onwards, we find the priestly Brahmanical defenders of Hindu socionormative living valorizing the notion of *dharma* as the basis of the sacral order of *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*, and their own sociocultural identity as speakers of Vedic Sanskrit. For key thinkers associated with the ritual-philosophical system called Mīmāṃsā such as Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (ca. 700 CE), the Vedas, which are concerned with the injunctions for performing ritual sacrifices, do not have any human author and are an authoritative source of knowledge of the *dharma*. This normative concern with *dharma* as the structural framework for Brahmanical ritual purity is continued in the genre of texts called *Dharmaśāstras*, of which the *Manusmṛti* (ca. 200 CE) is perhaps the best known, which lay down the socioreligious duties of individuals relative to their *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*, provide modes of expiation (*prāyaścitta*) for the trangressions of *dharma*, and outline the administrative and juridical duties of a king. For the *Manusmṛti*, the Vedas provide a cosmic template for both the ontological structures of the universe and the normative systems of the social order. Recapitulating the key motif of the cosmic Person from the Ṛg Veda, it prescribes differentially-structured types of *dharmic* activities for the four *varṇas*: for instance, the duties of the Brahmans encompass preserving Vedic knowledge and performing sacrificial rituals, and the Śūdras are said to gain *dharmic* virtue by serving the three higher *varṇas* dutifully. In the social visions of the *Dharmaśāstras*, as long as individuals remain in the two *āśramas* of the celibate student and the householder, the distinctions which are specific to class and gender are to be maintained. The gradualist movement of worldly individuals across the *āśramas* within one lifetime, and across the castes (*varṇa*) over several lifetimes, is often highlighted in the *Dharmasūtra* (ca. 300 BCE) literature. Thus *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* (I.1.4–7) states that there are four classes (*varṇa*), Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra, and, in this order, each preceding class is superior by birth to each subsequent. Crucially, by following the path of *dharma* people belonging to a lower class ascend to the next higher class in their subsequent birth, while by following the path of *adharma* people belonging to a higher class descend to the next lower class in their subsequent birth (II.11.10–11). These transitions across *varṇas* are structured by the law of *karma* which ensures that the birth of an individual in a specific *varṇa* is not a cosmic happenstance but a result of their *karmic* momentum acquired over previous lives. Therefore, individuals should fulfill their *dharmic* obligations because they are said to enjoy supreme and unlimited happiness by following the *dharma* specific to them. The sociocultural exclusions of Brahmanical Hinduism are also clearly stated in this corpus: the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* (II.2.8) states that it is a sin (*doṣah*) to touch, speak, or look at a socioritual outcaste (Cāṇḍāla) while the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* (18.11–12) records the view that the Śūdras are a cremation ground and one should not recite the Vedas in the presence of a Śūdra (Olivelle 2000, 25, 89, 77, 425). Further, the *āśrama* system applies only to the members of the first three *varṇas* and not to the Śūdras, and also not to women who are bound by specific forms of *dharmic* obligations. Their *strī-dharma* is configured by the *Manusmṛti* largely in terms of their relations of obedience to men – their fathers, husbands, and sons (9.3), and particularly married women who dutifully serve their husbands are said to be exalted in heaven (5.155).

However, if life within the world is thus regulated by the minutiae of the textures of *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*, the mendicant renunciant who has renounced all social matrices has transcended these densely-contoured sets of obligations and duties. The emergence of this dialectic – living within the *dharmic* structures of the world and progressing to a state beyond its regulative bounds – has to be located historically in the appropriation, by *Dharmaśāstras* such as the *Manusmṛti*, of asceticism or

world-renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) into Brahmanical universes. Initially the renouncer outlooks were sharply opposed to Vedic sacrificial worldviews, and pitted wilderness against village life, celibacy against marriage, and ritual inactivity against ritual performance (Olivelle 1992, 46). Therefore, the exaltation of the world renouncer in some of the early *Upaniṣads* above all social life, which is ideally regulated by *dharmic* norms, led to a fundamental tension within Vedic lifeworlds which insisted that people should perform specific types of actions. The *Dharmaśāstra* literature, which seeks to draw the world renouncer back into the fold of social obligations, is full of numerous tensions about the significance of renunciation. For instance, the *Manusmṛti* (6.87–90) declares the *āśrama* of the householder to be the best, and the other three *āśramas* are said to converge there. The reason for exalting this *āśrama* is connected to the prohibition on individuals from pursuing liberation (*mokṣa*) from the cycles of reincarnation without having first paid the three debts to ancient sages, ancestors, and gods (6.35–37). Once they have discharged these debts, they can become a wandering mendicant who practices various yogic techniques such as breath control, withdrawal of the senses, and others, and become completely free from the world, with the self (*ātman*) as the sole companion and bliss as the goal (6.49). Thus, bringing together the two types of Vedic activity – one which is driven by worldly desire (*pravṛtta*), and the other which is free from desire and based on knowledge (*nivṛtta*) – the *Manusmṛti* says that individuals who are dedicated to *pravṛtta* activity become equal to the gods, while those who are dedicated to *nivṛtta* pass beyond the five elements (12.88–90). The depictions of the final *āśrama* in the *Manusmṛti*, where individuals retreat from the sphere of worldly activity, recur more clearly across the *Saṁnyāsa Upaniṣads* which emphasize the rejection of external ritual paraphernalia and the realization of the transcendental essence which is beyond name and form. For instance, the sages, according to the *Nāradaparivrājaka Upaniṣad* (142–145), are said to bear harsh words patiently and have no hostility to other living beings. Their only marks are a begging bowl, a place of residence at the foot of the trees, a ragged garment, a solitary life, and impartiality toward all (Olivelle 1992, 178–179). A contemporary Hindu monk, Swami Nikhilananda (1968, 27) presents the life of such a self-realized individual in these terms: "Now his goodness is spontaneous. He is free but not whimsical, natural but not given to license . . . Such virtues such as humility, unselfishness, charity, and sympathy which he had previously practised as spiritual disciplines now adorn him like so many jewels."

The *Bhagavadgītā* (ca. 200 CE) is the classic attempt to intertwine these opposing pulls of life across the *dharmic* world and renunciation of the world. The text states that it is not activity in itself which binds individuals to the cycles of reincarnation (*saṃsāra*), but only those actions which are performed with attachment to the fruits of actions. Therefore, the pathway to *mokṣa* lies not through physical renunciation but the cultivation of a sense of inner detachment. The Lord Kṛṣṇa is presented as the highest, eternally unbound, transcendental person who can remain engaged in the world, and thus maintain the cosmic order, precisely because he continually acts without any attachment. The *Bhagavadgītā* is a synthetic fabric with interweaving threads of knowledge of the self (*jñāna*), selfless action (*karma*), and devotional love (*bhakti*) of the personal Lord – later Hindu commentators, from premodern contexts to recent times, would expend much of their exegetical energies on demonstrating the primacy of one of these over the other two as the spiritual technique that specifically guides individuals toward liberation. The same attempt at synthesis between ethical behavior in the here and now, and transition toward liberation shapes the doctrine of the four goals of human existence (*puruṣārthas*) – the three this-worldly values of material prosperity (*artha*), sensual enjoyment (*kāma*), and *dharma*, and the fourth, eternal goal of liberation (*mokṣa*). In the line of the *Manusmṛti*, some Hindu thinkers have claimed that the first

three structure the ethical preparatory ground for individuals who are urged to live a full life and continue, in and through such worldly existence, their pilgrimage toward the fourth destination.

Vedāntic Variations on *Dharmic* Templates

In other words, by moving across the idealized system of the three *āśramas*, structured by *dharmic* distinctions, the renunciant becomes a sage established, in the fourth *āśrama*, in the universal self beyond all distinctions. A survey of classical Vedāntic Hindu universes, from roughly the eighth century CE onwards, indicates that they too have operated with a conceptual contrast between an individual's metaphysical identity and an individual's sociological role. The former is the imperishable self (*ātman*) which, whether it is conceptualized as non-dual with the eternal reality, Brahman (thus Advaita Vedānta) or ontologically dependent on Brahman (thus the multiple strands of theistic Vedānta), is beyond all *dharmic* markers of caste, gender, and others. The latter, in contrast, is the precisely graduated sociological persona through which the imperishable self is refracted into a world of multiplicity. The general Vedāntic claim is that the cultivation of certain types of ego-effacing virtues – such as self-control, benevolence, nonviolence, and others – is an integral aspect of the realization that the true self (*ātman*) is the spiritual basis of all reality, and thus of the journey toward liberation from the world.

We find this dialectical move in some of the exegetical writings of Śaṃkara (ca. 800 CE) who developed an influential reading of the *Upaniṣads*, which states that while the empirical ego is marked with various worldly designations, liberation from *saṃsāra* lies precisely in the intuitive realization that the true self (*ātman*) is non-dual with Brahman which transcends all descriptions (*nirguṇa*). Because of spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*), individuals are unable to perceive the deeper non-duality that underlies the discrete objects of the world. Thus we find Śaṃkara starting his *Upadeśasāhasrī* by noting that the student who presents himself to a guru must be appropriately qualified: he is dispassionate toward all things which are transitory, has given up desires for worldly possessions, and reached the state of a wandering ascetic; and he is a Brahman whose caste, profession, knowledge of the Vedas and family have been examined. The guru will ask the student who is eager to cross the ocean of transmigratory existence: "Who are you, my dear"? If the student replies that he is a Brahman's son belonging to a specific family, who has become a wandering monk, he will be chided by the teacher for associating the pure self, which is free from caste, family, and purificatory ceremonies, with these bodily markers (I, 1, 9–13). Śaṃkara is here moving across the famous two "levels" of reality in Advaita teaching: while the transcendental truth is that all individuals are metaphysically non-dual (*advaita*) with the qualityless Brahman, on the conventional plane, one needs to be a Brahman male to have the requisite socioritual qualifications for Vedāntic enquiry. However, after the Brahman student has realized the metaphysical nullity of caste and gender, and right knowledge (*jñāna*) has been attained, there is the cessation of the duties relating to the specific castes (II 17, 47). From this transcendental vantage-point, the following affirmation is valid: "I have neither good nor bad deeds, neither release nor bondage, neither caste nor stages of life, since I am bodiless" (II 10, 6) (Swami Jagadananda 1989, 2–10, 205, 113). Thus, for the Advaita sage, life in the world is characterized by a gradual withdrawal from all forms of social activity which are shaped by the *karmic* subjectivities of desire. We thus note a powerful conceptual tension emerging between an ethical particularism at the conventional *dharmic* level and a radical spiritual transcendence, one which can also be discerned in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, sometimes attributed to Śaṃkara. After realizing one's true

spiritual essence, an individual should cease to identify with the conventional designations of false bodies, in the manner of actors giving up their assumed persona. Such a liberated sage (*jīvanmukta*) looks everywhere with an eye of equality in the world which is conventionally full of elements which are distinct from one another (Swami Madhavananda, 111–112, 163–164). The other-regarding orientation of the sage is articulated, though from a different metaphysical standpoint of pluralism, in Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra* which states that through the cultivation of intense forms of self-control, one becomes attuned to the world at large – thus, the yogi is said to cultivate (I.33) friendliness (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), gladness (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*) toward objects.

While the multiple forms of theistic Vedānta, unlike Advaita, regard the world as metaphysically real, these exegetical-theological streams often converge in stating that the Śūdras do not have the requisite qualifications for scriptural enquiry into Brahman, which is a central requirement for liberation. Śaṃkara's arch-rival Rāmānuja (1017–1137 CE) too argues that the Śūdras do not have in this lifetime the required capability for Vedāntic instruction. Rāmānuja's social gradualism ("the Śūdras could be ready in subsequent lifetimes for enquiry into Brahman, but not right now") should caution us against romanticizing the medieval devotional (*bhakti*) movements as a form of Indian proto-communist revolt of the masses. On the one hand, some of the holy individuals (*sants*) such as Kabir (ca. 1500 CE) rejected notions of scriptural revelation, image worship, and caste hierarchies, and their ethical views emphasized nonviolence, humility, compassion, and reverence for all. They sometimes used Vaiṣṇava names of the deity such as Ram, Hari, and Govinda for the formless (*nirguṇa*) deity, and declared that ultimate liberation is accessible to all individuals. On the other hand, however, these movements should not be viewed as subaltern uprisings, for they usually did not seek to institutionalize radical social egalitarianisms but rather viewed notions of caste (*jāti*) as an obstacle in an individual's spiritual progress (Pande 1989, 98). The operation of the dialectic between the affirmation of spiritual egalitarianism and the shaping of ethical striving by *dharmic* insignia can be noticed in universes as diverse as the Vīraśaivas, the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition, the Bāuls, and others.

In his study of some contemporary representations of the medieval Vīraśaivas or Lingāyats, R. J. Zydenbos (1997, 535) argues that some of the radically egalitarian motifs associated with them should be attributed not to their "founder" Bāsava himself but to more recent reformers in Vīraśaiva society. The Vīraśaivas offered possibilities of social equality for those who would live in accordance with Vīraśaiva norms which were broadly continuous with Brahmanical values relating to spiritual progress such as the rejection of the use of intoxicants and the adoption of a vegetarian diet. The Caitanya traditions too have grappled with the "translation" of the affirmation that Caitanya (1486–1534 CE) was the divinity who descended to the world to rescue women, Śūdras, and sinners, into a direct engagement with socioeconomic asymmetries. Some strands modeled their social radicalism on readings of the cowherd maidens (*gopī*) in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (ca. 1000 CE) as the supreme devotees precisely because they repudiate their social *dharmic* obligations in response to the call of the enchanting flute-music of Kṛṣṇa. A central question in these traditions was whether the worldly imitation of the *gopīs* was to be strictly mental or whether the practitioners should put on the clothes and the ornaments of these feminine characters. The option that was condemned by a council in 1727 was that the practitioners should transform their physical bodies so as to imitate (*anusāra*) the exemplary female models (Haberman 1988, 98). Thus, by and large, the early devotees accepted certain social restrictions relating to *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*, such as devotees of different castes not intermarrying or inter-dining with one another. For a relatively more straightforward repudiation of vestiges of the Brahmanical modes of living enshrined in the *Dharmaśāstras*, as well as a rejection of sociological gradualism in place of an emphasis on the here-now, we could turn to the

songs of the wandering minstrels of Bengal, the Bāuls, which direct the attention of the listener, somewhat in the style of Kabir, to the "I" which is beyond all distinctions of religious community and caste. The Bāuls believe that within the human body lies not only the celestial bodies such as the sun and the moon, but also the divine essence which lies hidden in the "man of the heart," which is beyond distinctions of caste, social mores, and cultural conventions. J. Openshaw has highlighted the multiple uses of the notion of the "I" (*āmi*) in the songs of a Bāul, Rāj Khyāpā (1869–1946). The members of his community employ the term *bartamān* ("the living") to refer to themselves, and contrast themselves with the followers of orthodoxy or orthopraxy (*anumān*). Their songs elaborate a distinction between the inner perspective of the "I," which is free from distinctions of self and other, high and low, pure and impure, and the external perspective which is the world of hierarchy, discrimination, and ranking. Rāj adopted a radically iconoclastic stance toward all social hierarchies on the basis of his claim that the interiority and the subjectivity of the "I" transcend all worldly categories. Here it is significant that the followers of the *bartamān*-path have, according to Openshaw (2005, 192), sometimes developed folk versions of Advaita Vedānta, and directed their non-dualism toward socioeconomic issues: "I have often heard even uninitiated rural Bengalis, Muslims as well as Hindus, explain 'non-dualism' as non-differentiation and non-discrimination [*advaita*] in a highly radical sense, for example, in terms of lack of possessiveness . . . The more conventionally religious would rarely draw such radical corollaries of course."

As these medieval and early modern instances indicate, Hindu forms of ethical thinking involve attempts to read life in the world through the prisms of foundational texts, gurus, and mythic forms. For another concrete example of such ethical reasoning, consider the argument developed by Rammohun Roy (1772–1833) against the ritual immolation of Hindu widows (*sati*) on the funeral pyres of their husbands. Roy (1885–1887) noted that texts from the Hindu traditions which praise such con-cremation approve, in effect, the fruition of desires as a goal to be pursued, and argued that, in fact, a number of authoritative scriptural sources such as the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, and the *Bhagavadgītā* specify that those who hanker after the perishable fruits of rites move away from the supreme end of eternal beatitude. Across several Hindu lifeworlds, rich resources of ethical thinking are provided also by the epic narratives of the *Mahābhārata* (ca. 200 BCE–400 CE) and the *Rāmāyaṇa* (ca. 200 BCE–200 CE), some of whose central characters are taken as figures to be emulated in one's ethical decisions within familial, social, and interpersonal contexts. The *Mahābhārata* is a richly textured web of narrative, mythic, and didactic elements where some characters are presented as working their way to liberation through ethical dilemmas generated by the conflict between the particularistic forms of *dharma* and the commitment to universal values. The narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa* turns around the paradigmatically moral king, Rāma who, with Lakṣmaṇa, his dutiful brother, rescues his wife, Sītā, an exemplar of wifely virtue, from the clutches of a demon king. As A. Dhand (2002, 364) has argued: "A study of the conduct of the ideal man, Rāma, gives us a good idea of the values that Hindus prize in their lives, and according to which they structure their own relationships."

Modernist Universalisms

Over the last few centuries, a galaxy of Hindu figures such as Swami Vivekananda (1863–1901), M. K. Gandhi (1869–1948), Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), and others, have sought to delink traditional Hindu lifeworlds from their particularistic moorings in *varṇa-āśrama-dharma* and present

Hinduism as expressive of the universal *dharma* which is projected as transcending the bounds of race, caste, gender, and nation (Halbfass 1988, 345–346). They reinvigorated a classical distinction between the *varṇa-āśrama-dharma* and the common ethical principles of the *sādhāraṇa-dharma* which are applicable to all, and highlighted the latter as the quintessence not only of Hinduism but also at times of the world religions. For instance, the *Manusmṛti*, a standard source of *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*, also delineates five virtues which are common to all four *varṇas*: nonviolence, truthfulness, not stealing, purification, and control over the senses (10.63). According to the modernized Advaita visions of these figures, through the active cultivation of ego-transcending virtues, individuals begin to realize the deep non-duality that pervades all spheres of reality.

Some of these universalized reconfigurations were prompted by the Christian missionary critique that Hindu lifeforms were pervaded by attitudes of world-renunciation, *karmic* fatalism, and cosmic pessimism, and were devoid of ethical structure. In response, Swami Vivekananda spoke of a "practical Vedānta" directed toward social engagement, which he argued was grounded in the Vedāntic dictum "thou art that" (*tat tvam asi*): because all human beings are rooted in the eternal self (*ātman*), one must love one's neighbor who is essentially oneself. Thus, he argued: "The Vedānta philosophers . . . discovered the basis of ethics . . . Why should I not injure my neighbor? . . . [E]ach individual soul is a part and parcel of that Universal Soul [*ātman*], which is infinite. Therefore in injuring his neighbor, the individual actually injures himself. This is the basic metaphysical truth underlying all ethical codes" (1982, 383). In fact, service to the poor, the illiterate, and the afflicted, knowing them to be embodiments of the divine reality, is the highest religion. For Vivekananda, then, ethical commitment toward the world and Advaitic trans-personalism are deeply compatible: indeed, only through liberation from egoism, attachment and fear is true ethical behavior possible. The imprint of Western critiques is visible also in Radhakrishnan's attempt to reconfigure Hindu ethical engagement on the scriptural basis of the *Bhagavadgītā*: "It is a great pity that the Hindu religion and philosophy have been so interpreted in the past as to give color to a quietistic and unpractical code of duties, quite in accord with the introspective turn of the Hindu's mind. The whole spirit of the *Bhagavadgītā* is a protest against this quietistic spirit" (1914, 183). Radhakrishnan goes on to argue that the *Bhagavadgītā* urges individuals not to retreat to a mystical solitude but to remain engaged in ceaseless activity, even as they seek to overcome modes of egoistic attachment to the world.

To return to the theme introduced at the beginning of the entry, Hindu ethical reflection interweaves "descriptive" and "normative" elements from a diverse array of scriptural texts, which have been interpreted by influential gurus, preceptors, and teachers. Ethical agency in these universes is exercised toward the cultivation of certain values, excellences, and virtues which are highlighted by scriptural sources, prescribed by traditional lineages (*sampradāya*) of exegetical interpretations, and encoded into idealized characters in epic narratives. Thus, the *Bhagavadgītā* declares that the system of four *varṇas* is founded by Kṛṣṇa, and also directs individuals to cultivate forms of even-mindedness which are associated with virtues such as humility, nonviolence, patience, simplicity, and others (13.8–12). A focused set of virtues appears in Vātsyāyan's commentary on the *Nyāyasūtras* (1.1.2), which states that the virtues of the body are charity (*dāna*), protection of others, and service (*paricaraṇa*) to others; the virtues of the speech are truthfulness, beneficial words, gentle speech, and Vedic study; and the virtues of the mind are kindness, indifference to material gain, and piety (*śraddhā*). The cultivation of such virtues is placed against the backdrop of conceptions of the good life, which are diversely configured across the complexly-layered Hindu traditions, ranging from social living within the systems of

varṇa-āśrama-dharma to the solitary existence of the itinerant renunciant, while premodern and contemporary readings of the *Bhagavadgītā* argue that life in the world is not only not opposed to, but constitutes the ethical ground for, the quest for liberation from the world.

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CHAPTER 93

Chinese Religions: Practices and Communities

Beverley McGuire

In present-day China, we have seen a revival of religious communities and practices, as well as a resurgence of values that held sway in earlier periods of history. Following widespread destruction of temples from Republican anti-superstition movements and repression during the Maoist era, especially the Cultural Revolution, temples have been rebuilt, festivals have returned, and five religious traditions – Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Buddhism, and Daoism – have again been officially sanctioned by the state. Longstanding values placed on family and beliefs in moral retribution have re-emerged despite efforts to change such kinship ties and eradicate religious worldviews. Divination, geomancy (*fengshui*), and fortune-telling, deemed "superstitious" and prohibited during the 1982–1984 campaign against "spiritual pollution," continue to be used today to address peoples' concerns about finances, marital troubles, and other matters.

Practices and values have been reformulated in light of social changes as well as different economic and political structures, and they vary according to geographic context, social location, and other factors. For example, in mainland China one finds fewer temples and less evidence of shamanic practices and spirit possession in urban centers than rural areas, which some attribute to tighter political control that limits opportunities for religious activity. As Robert Weller notes, "Religion thrives especially where the central bureaucrats are more distant – the south, rural areas, and at small scales" (1999, 87). Although difficult to measure, some studies suggest there may be one temple per 400 inhabitants, and temple groups that include all villagers provide common moral obligations and incentives to cooperate (Goossaert and Palmer 2011).

In many rural communities, people continue to worship gods and immortals in temples to pray for blessing such as good health, longevity, descendants, and material prosperity. Although popular religion has "hibernated" somewhat as secret home altars and modest chants have replaced elaborate temples and rituals, temple festivals with dance troop performances, folk operas, and processions continue to provide a way for people to express values such as hosting and mutual help (Chau 2006). During temple festivals celebrating gods' birthdays or showing gratitude for prosperity, people make offerings, burn incense, and kneel on mats to consult divination devices. By contrast, in many cities in mainland China, urban dwellers may only have access to a few officially designated monasteries, churches, and mosques that function largely as tourist attractions or museums rather than living communities, and while yearly festivals may be well attended, regular visitors remain rare. As a result, many city residents lack any knowledge of proper temple etiquette, and by the twenty-first century

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Buddhist and Daoist temples had young clerics show visitors how to light and burn incense, bow, or step over gate thresholds (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 273).

Despite rural and urban differences in temple worship, the transition to a market economy has generated spiritual needs and desires, and surveys conducted in mainland Chinese cities show a prevalent interest in religious culture. Some have argued that market forces and the spread of corruption have created a "spiritual void" (*jingsheng kongxu*) and "crisis of faith" (*xinyang weiji*) in mainland China following the collapse of Maoist utopianism and China's "Reform and Opening up" (*gaige kaifang*) initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 191). Robert Weller describes two cultural responses to the market economy, both of which undermine geographic ties: one tending toward a utilitarian granting of individual desires, the other toward a universalizing set of moral values (Weller 1999, 88). In the early twenty-first century, the Chinese Communist Party identified various problems plaguing society – the worship of money, the pursuit of pleasure, unbridled individualism, putting personal interest above all sense of justice, putting private interest above the common good, and an inability to distinguish good and evil – and emphasized the need to raise the "moral quality" (*daode suzhi*) of the people and educate them about the "eight honors and eight shames" (*ba rong ba chi*) (Billoud 2007, 55–56). Although the latter slogan was turned into an object of ridicule by many Chinese people, it speaks to underlying moral concerns about materialism, corruption, and selfishness. As we will see, another way that Chinese people have sought to address these issues is through the practice of self-cultivation, which found new outlets in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries through the *qigong* movement, the growth of Christianity, the revival of Buddhism, and popular Confucian movements.

Family

In contemporary China, family remains a prominent value, especially the parent-child relationship and its accompanying responsibilities. Confucius emphasized that one could not develop moral sensibilities outside the familial context – that our feelings, attitudes, and actions toward our parents and elder siblings play a foundational role in our moral development (Cline 2015, 8). Children learn rituals (*li*) from their family members and teachers, and they practice them until they can perform them naturally so they become means of expressing proper dispositions. As they mature, they develop a better sense of discernment about when and how to appropriately perform such rituals. Among those rituals was ancestor veneration, or worshipping the spirits of one's ancestors that retained influence over their living descendants. Traditionally sons were expected to uphold "filial piety" (*xiao*) by obeying and caring for their parents, holding funeral rituals upon their death, finding the proper burial site through geomancy (*fengshui*), and engaging in daily worship and offerings to appease their deceased spirit. However, such funerary practices changed following the funeral reforms promoted by Nationalists and Communists in the twentieth century that included new memorial services, the prohibition of wailing, wearing traditional mourning clothes, or presenting offerings to the deceased, and compulsory cremation instead of cemeteries. Today those in cities tend to accept cremation and do not have domestic ancestral shrines, however, in rural areas of southern China tombs for urns, cemeteries, and ancestral shrines are common (Goosaert and Palmer 2011).

Although some policies and processes have affected family structure and dynamics – most notably the One Child Policy introduced in 1979 and rural-urban migration that began following economic reforms

in 1978 – families continue to play a large role in the moral development of children. However, the logic of "filial piety" has become inverted as parents and grandparents now focus on nurturing young children (Goossaert and Palmer 2011). In urban settings, especially among wealthier upper-class families, the One Child Policy resulted in what some referred to as the "little emperor" syndrome as single children received excessive attention from their parents and grandparents. In rural settings, as parents seek employment in cities, grandparents often assume the role of caring for the children left behind. The documentary "Last Train Home" (2009) powerfully depicts how this can affect the respect that children display toward their parents whom they sometimes resent for leaving them behind.

Festivals

Despite these changing dynamics, family continues to be a core value within Chinese society as evidenced by the continued practice of ancestor veneration (*zuxian chongbai*) and festivals such as Spring Festival, Grave-Sweeping Festival (Qingming), and Mid-Autumn Festival. Recent studies have shown that over 70% of Chinese adults venerate the spirits of their ancestors or deceased relatives and visit the gravesites of ancestors (Hu 2016). In southern Chinese villages, lineage halls – often renamed "senior citizens' centers" to avoid being labeled feudal or superstitious – are sites for ancestor worship during the last day and first day of the lunar year, when family members bring offerings and burn incense (Tam 2011). Although urban residents and migrants are less likely to practice ancestor worship because of their separation from extended families and ancestral gravesites, they often make special efforts to return to their familial homes during festivals – especially the Spring Festival where families share a reunion meal and paste red paper cutouts on their doorways seeking happiness, wealth, and longevity. Reunion meals often feature various meat dishes, especially pork and chicken, and a hot pot symbolizing the coming together of family members. Northern Chinese typically make dumplings to eat at midnight, while southern Chinese make glutinous new year cakes (*niangao*), but both foods symbolize wealth and prosperity. During the Grave-Sweeping Festival, which was declared a public holiday by the People's Republic of China (PRC) government in 2008, families visit the tombs of ancestors to clean the gravesites, pray to the ancestors and make ritual offerings of food and burn joss sticks and joss paper.

Food continues to play a seminal role in Chinese culture, not only in festivals but also daily life. Chinese meals typically consist of two components: (1) a starch (typically rice, noodles, or steamed buns) and (2) vegetables and meats. Each person has their own bowl of rice, and they pick food out of communal plates with their chopsticks. Although marriages, funerals, and other formal occasions often include large banquets with endless dishes of food and copious amounts of alcohol, typical daily meals are more modest. The Chinese understand food as medicinal, paying attention to not only the kind and amount of food one eats, but also selecting appropriate foods at particular times dependent on one's health condition. Foods are classified into *yin* and *yang* categories, and one can eat foods from those categories to counterbalance any disequilibrium between *yin* and *yang* forces in the body.

Buddhist vegetarian diets often serve as a marker of religious identity. Indeed, one of the largest criticisms levied against Buddhism when it was introduced into China was the threat it posed to society in its monasticism and to culture in its vegetarianism. Buddhist apologists defended themselves by arguing that both practices upheld the value of the family – the former being a filial act toward saving one's parents alongside other sentient beings, the latter being a safeguard against the possibility of eating that

which may have been a parent in a former life – but today vegetarianism is often synonymous with Buddhist affiliation. When I lived in mainland China in the late 1990s, I soon discovered that the only way to ensure my food was vegetarian was to state that I was Buddhist (*wo xin fo*). Chinese Buddhist monks continue to uphold vegetarianism, and although few lay Buddhists are strict vegetarians, most observe a vegetarian diet on certain days in the Chinese lunar month such as the full moon and new moon, or during festivals such as the lunar New Year's Eve.

Although in late imperial and early modern periods strict vegetarianism excluded people from certain social networks because banquets were the venue for creating such connections, as lay Buddhist groups in mainland China understood vegetarianism as part of their morality and the Taiwanese middle-class increasingly identified themselves as Buddhists starting in the 1970s, it became acceptable and understood as part of an ethical lifestyle by the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 282). In some new urban settings, vegetarian restaurants became meeting places for those in search of a more ethical lifestyle.

Body Cultivation

Body cultivation traditions have also thrived in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Traditional techniques of manipulating the flow of *qi* through the body re-emerged in the twentieth century as a cultivation method (*xiulianfa*) with health and therapeutic benefits, and it continues to be popular not only among mostly elderly Chinese who gather together in parks to do *taijiquan* but also among those who practice *qigong* ("breath training") and other bodily practices. Previously understood in the context of Daoist or martial arts training, *qigong* was reinterpreted in the 1950s as a type of medical treatment and institutionalized in the state's national medical system as part of traditional Chinese medicine (Otehode 2009). In the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese ministries of health and sport promoted *qigong* as an inexpensive health care, which fueled a "*qigong* fever" that included movements around charismatic *qigong* masters who reputedly cured people of illness, or *qigong* practitioners who after entering trance states are said to be possessed by Guanyin, the Jade Emperor, or other gods in "spontaneous movements *qigong*" (Palmer 2011, 89–90). It was arguably one of the most prevalent forms of urban religiosity until the suppression of Falungong in 1999, with an estimated one-fifth of urban residents having contact with qigong from the 1970s until then (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 287).

Qigong encompassed a variety of gymnastic, breathing, and meditative techniques, and it was practiced in parks and other public spaces in the late twentieth century. Although some viewed it as a secular form of physical exercise, many *qigong* manuals drew from Daoist and Buddhist texts, or emphasized the moral dimensions of the practice. As David Palmer notes, body cultivation was understood to encompass the corporal, emotional, social, and spiritual as an undifferentiated whole, and by practicing *qigong* one was not solely nurturing one's body but also cultivating virtue – an embodied virtue that in Chinese cosmology was associated with power (Palmer 2011, 104–105). Whether one engaged in *qigong* for therapeutic reasons of health, or as a type of religious practice, one understood the practice as promoting the flow of *qi* through the body and bringing it into alignment with nature. Although most *qigong* groups were disbanded following the crackdown of Falungong, and only five completely secularized forms of *qigong* were allowed thereafter, other types of self-cultivation flourished in its stead, including Chan summer camps run by Buddhist monasteries

and courses in nourishing life by Daoist groups, as well as some scripture-recitation and meditation sessions led by Confucian movements (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 289).

Moral Retribution

Although relatively few people in mainland China have any formal religious affiliation – only 5% according to a 2005 survey – most believe in moral retribution: the rewarding of virtuous action and punishing of bad behavior understood to occur either automatically because of karma or after death through a postmortem judicial process in the courts of hell. According to a 2007 study of over 3,000 Han Chinese, 77% believed in the idea of divine retribution or cosmic recompense (*baoying*) (Yao and Badham 2007). Amid widespread criticism of materialism, corruption, and greed perceived to be rampant in contemporary society, some turn to religious practices as a means of combating moral degeneration (Osnos 2014). Middle-class residents in Shenzhen speak of taking their destiny (*mingyun*) into their own hands, constructing home altars, joining other spiritual seekers in vegetarian restaurants, and reading Daoist stories, Buddhist sutras, or works of Confucius and Mencius (Fan and Whitehead 2011).

Ethnographic studies of lay Buddhists show their concern for maintaining Buddhist commitments even while engaging in business ventures (Jones 2014) or achieving greater balance (*pingheng*) in their lives (Fisher 2014). They differentiate Buddhist moral frameworks of cause and consequence (*yinguo*) from the practice of gaining status through the cultivation of relationships (*guanxi*), emphasizing the importance of reciprocal relationships to all beings in the universe, not just those based on social proximity (Fisher 2014, 106). Ian Johnson describes the latter as a "studied indifference in society – the unwillingness to help people outside one's *guanxi* network" (Johnson 2017, 139) By contrast, lay Buddhists seek to build new connections by creating karmic links (*jieyuan*) with others through the printing and free distribution of morality books and other Buddhist media (Fisher 2014; Chau 2011). Such morality books were common in late imperial China as they promoted the idea that people can "create their own destiny" (*zooming*) by improving their moral status through good deeds. Another practice commonly used in late imperial times to understand and control one's fate, which has re-emerged today, is interest in divination and the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*).

Divination

Fortune-telling and divination remain prevalent in contemporary China as people cope with uncertainty and anxiety, despite the continual charge of "superstition" (*mixin*). A pervasive phenomenon throughout Chinese history, divinatory practices include predicting one's fate using the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), fortune-telling, spirit writing, dream interpretation, geomancy, astrology, and numerology. Chinese Buddhists have used divination as a means of diagnosing their karma, relying on the method to reveal their karmic obstacles so that they can then redress those through repentance rituals designed to eliminate their karma. The Buddhist monk Mengcan includes a set of plastic tops alongside his commentary on a divination sutra so that practitioners might perform rituals in their own homes.

Professional geomancers continue to use *fengshui* to determine appropriate sites for graves and houses, and they calculate auspicious dates for weddings and funerals, but one can also find *fengshui* compasses

and do-it-yourself manuals in local bookstores. Despite the massive migration of workers to factories in coastal cities, villages continue to use *fengshui* – capturing the energy of wind and water – in their architectural decisions and configuration of the village and graves of ancestors (Tam 2011). For example, houses in villages must not stand out from the others, so as not to be blamed for misfortunes in the village. Diviners in contemporary China have a somewhat ambiguous status, insofar as they are relegated to the margins of society but also respected by clients for their expertise and advice. They provide a sort of spiritual counseling and address their psychological needs.

People also engage in divination practices at temples, where they believe that deities can respond (*ying*) to their entreaties through their magical efficacy (*ling*) (Chau 2006). Divination sticks remain a common feature in Chinese temples: to address questions concerning business enterprises, marriages, jobs, examinations, and children, people "draw divination sticks" (*chouqian*) by shaking the container until a bamboo stick (*qian*) drops or shoots out of the divination stick container (*qiantong*); they then retrieve a divination poem slip (*qianzhi*) that corresponds to the number on the stick (Chau 2006).

Tradition

In the twenty-first century, the Chinese government has promoted a vision of "traditional culture" (*chuantong wenhua*) as a symbolic resource for legitimacy and national solidarity. A year after UNESCO launched the category of "intangible cultural heritage" in 2003 to protect oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, and festivals, and other practices, the People's Republic of China began identifying items of traditional culture that might officially be designated "intangible heritage," including local cults to deities such as Mazu and Jigong, village temple festivals, as well as official cults to Confucius. In this way, certain religious traditions have become promoted as parts of Chinese culture and worthy of preservation for nationalistic reasons and tourism development (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 343–344).

The Chinese government has increasingly portrayed Confucian traditions as constitutive of traditional culture, sponsoring Confucian ceremonies connecting Confucian values with Chinese national essence (Sun 2013; Billioud and Thoraval 2009). For example, in the Confucius festivals performed in September of 2007 in the city of Qufu in Shandong Province, where Confucius was born and buried, the inaugural ceremony depicted Confucian "Chineseness" (*zhonghua qing*) – understood to be a fundamental character of China that transcends borders and ethnicities – as a common cultural heritage that might harmonize and unify the entire world, exemplified by China hosting the Olympic Games in Beijing (Billioud and Thoraval 2009, 89). The Chinese government presents a broad image of tolerance by defining "Chineseness" as that which unites Han Chinese with other ethnic minorities, however Buddhists in Tibet and Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang have challenged the Chinese national identity imposed by the government, protesting and resisting the state's repression of religion and restriction of cultural autonomy (Lu and Gao 2018; Potter 2003). Similarly, since 2004 the government has established thousands of Confucius Institutes in overseas colleges and universities to promote Chinese language and culture, which is viewed by some academics as impinging on intellectual freedom and an attempt to build "soft power" by promoting Chinese culture as a way to extend its political influence.

Although some criticize "Confucian studies" (*ruxue*) and large-scale rituals in the name of Confucian culture as encouraging cultural nationalism, many grassroots Confucian activists promote the tradition as a way to address moral and intellectual concerns (Goossaert and Palmer, 345). Such activists have

rediscovered and reinvented new rituals in their attempt to revive Confucian traditions in the early twenty-first century. They study the Confucian classics, keep personal diaries as tools for moral self-cultivation, come together to perform rituals, and even develop virtual online "academies" that connect those who have an interest in Confucianism (Billioud and Thoraval 2009, 95). Indeed, Chinese cyberspace has provided a venue for many individuals searching for meaning to find new pathways for moral and spiritual cultivation (Palmer 2004).

Technology

Religious themes continue to appear in mass media and popular culture, such as martial arts novels, films, and television that include Buddhist monks, Daoist priests, and people with miraculous powers (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 277). Mass media, publishing, and the Internet have made it relatively easy to disseminate information about religious traditions. Although Chinese cyberspace is relatively self-enclosed, there have been increasing connections with Taiwanese, Hong Kong and overseas networks. Buddhist websites do not criticize the government, corruption, or environmental degradation but instead cater to religious seekers and commercial interests by encouraging meditation, sutra recitation, vegetarianism, and self-cultivation, and also selling religious paraphernalia and promoting pilgrimages (Laliberté 2017, 146).

Technologies are often interpreted as potential supplements to, rather than substitutes for, religious practice. For example, Buddha-recitation devices (*nianfo ji*) – portable plastic boxes that use modern technology to reproduce the Buddha's name endlessly – are used to create a spiritually efficacious environment, replicating the self-sounding environment of the Pure Land for Chinese Buddhists who engage in the practice of reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha (Heller 2014). Digital technologies such as mobile apps for religious practice, cyber-pilgrimages, and Buddhist social media can connect people with religious knowledge and monastic networks (Tarocco 2017). On the one hand, some Buddhists portray Web 2.0 technology as a means to accumulate wisdom and serve as a type of "storehouse consciousness," while on the other hand they acknowledge that technological progress and busy lives often do not allow for sufficient exercise or the purification of body, speech, and mind (McGuire 2017).

Western Applications

Not only have Chinese people found new significance in their religious traditions, but a number of Western scholars have too, although they address a somewhat different set of concerns. Several recent works have emphasized ways that early Chinese philosophy might serve as constructive resources for Westerners today, including Michael Puett and Christine Gross-Loh's *The Path* (2016) and Erin Cline's *Families of Virtue* (2015). Puett and Gross-Loh make the case for rituals creating an "as if" world that helps refine one's ability to respond properly to situations. For example, a child estranged from an overly critical mother might act "as if" she was nurturing, and by adopting that tone and stance, they might elicit a caring response from their mother (Puett and Loh 2016, 44–45). They emphasize the importance of actively working to shift patterned habits and entrenched narratives that limit our perception of the world. Because the world is fractured and fragmented, people are responsible for generating order. They

write, "we do this through daily self cultivation: working through our rituals to improve the way we relate to those around us; cultivating energies in our bodies so that we can live with more vitality; training our hearts and minds to work through daily decisions in a powerfully different way; and resisting our tendency to cut ourselves off from experience, so that we become constantly receptive to new things" (Puett and Loh 2016, 197). Puett and Loh present early Chinese philosophies as correctives to Western myths about living in an age of freedom where the goal is to find oneself and live authentically according to an inner truth.

Erin Cline argues that evidence-based approaches to early childhood intervention and parental caregiving supports Confucian claims about the important role that parents play in the lives and moral development of their children. If we take the Confucian views seriously, they would lead one to endorse certain social and policy changes, such as mandated paid leave for parents in the United States and the Nurse-Family Partnership program that provides first-time low-income mothers with home visits from public health nurses during early pregnancy through the first two years of the child's life. Confucian stories and anecdotes can provide a resource for rethinking and reshaping contemporary attitudes, practices, and policies related to the family.

My own current research considers the ways that Chinese philosophies may contribute to a more robust understanding of moral attention – the capacity to discern and attend to the morally salient features of a given situation. Moral attention involves suspending one's thought in order to actively receive something or someone else in all of their complexity and particularity. Although most scholars associate moral attention with Western philosophers such as Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch, Chinese religious traditions describe various means of facilitating moral attention, including Confucian techniques of moral cultivation, Daoist practices of "fasting the mind," and Buddhist meditation. Such techniques may be useful for redressing the contemporary tendency toward "continuous partial attention," a phrase coined by Linda Stone that describes the process of paying simultaneous attention to numerous sources of information, but at a superficial level. In an "attention economy" designed to draw our attention to our digital devices and away from those who surround us, we may benefit from reflecting on the ways that it impacts our interpersonal relationships by examining ourselves on various counts, or becoming more finely attuned to our surrounding environment by gathering ourselves in emptiness, or widening the scope of our concern to consider all types of sentient beings who need our attention and care. In this way, Chinese religions could contribute a great deal to how we approach technology and direct our attention.

Conclusion

In present-day China people continue to value family, participate in festivals such as the Grave-Sweeping Festival, and believe in a moral universe that rewards good deeds and punishes bad acts. However, they negotiate their values under very different circumstances from previous historical periods, in the wake of urbanization, family planning policies, and economic reforms that have often dissolved geographic ties, impacted family dynamics, and fueled a sense of moral crisis. Chinese people have sought out religious practices in response to the materialism, corruption, and inequality they perceive to be rampant in Chinese society, engaging in body cultivation techniques, reciting scriptures, and exchanging morality books. Although temples continue to address spiritual needs of some who remain in villages, others who dwell in cities have formed groups that meet in restaurants and draw from a variety of religious texts.

Alongside the rebuilding of Buddhist and Daoist temples, there has been a Confucian revival that includes state-sponsored ceremonies to Confucius as well as grassroots activism promoting the Confucian tradition as a way to address contemporary moral concerns. Technologies have afforded the opportunity to supplement religious practices in innovative ways, and Chinese religious ethicists have produced new work that urges Westerners to take early Chinese traditions seriously as resources that can address ethical issues facing us today.

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CHAPTER 94

African Religions: Practices and Communities

Ebenezer Akesseh

Introduction

The epistemic discourse on religious ethics offers sufficient cues for understanding the importance, role and function of communities in (African) religious ethics. Communities and practices embody the values and beliefs of a group of people. Through their practices, communities express their supernatural beliefs and demonstrate how those beliefs guide and influence the lives of the members. Thus, though religions possess "untold treasures of moral wisdom, that is, practical guidance about how to live justly and well that include beliefs and practices about the nature of human assistance, social life, what is good and righteous, and reality itself" (Schweiker and Clairmont 2020, 1), the communities play invaluable role in how their members conceptualize and apply those practices and "treasures of moral wisdom." Through their practices, communities also transmit standards of right and wrong to future generations. Not only do communities shape practices, but practices also shape communities. They provide an opening into understanding the communities' moral fabric and, also, constitute the prism through which individuals confront their social reality. Thus, communities and practices exercise a normative role in defining and determining standards of rightness or wrongness. Since communities express the core tenets of their life through practices, any analysis of the moral life of a community ought to consider the importance of practices and communities and the relationship between them. Religious ethics, therefore, needs to take into account communities and practices as well as the textured relationship between practices and communities in thinking through questions regarding how people understand what it means to live a good life.

Practices and Communities in African Ethics

The meaning of life and the prescriptions and proscriptions for a virtuous and responsible life in African culture are deeply embedded in a community's beliefs and practices. The absence of revealed scripture and authoritative sources for its ethics, as found in some religions, makes it very important to understand communities and their practices in African religions. Not only do communities and practices help to understand the way of life of African communities, they also illustrate that African moral reasoning combines the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of moral reasoning as well as a hybridization of

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classical ethical theories. As Odozor has noted, "traditional African moral reasoning is partly deontological, partly teleological, and partly everything else, depending on the issues at stake, the view of God the individual has, and the understanding of the human good in question which needs to be preserved, articulated, or enhanced" (Odozor 2014, 250).

Discussions of communities and practices in African thought must take into account the relationship between culture and religion since the beliefs and practices of a community are intrinsic to a community's culture. African writers have underscored the inextricable relationship between religion and culture in African religions (Mbiti 1990; Magesa 1997; Gyekye 1996). According to Odozor, "African religion is the culture, and the culture is religious" (Odozor 2014, 86). Because religion underpins almost every aspect of social life in Africa and provides "definitions of the universe and humanity's place in it," any attempt to separate the two is an exercise in futility (Assimeng 2010). However, it is important to note that religion can be meaningfully differentiated from, even though it is deeply connected with culture, since religion primarily can be described as a community or a person's "response to what is Ultimate in the human experience of existing insofar as that response is a conscious cultivation of one's form of conscious being"(Martin 1975, 467). In order to understand the significance of practices and communities in African ethics, it is necessary to lay out, first, how individuals see themselves in relation to the community and how the community exercises its responsibility toward the flourishing of her members. Second, it is important to examine how African communities use practices which are deeply religious to guide and orient the behavior of their members; and third, the impact of social change on practices and communities. This three-layered approach will provide a conceptual basis to assess the contribution that practices and communities can make to a moral issue confronting an African country.

Before we analyze the invaluable role of practices in African religions, it is essential to establish the origins of communities in African thought. African communities trace their origins to a common ancestor(s). In some sense, one can say that their views of such figures are spiritualized. The ancestor(s) is seen not only as a historical figure(s), they are also recalled in connection with the values they espoused during their lifetimes and in the founding of the tribes. Obrumankoma, Odapagyan, and Oson, for example, are the founding fathers of Fanteland in Ghana. Their prowess and valor in protecting Fanteland are captured in Fante folklore and songs (Shumway 2011). The founding narratives expressed through folklores and music also serve as one of the ways of uniting communities around shared values.

The notion of community is foundational to African thought. Kwame Gyekye illustrates the idea of community in Africa by analyzing three novels – *The African Child* by Camara Laye, a Guinean; *No Longer at Ease* by Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian; *The African* by William Conton, a Sierra Leonean – and affirms the moral significance of African communities (Gyekye 1995). Polycarp Ikuenobe describes a community as the "logical and epistemic foundation of the normative conception of a person and the basis for a person's own view of self-identity and ways of doing things" (Ikuenobe 2006, 53). In other words, a person's attitudes and ethical foundations are formed by being a community member. Menkiti also posits that the sense of self-identity, which the individual comes to possess, cannot be made sense of except by reference to the collective facts of the society which he inhabits. This is because the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life stories (Ifeanyi 1984). Gyekye illustrates this point further using the Akans of Ghana. He opines that among the Akans, the conception and development of an individual's personality and identity are inseparable from her participation in the group (Gyekye 1995). Thus, the community is at the center of every activity, practice, belief, and value.

Though the community shapes one's moral and social identity, it is essential to note that the individual does not lose his or her identity in the community; neither does the community dissolve the individual's ethical identity (Bujo 2001). According to Bujo, an individual is described as a "process of coming into existence in the reciprocal relatedness of the individual and the community" (Bujo 2001, 87). In general, the relationship that exists between the individual and the community manifests itself in the kind of moral principles and the moral reasoning that grounds the content of moral education in African cultures (Ikuenobe 2006).

The understandings of the importance of community as captured by Gyekye, Ikuenobe, and Bujo poignantly illustrate two interrelated issues, namely, the role that the community plays in the life of Africans and the fact that the community's sustenance depends on the ways through which the community helps people perform their roles and responsibilities. Such a functionalist perspective accentuates the fact that "the human person acts more effectively to the extent that he holds fast to solidarity with those like himself; for thus he raises the quality of the vital force not only for himself but rather for the whole community, indeed for the whole of humanity" (Bujo 2001, 5).

Having outlined the centrality of communities to African thought, some of the practices found in African religions with attention to how they impact African ethical discourse will now be examined. Generally, practices and rituals depict how communities relate to the supernatural, to the environment, and to one another. As Nukunya has opined, the beliefs and practices associated with the supernatural operate at different levels and in different forms. Though they differ from place to place on the continent, we could deduce some general categories, including, High God, small gods, ancestors, witchcraft, sorcery, and magic (Nukunya 2016). Practices associated with the worship of the High God, the small gods and ancestors are expressed through offering sacrifices and pouring of individual or communal libation usually performed by priests and clan heads. Festivals are also occasions where communities through their practices manifest their belief in the High God, the small gods and ancestors. The practices associated with festivals are considered necessary for sustaining the life-giving force of the community and they serve as a means of social cohesion.

A group of practices through which communities pass on standards of excellence are the rites of passage. The rites "connect human beings with the other visible and the invisible world of God, the ancestors, and the spirits" (Magesa 1997, 114). The rites cover four stages of a person's life – birth, puberty, marriage, and death. According to Magesa, each of these stages has to do with the vitality of human life – birth as transmitting the vital force, puberty (initiation) as a confirmation of the vital force, procreation as the preservation of the vital force and funeral rites as the availing of the deceased elder's vital power. Accompanied by the appropriate rites and practices, the rites of passage are moments when the power of life is intensified for the individual and community (Magesa 1997).

Without describing the various rites in detail, it suffices to note that apart from their religious value, the rites also serve as an essential means of moral formation from the cradle to the grave. The practice of dipping a form of liquid on the tongue of a child during naming ceremonies in some African communities is usually accompanied by words that require the child to speak the truth and cultivate honesty. Additionally, by naming a child after an ancestor, the child is expected to emulate the virtues of the ancestor. Failure to do so means bringing the ancestor's legacy into disrepute. Thus, the community uses the naming ceremony to address moral issues related to living an upright life. Though the rites are for the child, they also remind those present to cultivate honesty, sincerity and other virtues emphasized in the ceremony.

The puberty or initiation rites are a time to learn ancestral wisdom. During the period, boys and girls are taught the values of cooperation and sharing, the relationship between human life and the rest of creation, domestic and social virtues, sex and sexuality, good manners and grooming, and the forms of self-identity. In addition to these, bravery and courage are emphasized for boys whereas tenderness and affection are stressed for girls. In many societies, the ceremony is supposed to check immorality or premarital sex since adolescents are required to be chaste before going through the puberty rites. Failure to meet this requirement brings shame to the initiate's family. He or she also incurs the displeasure of the gods and the ancestors (Magesa 1997; Lartey 2014). The puberty rites, therefore, illustrate how communities think through moral responsibility, sexual ethics and social cohesion and address them through formation.

Marriage is understood universally in African religion as an essential social institution. It is the meeting point for the three layers of human life – the living, the departed and the unborn (Sarpong 1974).The practices associated with the rite emphasize that marriage is the acceptable social structure for transmitting life. It is also the context for the proper expression of sexuality. The practices also point to society's approval of legitimate unions and the respect accorded to children of such unions. The stages of the marriage ceremony emphasize the enduring nature of marriage. The couple also receive instruction on how to live together as part of their preparations for marriage. The marriage rites, then serve as the means through which the community approaches the moral questions relating to marriage such as creating stable families and avoiding marital instability.

The practices associated with death rites stress the importance of living a fulfilling and responsible life. As Nukunya notes: "Though everyone on his or her death would go to the spirit world, not every dead person forms the center of attention during the ancestral rights. This honor is reserved only for the ancestors, those who led good and exemplary lives and died honorably and in advanced age" (Nukunya 2016, 73). The death rites, therefore, underscore the importance of living the moral values one was introduced to during the naming ceremony, puberty rites, and marriage rites since they count toward whether or not one becomes an ancestor.

Certain practices are related to the environment. These include the prohibition to fish and farm on certain days of the week in some communities. For example, the Akans and the Gas of Ghana forbid fishing on Tuesdays. Thursdays, and Fridays are considered days of rest for the earth for the Akans. These prohibitions are based on religious motives. The sea is believed to be the abode of the gods among the Gas and Akans. Hence Tuesdays are dedicated to them. The earth is also believed to be the abode of the earth goddess known as "Asaase Yaa" among the Twi and "Asaase Efua" among the Fante. Thursdays are designated as the day of rest, where the earth goddess is known as "Yaa," and Friday in communities where she is known as "Efua" (Nukunya 2016). Certain species of trees are also considered as totems and, therefore, are not to be cut down. These practices are not only limited to the Akans of Ghana. In his book *The Life of a South African Tribe*, Junod describes the prohibition of farming, gathering wood or any form of activity in designated forests. Transgressing such a directive was met with various kinds of punishment. The fear that the people have of these sacred woods is inculcated and passed on through terrifying tales. In Junod's words, "in low tones, and with frightened looks, these are related in the evenings, and the feeling of awe is fed and maintained by these legends" (Junod 1962, 352). Also, among the Maasai, a species of parasitic fig tree known as *oreteti* is considered sacred and, therefore, not to be touched. According to Hodgson, "*Oreteti* trees held water in their trunks and fissures, . . . the Maasai saw these thickets as links growing from the sky and Eng'ai down to the earth and humans; they were therefore

considered holy places where people could be closer to Eng'ai. Maasai men and women visited these holy trees either alone or in groups to pray, worship, and plead to Eng'ai for rain and other blessings" (Hodgson 2005, 29–30).

The mention of prohibitions above brings into focus how African religions use prohibitions, also known as taboos, to encourage and discourage a variety of practices and customs. Taboos relate to several practices associated with many areas of human life, including death, sacred persons and things, marriage and sexuality, dietary norms, and the environment (Magesa 1997). Though there are a number of taboos, Bujo notes that "many taboos function to protect the individual and group morality. They draw attention to its basic principle, namely, life, at least slowly to an interiorization or deepening of the moral norms, which amounts to a formation of the conscience. This leads the individual to accept a deeper ethical obligation and guarantees the good of the community" (Bujo 2001, 128). What usually gives taboos their force is the strong notion of sanctions associated with them. According to Mbiti, "breaking a taboo entails punishment in the form of social ostracism, misfortune, and even death. If people do not punish the offender, then the invisible world will punish him. This view arises from the belief in the religious order of the universe, in which God and other invisible beings are thought to be actively engaged in the world of men" (Mbiti 1991, 41). The taboos concerning the environment are not only to protect the ecosystem, but they are also grounded in the understanding that the earth should be preserved for future generations.

Religious and social change have had a significant impact on African communities and practices. With the introduction and spread of Islam and Christianity some practices are considered fetish. Others are weakened because there were parallel structures in Christianity. As a result, African religion has moved from being the religion of the majority to become the religion of the minority. Urbanization has also had a significant influence on the organization of communities and practices. The development of industries and market economies in many African countries caused people to migrate from their place of birth into urban centers. Nukunya opines that one of the effects of urbanization and migration "is the demise or at least the weakening of traditional sanctions which used to sustain accepted kinship behavior" (Nukunya 2016, 193). Formal education and technological improvements have also attenuated the prohibition of some traditional practices. Religious reasons which were used to justify the observance of certain practices that deal with social control are now considered antiquated and, therefore, viewed with cynicism. Nukunya points out that "the weakening of the sanctions has set in motion alterations and innovations in social life, which in turn lead to further reductions in the effects of the sanctions" (Nukunya 2016, 193).

The effects of religion and social change on practices and communities do not suggest communities and practices have entirely lost their force in African ethics. Some African practices are still observed in their form. These include practices associated with marriage rites, festivals and the preservation of the environment. Other practices are observed in their essence. The strong sense of familial bonds and solidarity associated with African communities have also retained their influence on certain aspects of life in African societies. For example, one cannot make sense of the rational expectations and the actual operations of bureaucratic institutions without a good sense of how people conceptualize their obligations toward their kinship group.

One of the challenges of African ethics is how to make sense of ethnicity and tribalism through the prism of African ethics. The formation of nation-states in Africa meant bringing together many ethnic groups with their respective traditions of looking out for members of their clan or lineage. This brought

to the fore a culture of "me" versus "them," which already existed among tribes. In many societies, the strong sense of "me" versus "them" can be traced to histories of inter-tribal wars and the slave trade when communities would capture and sell members of other communities but usually not their own (Perbi 2004). These divisions were further entrenched in some societies during colonial rule (Katongole 2011). Currently, ethnocentrism manifests in the civil service (Lentz 2014), in the media (Wasserman 2014), in politics (Bayart 2009) and other facets of life in many countries. Ethnicity remains one of the banes of Africa's under development (Ilorah 2009). Ethnicity needs to be mentioned here because it introduces a certain qualification to the strong sense of communal life and solidarity that is usually identified with African ethics. In other words, the prevalence of ethnocentrism raises a germane question regarding how communities express strong standards of equity and fairness and yet limit those standards mostly to members of their communities.

A Moral Challenge in An African Context

African societies are faced with certain social conundrums and moral dilemmas that they continue to seek ways to address. The final part of this entry questions the issue of environmental degradation in Ghana and examines how some practices within African religions offer useful solutions toward addressing them. Rapid population growth, urbanization, human encroachment, and deforestation have resulted in the loss of a variety of species and ecosystems in Ghana (Attuaquayefio and Fobil 2005). According to the Ghana 2012 Ministry of Land and Resources report, the country's original forest cover of 8.2 million hectares stands at only 1.6 million. The rate of depletion has become alarming in the past few years. As a result, experts have warned that at the current annual depletion rate of 2 percent (equivalent to 65,000 hectares) due to illegal logging, the country stands the risk of losing its forest cover. In addition to illegal logging of rare species of trees, Ghana is also contending with how to deal with small-scale illegal mining popularly known as "galamsey." Arable farmlands that are the means of sustenance for families have been destroyed due to surface mining. Also, essential water bodies that serve as sources of drinking water such as the Tano, Akobra, Pra, Oti, and Ofin rivers are polluted; thus putting the lives of those who depend on these rivers and their tributaries at risk. In its 2018 proposal for a review of aggregate revenue requirement and tariff, the Ghana Water Company Ltd. noted the effects of small-scale illegal mining on their stations at Kibi, Osino, Anyinam, Bunso, Daboase, Obuasi, and Sekyere Hemang. They also added that the sources of water for Nsawam, Konongo, and Winneba dried up in 2016 due to human activities (2018 report, 23). Those who engage in illegal mining work under life-threatening conditions, and some later contract respiratory diseases. The pits and stagnated water bodies they leave behind become death traps and breeding grounds of mosquitoes. Illegal mining and other human activities along water bodies also have biodiversity implications because they destroy both flora and fauna. There is, therefore, the need to pay attention to the menace of environmental degradation as a biodiversity issue as well, because "the variety of life is valuable in and for itself, is necessary for healthy ecosystems, provides biological resources, helps create healthy societies, has monetary worth, [and] inspires significant research" (O'Brien 2010).

In addition to government policy directives, it can be argued that African religions offer invaluable ethical resources that could help in reorienting the behavior of those whose practices are degrading the environment. African practices associated with the environment emphasize the intrinsic value of

creation to human existence. The responsibility of the Akan toward nature is grounded within their understanding of what nature itself is. As already noted, the practice of not farming on certain days is based on the belief that the earth is governed by a mother spiritual force, "Asaase Yaa/Asaase Efua" (Busia 1954; Ephraim-Donkor 2010). The practice also ensures nature is given some rest to ensure the regeneration and fecundity of the earth because they believe that the perpetuation of human life on earth is bound to the fecundity of the earth. The Akan traditionally believe they are responsible for how they use the earth's resources. Danquah expresses that sense of responsibility in the following words: "in our culture, [we] do not only hold in trust for the present and future generations all the natural resources on which our welfare and continuance of the community depend, but [we] are also accountable to the ancestors for the proper management of the resources" (Danquah 1968, 12). The Akan sense of responsibility and accountability, is rooted in the idea that the land is a finite resource that they are holding in trust for future generations. In other words, since all the clan members, including those unborn, have a stake in the use of the land, it is imperative to use it judiciously (Sarpong 1974). This sense of responsibility toward the earth together with respecting the land for its intrinsic worth and not only for its instrumental value are resources in African ethics which can serve as ways to raise constant awareness, and reorient behaviors toward the land.

Taboos associated with the environment, especially those concerning land and water bodies, can also be useful in addressing the threat of environmental degradation. The sacred part of the river, where fishing is prohibited, serves as an incubator for breeding and regeneration of fishes found downstream (Garbrah 2000, 70). Such a taboo even if it is stripped of its supernatural basis, still has a scientific validity for its observance. The same can be said about the prohibition of felling rare species of trees which are shrouded in myths. Appiah-Opoku, in his assessment of the relationship between beliefs and stewardship and conservation of the environment, opines that taboos and traditional beliefs continue to exercise remarkable influence on people's understanding of stewardship in some Akan communities. From his study of the monkey sanctuaries at Fiema and Boabeng, Appiah-Opoku argues that although there is pressure on the land around the area for other uses, the belief that the two species of monkeys found in the forest – the black and white monkeys (*Colobus polykomos*) and mona monkey (*Cercopithecus campbelli*) – are children of the gods has ensured not only the preservation of the endangered species but also the flourishing of other flora and fauna in the sacred grove (Appiah-Opoku 2007). Thus, in order to guarantee the preservation of certain critical and finite resources and prevent wanton exploitation of nature, conservation policies must take the interventions that traditional practices provide seriously.

Conclusion

Communities and practices provide an essential means of understanding and appreciating African ethics. Though religious and social change have impacted some practices of African communities, it does not suggest that African beliefs and practices have lost their force. They continue to serve as the lens through which people filter their decisions and actions. Cardinal Onaiyekan's assertion that "every Nigerian, whether he is Christian or Muslim, retains within him some basic elements of the Traditional Religions of our people" holds for many Africans (Onaiyekan 2013, 86). Since, "acknowledging the important role played by particular traditions in the way people conceive of the good and of moral value, and in the way they make judgments is crucial to any public discourse properly so-called today"

(Odozor 2014, 70), it is important to engage the notion of communities and practices in African ethics to ascertain the contribution they can make to addressing present moral concerns. This fact has been illustrated by showing that certain beliefs, practices, and sanctions associated with the environment in African communities – recognizing that the fecundity of the earth is tied to the longevity of humanity; appreciating the earth for its intrinsic value; allowing nature days of rest to allow for rejuvenation; preservation of finite resources through the observance and application of sanctions; holding the earth in trust for the present and future generations – can help to address the current problem of environmental degradation confronting the continent.

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2 Modes of Interpretation

CHAPTER 95

Modes of Interpretation in Jewish Ethics

Elias Sacks

Much ink has been spilled on the promise and perils of "Jewish ethics" – on what this phrase might denote and how it might both illuminate and distort. This entry addresses a different, yet also fraught, topic: the role of textual interpretation within this contested field. It is commonplace to encounter descriptions of Judaism as a "book religion" or "text-centered tradition." Jewish reflections about topics from God to human nature to politics, the story goes, often appear in commentaries on earlier sources rather than systematic philosophical treatises, and Jewish history is itself the story of a geographically dispersed, internally diverse people devoted to reading and rereading a shared set of biblical and non-biblical books.

Such claims reflect important dynamics within Jewish life, but they also run the risk of obscuring a more complicated reality. As important as textual interpretation has been to the Jewish tradition, the nature and status of the texts being interpreted have been understood in diverse ways. It is doubtful that Jews have always thought of themselves as engaging "biblical" and "non-biblical" works (or conceived of these sources as "books"). On the contrary, during the Second Temple Period, many Jews seem to have understood their textual universe less as a collection of clearly defined canonical and non-canonical books, and more as elements within a vast library or archive of divinely inspired writings that would never be fully accessible in any specific body of literature (Mroczek 2016).

Diverse views have existed not only regarding Judaism's texts, but also regarding interpretive activity itself – regarding what Jews are supposed to derive from an engagement with inherited sources. One example is the history of the Babylonian Talmud, a sprawling compilation of legal discussions, narratives, and other types of material emerging from the rabbis of late antiquity. While this source has come to be seen as a reference guide to laws governing Jewish practice, it has not always played this role. Rather, there is substantial evidence that this work was used in widely disparate ways during the Middle Ages, with communities (and individual authorities) disagreeing with one another about how this work should be used in pedagogy and legal decision-making (Fishman 2011). Indeed, as tempting as it might be to imagine Jewish sources as the shared legacy of a text-centered people, this picture runs the risk of glossing over a long history of conflicts over which texts merit interpretation and who should have access to this material. A case in point is the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century central and eastern European movement of cultural renewal known as the Haskalah (sometimes translated as the "Jewish Enlightenment"). Its overwhelmingly male authors have often been cast as figures committed to providing a broad Jewish public with access to Judaism's textual heritage, especially the Bible (either in

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Hebrew or in German translation). Recent scholarship, however, has suggested that these intellectuals were animated by a desire to *limit* certain types of access to Jewish texts – to combat the growing popularity of Yiddish renderings of the Bible (and Yiddish literature more broadly) among women and uneducated men, and to thereby reassert elite male control over what was being read and who was doing that reading (Litvak 2012).

The aim in what follows is to explore the relationship between textual interpretation and Jewish ethics in a way that foregrounds this type of diversity and disagreement. More specifically, the entry will survey the history of this relationship between hermeneutical practices and ethical reflection, and it will argue that some of the central questions in contemporary Jewish ethics are interpretive ones. The entry begins with examples of how interpretation and ethical reflection are intertwined in premodern sources. The entry then explores the persistence of this relationship in modernity, focusing on historical-critical study and feminist hermeneutics. It concludes by highlighting two types of questions about textual interpretation that are central to contemporary Jewish ethics: (1) What should ethicists be interpreting? Which texts should shape Jewish ethical thinking, and to what extent should ethicists look beyond textual sources to nontextual voices emerging from contemporary communities? (2) Why should ethicists be interpreting? What challenges confront ethicists committed to exploring Jewish sources, and what should ethicists seek to derive from these texts in the face of such challenges?

Two remarks on terminology. For the sake of space, the entry avoids intervening in debates about the nature of "Jewish ethics" and instead operates with a capacious understanding of this concept, using the phrase to refer to traditions of reflection in Jewish sources and communities about conduct, character, and concepts such as goodness and rightness. Moreover, since the entry seeks to highlight rather than resolve questions about the relationship between these traditions of reflection and practices of textual interpretation, it avoids privileging any one account of what interpretation involves. That is, the entry is not interested in determining whether interpretation involves recovering original meanings intended by texts' authors, ascribing new meanings to inherited material to secure its enduring relevance, or something else entirely. Rather, "textual interpretation" is used to refer, broadly, to the activity of engaging textual material. When the entry links textual interpretation and ethical reflection, the focus is on ways in which ethical reflection in Jewish sources and communities has involved invoking, exploring, and discussing texts. Similarly, when the entry argues that some of the central questions in contemporary Jewish ethics are interpretive ones, the claim is that some of the debates at the heart of Jewish ethics today revolve around how, why, and even the extent to which textual material should be engaged.

From Ezekiel to Maimonides

Textual interpretation and ethical reflection are already linked in the materials that would eventually form the Hebrew Bible. Consider Ezekiel 18:

> What do you mean by quoting this proverb upon the soil of Israel, "Parents eat sour grapes and their children's teeth are blunted"? As I live – declares the Lord God – this proverb shall no longer be current ... Suppose that [a wicked father], in turn, has begotten a son who ... has done what is right and just, and has carefully kept all My laws: he shall live! The person who sins, he alone shall

> die. A child shall not share the burden of a parent's guilt, nor shall a parent share the burden of a child's guilt; the righteousness of the righteous shall be accounted to him alone, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be accounted to him alone. (18:2–20)[1]

Rejecting the idea of intergenerational guilt in favor of a notion of individual moral responsibility, this passage stakes out its view not by simply asserting the latter doctrine, but rather by engaging an inherited source. Citing a proverb about parents' grapes and children's teeth, these lines advance an interpretive claim about the adage's meaning (that it casts children as responsible for their parents' sins) and insists that this moral perspective is no longer valid. This passage goes so far as to articulate its own ethical position by reworking the imagery of that earlier source, affirming individual responsibility by redeploying the proverb's familial language to declare that "a child shall not share the burden of a parent's guilt, nor shall a parent share the burden of a child's guilt." This proverb, in fact, might not be the only source at issue here: given affinities between Ezekiel's language and passages in sources such as Deuteronomy, it is possible that the former is launching its attack on intergenerational guilt by implicitly drawing on texts (such as Deuteronomy 24:16) that stress individual responsibility (Fishbane 1985, 284, 293, 410 et al.).

Textual interpretation and ethics are also intertwined for the rabbis, the network of male intellectuals from late ancient Babylonia and Palestine whose work would yield sources such as the Mishnah, Talmuds, and midrashic collections. In many cases, rabbinic materials cite biblical passages to support claims about individual conduct or provide exemplars of moral behavior (Mittleman 2012, 52–87; Fonrobert 2013). In other cases, rabbinic sources engage scriptural texts to raise moral concerns about inherited traditions. One widely-cited instance concerns the command in Deuteronomy 21:18–21 to execute a "stubborn and rebellious son" who does not heed his parents' "voice." Some rabbinic sources seem to reflect moral discomfort with the prospect of executing rebellious children and respond by attempting to interpret this law into practical irrelevance. One passage uses seemingly minor textual features to limit the law's applicability, advancing (among other claims) the proposal that the biblical description of the wayward child as not heeding his parents' "voice" restricts the command to rare cases where a mother and father are exceedingly similar in voice and other physical characteristics; even more strikingly, this rabbinic passage speculates that the law in question was never meant to be implemented but instead was given only so that individuals might "study it and receive reward" for engaging in biblical exploration (TB Sanhedrin 71a;[2] Fonrobert 2013).

Some rabbinic sources go further and cast textual engagement itself as a means of ethical cultivation. On this view, studying the Bible in a community of disciples under an authoritative teacher can result in Scripture being so powerfully internalized that an individual's desires, impulses, and emotions are transformed (Schofer 2005). Consider this passage from the rabbinic collection *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*:

> The bad *yetzer* [inclination] is thirteen years older than the good *yetzer* [inclination]. From the belly of a person's mother it grows and comes with him. If he begins to desecrate the Sabbath, nothing in him protests ... [If he goes to do an act of transgression, nothing in him protests.] After thirteen years, the good *yetzer* is born. When he begins to desecrate Sabbaths, it says to him, "You idiot! Look, it says, 'The one who desecrates it will surely die!'" (Exod. 31:14). When he goes to

1 Biblical translations follow the NJPS unless otherwise noted.
2 Following the translation in Epstein (1961).

> commit murder, it says to him, "You idiot! Look, it says, 'If a man spills the blood of another man, his blood will be spilled'" (Gen. 9:6). When he goes to do an act of sexual transgression, it says to him, "You idiot! Look, it says, 'the adulterer and the adulteress will surely die'" (Lev. 20:10).
>
> (Schofer 2005, 87)

While a person is born with an evil inclination, this innate tendency can be overcome by engaging the Bible's words, which inculcate dispositions to act in accord with scriptural dictates.

Medieval Jewish figures also discuss inherited texts – both biblical and rabbinic – in order to advance claims about moral conduct. Consider the emergence of philosophical exegesis: the practice of reading texts such as the Bible in light of ideas derived from philosophical frameworks such as neo-Platonic and Aristotelian thought. Perhaps the best-known practitioner is the twelfth-century philosopher and jurist Moses Maimonides, who devotes considerable attention to topics such as virtue and repentance while also drawing on broader philosophical trends to elevate intellectual over moral perfection – to argue that intellectual perfection is the ultimate *telos* of the human being, whereas moral cultivation is a means toward this end.

The important point for us is that Maimonides advances such claims, in part, by engaging Scripture. Consider his philosophical magnum opus, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, which devotes its concluding chapter, in part, to Jeremiah 9:22–23: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me: that I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth. For in these things I delight, saith the Lord."[3] On the one hand, Maimonides invokes these verses to stress the superiority of intellectual over moral excellence. Reading the phrase "wise man ... in his wisdom" as a reference to someone who has attained moral perfection and "he understandeth and knoweth Me" as a reference to someone who has achieved intellectual perfection, Maimonides suggests that Jeremiah arranges these attainments in a clear hierarchy: by privileging the individual who achieves (intellectual) understanding and knowledge over the individual who obtains (moral) wisdom, the Bible indicates that moral cultivation is subordinate to intellectual perfection. On the other hand, Maimonides also uses these verses to hint that intellectual perfection may itself have ethical consequences. By concluding with a reference to the intellectually perfect individual knowing that God "exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth," Maimonides claims, these verses indicate both that the pursuit of intellectual perfection yields knowledge of God's attributes of action, and that such knowledge generates a commitment to *imitatio dei* and practical activity in the world (Maimonides 1963, 636–638; Mittleman 2012, 106–118).

Modernity

Textual interpretation and ethical reflection remain intertwined in modern sources. While this relationship is evident in thinkers who continue earlier modes of reading such as philosophical exegesis, it also persists among figures who adopt emphatically modern hermeneutical approaches.

3 Following the translation in Maimonides (1963, 636–638).

One example is historical-critical study, a method that emerges in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and treats sources such as the Bible not as pristine, divinely authored texts, but as human creations profoundly shaped by the historical contexts in which they originated. This approach might seem to undermine the prospect of ethically significant textual engagement: if sources such as biblical books are humanly authored compositions rooted in the ancient world, we might wonder whether such texts have much to offer us today. For some thinkers, though, a historical-critical approach is crucial to addressing contemporary questions. Consider Gordon Tucker, a rabbi involved in recent debates in one Jewish denomination, Conservative Judaism, about the status of homosexuality. Troubled by a widespread mode of argumentation that forbids non-heterosexual sexual relationships by citing the biblical verses Leviticus 18:22 ("do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abhorrence") and 20:13 ("if a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death"), Tucker – as part of a broader argument – notes that such reasoning "rests on the assumption that the words of Leviticus (and, of course, those of the other four books of the Pentateuch) express directly and completely the will of God." However, he continues, many Jewish groups (including his own denomination) reject this assumption because, among other reasons, they affirm the importance of historical-critical study:

> The non-acceptance of biblical infallibility is not merely a negative verdict on the divine authorship of the Torah born of academic skepticism; it is a ... message about the ways in which God and humans find each other ... God's will is not infallibly represented in the Torah, but only imperfectly, in a form that awaits the engagement and honest searching of religious communities ... Could it perhaps be that critical study itself was given to us precisely so that we would not let the text of the Torah stand as an impediment to the acceptance, fulfillment, and normalization of God's creatures?
>
> (Tucker 2006, 6–7)

Undermining the assumption of "biblical infallibility," historical-critical study empowers contemporary Jews to treat a text such as the Bible as a deeply significant yet unavoidably imperfect human source that articulates "God's will ... in a form that awaits the engagement and honest searching of religious communities." Historical-critical study, that is, casts texts such as the Bible in terms that broaden the contours of how Jews might wrestle with topics such as sexuality. Precisely because a text such as the Bible constitutes a human attempt to discern God's will, readers are authorized to take such material seriously while nevertheless looking beyond its legal prescriptions for guidance in a wider range of sources, from narrative texts in classical writings to the lived realities of contemporary communities.

Questions about textual interpretation are also central to Jewish feminism. Identifying "Jewish feminism's ethical core" as the conviction that "women's subordination in Judaism and the larger society are real and unjust and that change is urgent and necessary," Judith Plaskow, one of the first feminist Jewish theologians, writes:

> Given the centrality of textual interpretation in Judaism, rereading Jewish texts ... has been a crucial mode of Jewish feminist ethical engagement ... Feminists have offered new readings of canonical sources and also expanded the canon to include modern texts by Jewish women. They have produced [biblical] commentaries, critical analyses of biblical and rabbinic texts, as well as readings of contemporary feminist literature.
>
> (Plaskow 2013, 272, 279)

Textual interpretation is crucial to Plaskow's own work, most notably her groundbreaking *Standing Again at Sinai*. Calling on contemporary Jews to "render visible the presence, experience, and deeds of women erased in traditional sources" (Plaskow 1990, 28), Plaskow suggests that addressing this textual silence requires endeavors such as feminist historiography that recovers women's experiences, literary projects that imaginatively retell and supplement biblical narratives, and liturgical compositions that incorporate these discoveries and stories into the rhythms of Jewish life. Textual interpretation also figures prominently in the work of Rachel Adler, who pursues the "ethical task" of transforming Judaism by developing "a text-bound theology" that is "concerned not only with critiquing androcentric structures, categories, and motifs and constructing feminist theory and interpretation, but also with mending and healing Judaism by encountering, renewing, and reclaiming the holiness in texts" (Adler 1998, xv, xxv). On this view, a feminist commitment to reimagining Jewish life requires a twofold hermeneutical project of laying bare the patriarchal, misogynistic dynamics in classical Jewish texts while also showing that these sources have lessons to offer contemporary readers. Indeed, as we will see, feminist thinkers have called not only for new ways of relating to classical Jewish texts, but also for new conceptions of precisely which texts – and of the extent to which texts – matter for ethical reflection.

Contemporary Questions

Given this history, it should not be surprising that interpretive questions continue to loom large in contemporary Jewish ethics. This entry concludes by highlighting two such questions.

The first concerns the materials that merit interpretation. When introductory surveys outline the textual sources of Jewish ethics, the focus is typically on "classical" texts: texts that have long been recognized as part of the Jewish literary canon. Two recent introductions to the field identify the Bible, rabbinic works, medieval ethical treatises, legal codes, and responses to legal queries as the key sources of Jewish ethics, with one introduction adding a brief reference to "philosophical, literary, and liturgical works, as well as music and some art" (Newman 2005; Dorff and Crane 2013, 8–9).

There is much to be said for engaging classical texts. Adler (1998) insists that continuing to read and reread this material represents a way to hold the Jewish tradition accountable for its failings while also uncovering ethically significant teachings that eluded previous generations. Nevertheless, some contemporary thinkers have argued for bringing previously neglected texts into conversations about ethical questions. Laurie Zoloth emphasizes classical texts that have not typically been treated as resources for ethical reflection, arguing that such sources might introduce perspectives and concepts that are desperately needed in Jewish (and non-Jewish) ethical discourse. For example, she suggests, the often-neglected biblical book of Ruth reflects the lived realities of women and addresses issues of friendship and scarcity in ways that generate a language of community and responsibility crucial to theorizing the just allocation of limited public resources (Zoloth 1999). In a different vein, Rebecca Alpert stresses the importance of broadening Judaism's conception of what counts as sacred literature. Seeking to create a Judaism in which lesbians can be full participants, she argues that this endeavor requires not only new interpretations of ancient sources, but also "an effort to find or rediscover Jewish texts from other eras that incorporate a lesbian sensibility and the creation of new sacred texts that are affirmatively Jewish and lesbian" (Alpert 1997, 8). Twentieth-century texts (from autobiographies to plays to psychoanalytic writings) that feature Jewish lesbians can show that lesbians have always been part of Jewish life; emerging bodies of

literature such as Jewish lesbian fiction can generate new, more inclusive visions of religious practice and community.

A more disruptive move appears in the work of Michal Raucher, who argues that it is insufficient to simply reread and expand the Jewish textual universe. Rather, Raucher insists, Jewish ethics should move beyond a "text-reliant approach" that privileges written sources when searching for norms, concepts, and other resources relevant to ethical deliberation. More specifically, Jewish ethics should also embrace ethnographic research into the lived realities of contemporary Jewish communities – research that explores and articulates modes of ethical deliberation employed by non-elite members of such communities, and that thereby makes these modes of thinking available for analysis and use. Her work, for example, explores ways in which ultra-Orthodox Israeli women construct their own ethics of reproduction in tension with (and even opposition to) male authorities, making choices about medical care and reproductive technology that involve distinctive conceptions of divine service and women's agency.

For Raucher, ethnographic analysis both reflects the ways in which ethical decisions are made in real-life settings and elevates marginalized voices typically excluded from religious writings. This approach is also more intellectually honest than text-focused alternatives:

> Can ethnography provide us with normative ethics, rather than descriptive ethics? It is my contention that the question, so often posed as a critique of ethnography as ethics, is flawed ... The text-reliant approach is itself particular, yet more easily framed in universal terms. Legal codes and philosophy incorporate limited voices and speak to a particular subset of the population, despite claiming to be universal and normative. As a method of ethics, ethnography is more transparent in its contextual commitments.
>
> (Raucher 2016, 648)

For Raucher, all modes of ethical analysis – whether rooted in texts or ethnography – are partial and context-specific, reflecting some perspectives while excluding others. Part of what distinguishes ethnography, however, is an awareness of this partiality. Whereas interpreters of religious texts often fail to acknowledge the degree to which these sources reflect the views of only some (typically elite) groups, ethnographers cannot help but recognize that they are exploring the views of specific individuals and communities. One type of question facing contemporary Jewish ethics, then, is the following: what should ethicists be interpreting? Which texts should shape Jewish ethical thinking, and to what extent should ethicists look beyond textual sources to nontextual voices emerging from contemporary communities?

A second question focuses less on what ethicists should be interpreting, and more on what such activity can accomplish – on what thinkers might hope to derive from the sources they engage. Louis Newman has suggested that many Jewish ethicists assume that interpreting a text involves discovering a single, authoritative meaning that can be applied to contemporary debates. On this model, an interpreter identifies sources that address the topic with which she is concerned, extracts the determinate meaning of those texts, and applies that meaning – for instance, a set of principles or behavioral norms – to the question at hand.

Unfortunately, Newman argues, this approach fails to appreciate the complexities of textual engagement:

> Many of those engaged in contemporary Jewish ethics are inclined to treat the provisions of talmudic and medieval texts as if they were less open-textured than in fact they are. The Jewish legal tradition does not really constitute a body of views and precedents that "speak for themselves" to

> contemporary issues. Rather, it offers us categories, concepts ... and notions of the relationships that obtain among moral agents. It provides a rich resource of values and principles ... But the texts do not, either individually or collectively, dictate how to use or apply these resources. That is up to the interpreters.
>
> (Newman 1998, 176)

Newman's point is that what texts offer are not single, authoritative meanings that can be applied in a straightforward manner to contemporary problems, but rather an array of principles, concepts, and other resources that interpreters must figure out how to deploy – and that might plausibly be deployed in different ways by different interpreters.

It is not only the task of recovering and applying textual meanings that is fraught with difficulties. Rather, the task of identifying sources that address the topics with which ethicists are concerned is itself problematic. One worry is that as much as a text might seem to address an issue of contemporary interest such as capital punishment or sexual ethics, the primary concerns animating this material might be very different (Epstein-Levi 2018). For example, Beth Berkowitz (2006) argues that key rabbinic texts on execution are often concerned less with actual historical enactments of the death penalty, and more with the authority of the rabbis themselves – with establishing this authority by providing detailed descriptions of executions that might never have occurred but that are nevertheless cast as lying within the scope of rabbinic power (and punishing violations of rabbinic law).

Given these problems, why read Jewish texts at all? For Newman (1998), what this material provides are the resources to make ethical judgments that cohere with the overall thrust of the Jewish tradition. Even if Jewish sources supply concepts and principles without clarifying how such tools are to be deployed, Jewish thinkers can make reasonable judgments about these matters by constructing accounts of the Jewish tradition itself – of what renders the history of Jewish thought sufficiently coherent to count as a (relatively) cohesive tradition. Jewish sources, in turn, can be used to make ethical judgments that fit with these (constructed) accounts of the overall trajectory of the Jewish tradition.

To be sure, Newman acknowledges, different thinkers might address this task in widely divergent ways. Some might decide that what unifies the history of Judaism is a concern with law, and that the task of Jewish ethics is to mine Jewish sources for relevant legal cases, distill the guiding principles behind these precedents, and apply those principles to contemporary questions. Others might determine that what holds the Jewish tradition together is a conviction that Jews stand in a covenantal relationship with God, and that the task of Jewish ethics is to turn to Jewish sources for guidance regarding what responsibilities might follow from such a relationship. Still others might conclude that what undergirds Judaism is an overarching story about God's actions and the trajectory of human history, and that the task of Jewish ethics is to examine Jewish sources to better understand the behaviors and obligations incumbent upon – and the possibilities open to – individuals and communities committed to playing a role in that narrative. In all of these scenarios, though, what texts provide is not a set of clear, authoritative meanings, but rather a collection of resources that contemporary Jews are charged with deploying to reach ethical judgments that reflect, and extend, the coherence of the Jewish tradition.

Another account of what interpretation might achieve focuses less on the continuity of the Jewish tradition as a whole, and more on the modes of reasoning that this tradition employs. The background is a set of developments often grouped together under the heading "Textual Reasoning." Emerging over recent decades, these developments begin from the premise that Western academic and traditional

Jewish practices of reasoning are neither identical nor impervious to critique, and that these modes of thinking should therefore be brought into conversation with one another. On this view, Jewish texts enact "indigenous" modes of analysis and argumentation that differ from, and thus might be illuminated by while also serving as a corrective to (and being challenged by), modes of thinking employed in North American and European academic disciplines (Ochs 2002).

Applied to Jewish ethics, this approach suggests that textual interpretation might recover and evaluate Jewish modes of reasoning relevant to contemporary moral questions. One example appears in the work of Rebecca J. Epstein-Levi, who frames this mode of textual engagement as a response to the second difficulty outlined above: the prospect that texts (such as rabbinic sources) that seem to be about topics such as capital punishment or sexuality might be more concerned with other issues. This point, she argues, need not imply that such texts are irrelevant. On the contrary, although rabbinic texts about a topic such as sexuality might be primarily animated by very different concerns, there may be other phenomena that function for the rabbis in ways that are similar to the ways in which sexuality functions for twenty-first-century readers, and rabbinic modes of reasoning about those topics may thus provide resources for contemporary ethical deliberation.

Epstein-Levi focuses on rabbinic notions of impurity, a condition that limits an individual's ability to participate in certain types of communal and ritual activities and can arise and be transmitted through various physical processes. She argues that rabbinic views on this topic bear striking affinities with contemporary understandings of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and that the ways in which the rabbis reflect on this impurity thus provide models for efforts to think about STIs in our own context:

> Too often, frank and medically accurate discussions of STIs and the best ways to manage them are stymied by shame, stigma, and misinformation. The Mishnah's [a rabbinic text edited around 200 CE] exhaustive, matter-of-fact, detailed, and depersonalized patterns of discussing social contagion ... offer a model for de-stigmatizing STI discourse and making it so commonplace as to be unthreatening ... The Mishnah's recognition of multiple types and subtypes of impurity ... [is] a particular corrective to the modern and contemporary West's tendency to treat all STIs as the same terrifying affliction: one is either "clean" or "infected."
>
> (Epstein-Levi 2018)

On this view, what textual interpretation yields is less a set of conceptual and normative resources that allow us to extend the continuity of Jewish thinking, and more a window into distinctive habits of reasoning that might enrich and redirect contemporary ethical discourse. If one type of question central to contemporary Jewish ethics concerns the objects of textual interpretation, then, a second concerns the aims of this activity: why should ethicists be interpreting? What challenges confront ethicists committed to exploring Jewish sources, and what should ethicists seek to derive from these texts in the face of such challenges?

There is little reason to expect that these questions will receive definitive answers. This entry would suggest, however, that it is precisely such debates that will shape the future of Jewish ethics. Jewish ethics, we might say, is a terrain where Judaism's status as a text-centered tradition is subject to interrogation, contestation, and reimagining. It is a terrain where questions about the aims, objects, and relevance of textual interpretation stand at the center of contemporary thinking.[4]

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4 I thank Sarah Imhoff and Martin Kavka for their feedback on earlier drafts of this entry.

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CHAPTER 96

Modes of Interpretation (Christianity)

Christina G. McRorie

Like other belief-oriented religions that are based in revelation and that make claims about the nature and proper conduct of humanity, the Christian tradition can be read as a dynamic and ongoing project of moral interpretation – of scripture, doctrines, and religious identity and authority; of bodies, beauty, and human flourishing; and ultimately, of value, justice, and the meaning of human history itself. This entry will suggest that these processes of interpretation can be productively viewed as having both an inward- and outward-facing aspect, and that these aspects are continually mutually reinforcing within Christian ethical theory and practice.

The outward-facing aspect arises from the way that Christianity, like other moral traditions, holds that its core claims provide the truest moral narration of all of human experience. The Christian tradition claims to communicate to the world the truth of humanity's situation, as revealed through Christian scriptures, the incarnational event, and in the ongoing experience and wisdom of the community of Christian believers, or church, since then. This truth centers on the claim that humanity has been created by a loving God who, despite humanity's tendency to sin, invites humanity to enjoy its ultimate destiny: loving reunion with God, made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the "good news" of the gospel: the "truth" that describes our situation, and then calls us to a certain kind of ethical and spiritual action that it has itself enabled, because it has "set us free" (John 8.32). Part of the action that Christians believe they are called to is the sharing of this good news with others through evangelization. Christian ethics is shaped in no small part by this task, as its moral precepts are intended to enable believers' very lives to bear witness to God's redemptive activity in human history. At the same time, Christian ethics also aims to provide moral descriptions and analyses that correctly orient believers to "the world," as well as to their own lives (for more on "the world" as a theological trope significantly structuring Christian thought and practice, see Pyper 2000). Christians believe, that is, that God's revealed truth – which the Christian church has the task of interpreting and sharing – can be used to read and render intelligible the "signs of the times." (Originally found in the words of Jesus in Matthew 16, this phrase has been used especially in Catholic Christianity after the Second Vatican Council to emphasize that Christians have an obligation to attend to, and critically engage, social and historical developments.)

This entry discusses these elements of Christian moral reflection as "outward"-facing in nature, given that they involve the Christian community interpreting divine revelation for others, and using revelation to interpret the moral terrains Christians face in different times and places. In these we can see a kind of

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

outward momentum, as it were. At the same time, however, even in these apparently externally oriented modes, Christian ethics also has what can be called an "inward"-facing momentum, when one considers that each new moral claim made on behalf of the tradition at the same time offers a new interpretation of that tradition.

This internal reinterpretive process is, to a certain extent, inevitable. Even if a moral claim or practice merely aims to extend – and not to alter or develop – the tradition, even this reaffirmation entails some degree of reinterpretation as scripture passages, doctrines, rituals, moral sensibilities, and ethical norms are articulated and inhabited in new historical contexts. Often this process is tacit and latent; this entry will discuss some of the ways in which key elements of the Christian moral tradition itself have become reinterpreted over time almost as if by accident, as a result of wider societal changes. Just as often, though, reinterpretation of the moral tradition itself occurs as a result of conscious deliberation and contestation, as Christians disagree about the practical consequences of shared claims about God, the nature and destiny of humanity, and justice and moral obligation – a disagreement which, this entry notes, has frequently arisen in response to historical developments.

The linkages between these two aspects of Christian moral discourse are therefore many: even as Christians use their tradition-specific commitments to render meaningful the moral terrains they face, this process at the same time reaffirms and gives new shape to those very commitments. Likewise, when Christians explicitly refine and adapt their internal ethical commitments, this has consequences for how they interpret the world, and for the way that they articulate the good news they believe they are charged to share. In short, every Christian moral claim necessarily reinterprets for Christians both their own tradition and "the world" that their tradition claims to speak to, and about.

Although these two aspects of Christian ethics are thus ultimately not separable either in practice or conceptually, this entry addresses these in turn. It begins with the outward-facing nature of Christian ethics, highlighting a growing awareness of how ethical analysis of "external" moral questions and social phenomena is a mode through which the tradition itself adapts and develops. It then turns to the inward-facing nature of Christian ethics, discussing the heightened attention paid in recent history to the relationship between theology and culture, and introducing the emergence of contextual theologies and ethics. This entry concludes by noting some of the opportunities and challenges that globalization presents for the ongoing development of Christianity as a moral tradition.

Ethics as an Outward-Facing Process of Interpretation

As just mentioned, Christianity claims to offer the truest and most fundamental narrative interpretation of reality itself, including and especially of our experience of ourselves as moral agents. For those who inhabit and live by its theological and moral claims, perceptions of the world are shaped by the Christian view of humanity's situation before God and God's gracious action in response – i.e. the doctrines of creation, fall, and redemption. Much of what sets Christian ethics apart from Jewish and Islamic ethics stems especially from the latter of these two: the Christian claim that humanity's willful disobedience of God's commands has refracted back upon us by predisposing us to sin (which state the language of a "fall" describes), and that this damage to our moral agency can only be healed by God's redeeming action in our lives. It is with a focus on the distinctive Christian doctrine of the fall that the Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth is alleged to have quipped, "only Christians sin." That this worldview

is self-confirming can be seen in Reinhold Niebuhr's equally famous, if somewhat contradictory to Barth's view, remark that original sin "is the only empirically verifiable doctrine."

It is through this theological worldview that Christian moral reflection assesses its subject matters. Modes of inhabiting this narrative (or put differently, of operationalizing it) vary widely within the tradition. Some Christian moral discourses, for example, emphasize humanity's objective duty to obey divine commands, and the way that disobedience severs right relationship with God. Others focus on the agent's cultivation of virtue and progress toward holistic flourishing, and see these as integrally related to the restoration and further perfection of moral agency that sanctification brings. Likewise, while some approaches to Christian ethics focus on humanity's ability to cooperate with our own moral healing, others highlight our inability to remedy our own wickedness and moral blindness unaided, and in so doing underline the role of divine grace in the moral life. Regardless of theological emphasis, however, the Christian search for moral guidance and certainty takes place within the horizon of this broad theological narrative of humanity's fall and need for redemption.

Given that Christian scriptures contain a number of clear and even specific moral commands, it might appear that Christian ethics is primarily a technical discipline, requiring the straightforward application of pre-existing standards to individual and social behavior. As it happens, however, there is growing awareness that even apparently obvious moral judgments presuppose – and therefore also propose – contestable interpretations of reality; that is, that prescriptive "ought" claims about obligation always rest upon and entail descriptive claims about what "is" empirically true.

A lively and ongoing discussion within the subfield of natural law ethics illustrates this. Christian natural law reflection assumes that God designed human nature in accordance with certain moral precepts that are universally accessible through the use of human reason. On this view, all that is needed for ethical analysis is to discern these precepts through rational reflection (undertaken in light of Christian revelation) on what is natural for humans – on what sorts of habits and activities enable them to function according to their divine design, and therefore conduce to their flourishing. As twentieth-century conversations about sexuality have rendered particularly visible, however, what appears self-evidently "natural" varies according to one's social, cultural, and even technological context. While traditional Christian sexual ethics describes homosexual relationships as unnatural and therefore immoral, for example, an increasing number of Christians view these relationships as natural, and therefore morally on par with heterosexual relationships. Reflecting on this, Catholic ethicists Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler observe, "When we derive moral obligations from 'nature', we are actually deriving them from our human attention to and our interpretation and evaluation of 'nature'" (Salzman and Lawler 2008, 49). This inevitable reliance upon interpretive work means that ethical pronouncements not only make a bid to shape Christian actions, but also Christian perceptions of reality in the first place.

This fundamentally descriptive function of Christian ethics may have been less visible in premodern times due to the restriction of theological and moral production to a celibate and male clerical elite. At the same time, ethics during this period also primarily addressed individual behavior, and situations demonstrably requiring new moral analysis emerged fairly slowly. Consider, for example, the gradual transformation of the usury prohibition over the course of nearly a millennium. During the transition from a feudal to a largely trade-based economic order in most of Europe, new lending and insuring practices emerged. Prompted by a need to adjudicate between licit and illicit finance, scholars and ecclesial authorities inductively generated a series of categories and arguments for assessing these practices that ultimately added up to a substantial revision of the usury prohibition, in both theory and application.

The conceptual developments undergirding these arguments (such as the time value of money, and money's capacity to function as capital) also established the intellectual framework undergirding Western capitalism to this day. However, neither the scope of this change in the moral tradition itself nor the significance of its innovative interpretation of life in markets was visible for centuries, given the very slow pace of the social transformation that this process of moral reflection addressed.

In recent centuries, this interpretive aspect of Christian ethics has not only become more apparent, but also accelerated along with the pace of social, political, and technological change. Arguably, this began with the discovery of "society" in the modern era, which prompted the extension of Christian thought to the moral analysis of political, social, legal, and economic institutions and outcomes, and even of culture itself. The fields of Protestant social ethics (which encompassed the social gospel movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) and Catholic social thought in particular consciously seek to use Christian categories of thought to describe and analyze contemporary social events, institutions, and outcomes. In more recent years, technological advancements have further opened up a number of new domains in need of moral interpretation and description, including genetic enhancement, artificial reproductive technologies, intellectual property law, the use of Big Data, space travel, nuclear weapons technologies, social media, and so forth. Whether or not academics, religious leaders, or lay adherents are aware of it, the process of describing the moral terrain in each of these new areas has also given new shape to the Christian tradition itself. The next section turns to this aspect of Christian ethics.

Ethics as an Inward-Facing Process of Interpretation

The claim here is that each ethical pronouncement necessarily also reinterprets the tradition. As much as Christianity is used to interpret culture, culture also inevitably provides the backdrop against which – and therefore the tools with which – Christianity itself is interpreted.

Historical Issues

Historically, the tradition has had little recognition or reflection on this fact, for at least two reasons. The first of these has to do with the fact that, as noted above, much of Christian history occurred in the premodern era, before widespread awareness of culture and social structures as contingent variables in our experience of the world in general, and as factors influencing moral reasoning in particular. Moreover, for much of its history, Christianity was largely practiced within Christendom in Europe and the Near East, which, although certainly not culturally monolithic, was not as varied in culture as is global Christianity today. With fewer comparison points, there was less need to notice the contingent role of culture.

The role of culture in prompting and structuring moral adaptation within Christianity was also less likely to be embraced given the perennial Christian anxiety about "the world," in light of the scriptural charge to be "in the world, but not of it" (John 17; see also Romans 12). Christians have regularly interpreted this to mean that all cultures are in some way sinful and in need of redemption, and that the Christian ethic ought to transform the wider culture in which it operates, rather than the other way around. At times, this has also been developed into the claim that Christian ethics is incompatible with and therefore requires a rejection of and withdrawal from secular culture. (Protestant theologian

H. Richard Niebuhr (1951) identified this as the "Christ against culture" approach to Christian ethics; Protestant theologian and historian Ernst Troeltsch (1992) referred to this as the "Sect type" of the tradition's social expression, and noticed that its ascetic and radical impulses were present even within the "Church type" social philosophy of medieval Catholicism, which intended to encompass and organize, rather than withdraw from, society.)

Such anxieties notwithstanding, recent theological scholarship has examined the way that the Christian tradition is inevitably the product of an ongoing negotiation with – and not just rejection of – particular other traditions and cultures. That is, there simply is no single, self-contained, or clearly demarcated "Christian culture" as such. Along these lines, Kathryn Tanner has drawn upon contemporary cultural anthropology to argue that Christian identity is fundamentally relational; as Tanner puts it, a certain amount of "borrowed materials always go to make up Christian words and deeds," even as Christian theological claims rework this material in new and interesting ways (Tanner 1997, 148). This has always been the case, and can be seen at earlier moments in the tradition; other examples include the role of feudal imagery and values in shaping Anselm's satisfaction theory of atonement, and the way that early Protestant substitutionary theories of atonement reflect the legal and political thought of the sixteenth century. Standing on this side of the post-Enlightenment critique of foundationalism – not to mention amidst pluralism and our constantly revolutionizing capacities for global communication – Christians are now simply more aware of this ongoing and open-ended process of engagement with non-Christian cultural and moral traditions.

Indeed, a case could be made that the process of enculturation within Christianity is not only now more visible, but also currently accelerating. One factor in this is clearly the global diffusion of Christianity initiated by European colonialism. This has been complemented by a slow diffusion of theological and ethical production. Although lay piety has always been an important factor shaping the tradition, until at least the Reformation era official theological production was restricted to a celibate and male clergy. Since then, the gradual enfranchisement of women, lay and married persons, and racial and cultural (and in some cases, sexual) minorities has brought new perspectives and experiences into conversations about what constitutes the Christian moral tradition. Furthermore, globalization has enabled an increased cross-pollination between these conversations, such that today it is not at all inconceivable that a Protestant American seminary student might be assigned to read a contemporary Asian and Catholic liberation theologian's analysis of political economy, for example.

This entry is suggesting that the process of incorporating such new insight necessarily involves a reinterpretation of the tradition. Indeed, there is a growing awareness that this can be a fruitful, generative reinterpretation (although this sentiment is not universal, as the following section will note). A significant insight of the Roman Catholic Council of Vatican II, for example, was that revelation itself is more adequately understood as symbolic, and an invitation to encounter God, than as a static deposit of faith contained within propositional claims. This insight itself authorizes reasonable room for re-articulations of even core dogmatic affirmations, so that they continue over time to adequately communicate and express their revelational content (for more on this development, see McBrien 1981, 70).

Contextual Theology and Ethics

Academically, this insight can be seen reflected in the rise of what have been called "contextual" theologies and ethics, a genre that takes seriously the post-modern claim that there is "no view from nowhere." This literature emphasizes that articulations of Christian claims have always been shaped by the social,

political, technological, and historical contexts out of which they have arisen. With this in mind, scholars argue that Christians ought to use a hermeneutic of suspicion to discern where this formative effect has been a distorting one, and when revision is therefore appropriate. Delores Williams's critique of atonement theory in light of black women's historical experiences of surrogacy and oppression offers one example of this kind of reinterpretation of Christian thought (Williams 1993, 161–170).

Contextual scholarship is as constructive as it is critical, and assumes that diverse contexts yield new and useful vantage points from which to engage in constructive as well as corrective theological reflection. Among others, feminist, black, liberationist, womanist, and *mujerista* theologians have contributed novel articulations of Christian beliefs and narratives that are grounded in their distinct experiences, struggles, insights, and concerns. Reasoning that women have historically been more susceptible to self-abnegation than to pride as their fundamental sin, for example, Reformed theologian Serene Jones has offered a feminist reinterpretation of the doctrines of justification and sanctification in which the experience of grace in sanctification precedes the experience of judgment in justification (Jones 2000, 49–68). Likewise, in light of the striking analogy between the crucifixion of Jesus and the brutal lynching of black Americans, black liberation theologian James H. Cone (2011) has argued that the suffering of the lynching tree provides a vantage point from which to better understand not only American religious history, but the tragic mystery and salvific meaning of the cross.

These are clearly academic examples of theological production, and as always the question of how and to what extent this reflects and influences the wider practice of Christianity as a religion is an open one. As anthropological and sociological studies of religious communities remind us, however, innovative reinterpretation of Christianity is not restricted to academia; theology and social practice exist on a continuum of theological production, and therefore also of reinterpretation of the Christian moral tradition. Significant reinterpretations are often advanced indirectly, and emerge from local liturgical and spiritual practices and art.

The recent growth of the prosperity gospel movement and prosperity theology in developing nations offers an example of this. This movement is centered upon a reinterpretation of the Christian faith in which Christ's atonement guarantees believers physical and material well-being. In most articulations of this theology, these divinely given blessings are accessed through the individual's godly behavior and faith, which is often demonstrated by making financial donations to a church (for more on this, see Bowler 2013). Scholars have pointed out that this movement's especial popularity among the poor, immigrants, and citizens of developing and impoverished countries is due in part to the sense of agency that its emphasis upon miracles and the causal efficacy of individual belief allows (Jenkins 2006, 90–97; also Coleman 2000). That is, the appeal of this controversial reinterpretation of Christianity as a moral tradition may lie in not only in its reframing of the faith itself, but also in its altered depiction of global capitalism as a moral terrain.

Challenges and Opportunities Brought by Globalization

Globalization presents both opportunities and challenges to the process of development in Christianity as a moral tradition. Communication technology and media now enable Christians in diverse contexts to be in instant dialogue, and as noted a much wider range of voices are now heard in these dialogues than has historically been the case. Conversations about how to interpret, apply, and develop Christian ethics are clearly the richer for this.

At the same time, however, the connected and networked nature of global society today also makes disagreement over correct interpretations of Christian ethics more visible, and lends these disagreements a new speed and intensity. Controversy over prosperity theology illustrates this, as a number of critics allege that prosperity gospel preachers have not only strayed outside the boundaries of orthodox theological and ethical teaching, but are also taking advantage of their congregations.

Especially contentious are debates over issues related to gender and sexuality. In the past centuries, Western societies have experienced a dramatic shift in views on gender equality and sexuality, and many North American and European Christians now support the ordination of women and moral affirmation of homosexual marriages. This has led to open and ongoing institutional debates on these issues within many Christian communities, such as the Anglican Communion, and actual schism of ecclesial polities in some cases (for more on the particular case of the Anglican Communion, see Hassett 2007). In other communities such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, conversation on contested issues is less visible at an institutional level, but ongoing nonetheless within theological scholarship and the laity. It remains to be seen how these diverse communities will mediate these divergent and incompatible interpretations of the tradition.

Of course, not all reinterpretations of Christianity are advanced or welcomed intentionally. A certain amount of development in Christian moral thought occurs in the background, as it were, and only becomes visible after the passage of much time. These are transformations in the tradition prompted by wider cultural and social transformations. The gradual development of Christian thinking and practice with regard to the ethics of lending at interest, mentioned earlier in this entry, offers one example of this.

Another can be found in the remarkable expansion of moral responsibility in modernity that has been the result of our increased awareness of and power to influence what happens to distant strangers. As social scientist Alan Wolfe has put it, "The sheer complexity of modern forms of social organization creates an ever-widening circle of newer obligations beyond those of family and locality," such that now, the scope of moral obligation "seems to be without limits" (Wolfe 1991, 3; see also Ignatieff 1985). We now regularly conceive of ourselves as having obligations to what Seyla Benhabib calls "the generalized other," which includes not only perfect strangers living miles away but perhaps also those not yet living (Benhabib 1988). As one result of this the scope of the tragic (sometimes called natural evil) seems to have shrunk, and domains in which unalleviated suffering is viewed as moral evil have expanded. This has been a gradual and indirect transformation that has indelibly marked modern interpretation of what it means for Christians to follow Jesus, as individuals, as families and communities, and as citizens of secular and pluralistic polities. As noted earlier, one response to this systemic shift can be seen in the fields of Catholic social teaching and Protestant social ethics. These discourses extend Christianity's interpretive capacities vis-à-vis the issues of modern life; through them Christians develop normative descriptions and analyses of issues and phenomena that exceed the individual scope of earlier moral teachings. These articulated expansions of Christian thought thus reflect and respond to the more fundamental reinterpretation of moral sensibilities that modern social life has prompted.

Christians today are undoubtedly living through a number of similar moral transformations prompted by globalization. One of these is surely the way that living in increasingly pluralist societies shaped by immigration is forcing Christians to think more carefully about the relationship between their religious and cultural and national identities, and about the proper role of Christian moral claims in public discourse. Another may be the way that the experience of living within capitalist institutions trains indi-

viduals to conceive of themselves fundamentally as consumers, and of their freedom and agency as exercised primarily through choice. It remains an open question as to how Christian ethical thought and practice will be reshaped by and in turn critically address these and other ongoing epochal shifts. Whatever path its evolution takes, however, it will certainly be the result of an continued and dynamic process of interpretation and reinterpretation, of both the external signs of the times, and of the core of the moral tradition itself.

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CHAPTER 97

Ethics in Islam

Paul L. Heck

To speak of ethics (*akhlāq*) in Islam is to speak of dispositions in the soul as the byproduct of monotheistic faith, dispositions that restrain or direct one's behavior. With a proper reverence for God, one will not cheat or lie. One will show forbearance rather than seek vengeance. One will fulfill duties to others faithfully and not break promises. A saying of the Prophet Muhammad links faith to ethics: "The believer with the most perfect faith is the one with the best ethics."

The point is emphasized by Fazlur Rahman (1919–1988) in *Major Themes of the Qur'an*. The monotheistic message of the one creator who knows all aspects of the human condition, both outer actions and inner dispositions, inspires a pious reverence (*taqwā*) that is not so much about knowing the right as it is about adhering to it in the face of temptations to prefer one's own whim (*hawā*). In all this, the concept of repentance (*tawba*) is paramount. One does not do repentance so much as one is drawn to it by God's mercy (*raḥma*). Repentance is a turning to God as much as it is a turning from sin. A saying of the Prophet Muhammad depicts him seeking God's forgiveness and repenting seventy times a day despite being a sinless figure in Islam. In other words, he is not repenting from sin so much as he's growing in knowledge of God's mercy for him and his community. Ethics in Islam is thus essentially tied to the question of the inner life. Moral obligation as determined by the law is one thing while ethics is another.

Knowledge of moral obligation is the task of jurists and moral theologians, who seek to determine the divine will for humans in their varied affairs in society, from marriage to commerce. These scholars engage a range of sources that make up the sources of the Muslim way of life (*sharīʿa*), bringing the human mind to bear on the words of revelation. Of course, there is considerable diversity in what is held to be morally incumbent upon a believer in a particular situation, making *sharīʿa* more a conversation of legal scholars than a code, which marks it it with a certain flexibility, not so much in terms of its penal aspects as in the range of opinions and rulings that *sharīʿa* scholars might issue on a single moral question. What is more, their positions may or may not align with state law (*qānūn*), which itself has moral weight in the scale of *sharīʿa*, particularly in relation to the aims of the Muslim way of life, since the purpose of state law in principle is to preserve stability in society without which Muslims would not be able to pursue their religious obligations. Ethics, in contrast, is a turning of the soul to God.

Without this fundamental orientation (the act of faith), one's piety does not make sense. Some therefore say that faith (*īmān*) precedes scripture (*qur'an*). That is, scripture has no hold on you unless you have already turned to God's mercy. In this view, the moral life is contingent upon recognizing and entrusting oneself to the one creator of all. This is not to suggest that Islam denies the possibility of a

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

moral life apart from faith. Human nature is not hopelessly fallen in Islam. However, Islam would say that the ethical life is fullest when enhanced by faith in God, because without faith, your motive for doing good will invariably be mixed with a worldly logic.

Ethics in Islam is thus about character and character traits as much as it is about specific morally incumbent actions. In other words, ethics flows from one's inner constitution. One's ethics – good or bad – are acquired from one's education and the company one keeps. It is possible to change traits in one's character once formed, but ethics in Islam are primarily about a state of the soul and a way of acting that flows naturally from one's character. For example, one should not have to swear oaths in order to act righteously. One does so because one is habituated to living out of devotion to God (*al-ikhlāṣ li-llāh*). There has been considerable discussion among Muslim scholars over the years about the nature and scope of ethics (*akhlāq*) in relation to both Islam's doctrines (*ʿaqāʾid*) and corpus of legal rulings (*aḥkām al-fiqh*). Following the discussions within Islam over the centuries, ethics here is treated as character traits that may be either inborn or acquired, that are embodied in one's behavior in society, and that are most fully realized as a result of sincere worship of God. Good ethics includes justice, kindness, patience, generosity, selflessness, humility, modesty, gratitude, continence, loyalty, and honesty. Bad ethics include vengefulness, selfishness, gossip, slander, lying, and the use of profanities. Ideally, one should live out of love for others, not fear of reprisal, being ready to forgive them to maintain love as the norm in response to knowledge of God's love and forgiveness, as suggested in the following verse from the Qur'an (3:31 "The Family of ʿImran"): "Say [the Angel Gabriel addressing Muhammad]: If you should love God, follow me [Muhammad], and God will love you (or make you beloved) and forgive you yours sins, for God is forgiving and merciful."

Such ethical characteristics are not exclusive to Muslims but are universal values. The Qur'an itself suggests that the right thing to do is known even apart from revealed decree. It is therefore more accurate to speak of the uniqueness of ethics in Islam not in terms of specific character traits but in terms of the relation such traits have to worship in Islam and the hope of divine favor. A saying of the prophet links ethics to worship: "With good ethics, the believer realizes the ranks of those who pray at night and fast during the day." In other words, one's character is part of the calculation of divine favor no less than the performance of ritual actions in worship. Ethics in Islam is thus a state of the soul before God and not only a matter of words and deeds. In that sense, one's ethics are to be strengthened through worship. The closer the believer draws to God, the more committed he or she becomes to preserving good relations with family, fellow believers, and with all of creation. The Qur'an does speak of righteousness (*birr*) in terms of obedience to God but also in terms of honesty, patience, and commitment in one's relations with others. Thus, as a result of the greater awareness of God that comes through ritual actions, believers are ethically fortified to endure worldly trials without loss of virtue, that is, without succumbing to the temptation to act with duplicity. This is because they have been sensitized to the passing nature of this world and the rewards from God for living according to ethical convictions even when one's social environment encourages corruption. This sensitization begins through the pious exhortations (*mawāʿiẓ*) of parents and preachers who discipline youth with a desire for paradise and a fear of hellfire (*targhīb wa-tarhīb*), but eventually such discipline is to mature whereby one examines one's own life for forces that strengthen or weaken one's personal ethics. The goal is conviction that a life of virtue before God is its own reward. That is, it results in abiding as opposed to passing pleasure (*ladhdha*).

Goodness is thus a function of devotion to God, and so Muslims connect their ethics to the ethics of God (*akhlāq allāh*), which are represented by the ninety-nine names of God as revealed in scripture: generous,

forgiving, kindly, merciful, just, good, forebearing, grateful, wise, affectionate, etc. By regularly reciting these names and contemplating their meanings, Muslims are able to identify their own lives with God's traits, thereby putting God's ways over their own whims. Such a practice cultivates a spirit of selflessness, sacrifice, and the willingness to forego the right to retribution, as seen in a prophetic saying that calls believers "to pardon those who wrong you, to give to those who deny you, and to repair relations with those who break off relations with you." The ability to respond to transgressions against oneself with such charity reflects a high level of ethics that is essential to the moral coherency of any society. Without such forebearance, society would devolve into endless litigiousness. In Islam, it is the quality of a soul that – because it worships God – has been imbued with a vision greater than that of self-regard, that is, a certain magnanimity that permits one to suffer fools gladly and respond to harms committed against oneself with leniency. The fact that the process begins from God – worship of God and recitation of God's names and other pious formulae – means that God is behind the ethical process. To put it in the language of Islam, the fact that you are faithful to God in acts of worship is a sign that God is granting you success *(tawfīq*), whereas failure to perform acts of worship is a sign that God is forsaking you (*khidhlān*). And the success that God grants you to persevere in your religious duties provides you with the awareness of God that allows you, in turn, to act with the selfless manners embodied in the above prophetic saying and to live in greater harmony with your society and surroundings. In contrast, when God forsakes you, as evidenced in a failure to persevere in worship, the result is ethical failure: whatever worldly success you might enjoy, you are deprived of the ability to act with a selflessness made possible by worship of God, leaving you in greater disharmony with your surroundings. One can thus speak of double success granted by God: success in worship and the ethical success it nurtures.

This is not to suggest that good character or good behavior is the automatic product of ritual actions such as praying and fasting. Such actions do make the soul sensitive to life for God and God's ways rather than one's own. However, one might undertake acts of worship without a properly ordered soul. In short, worship alone is not sufficient for the ethical life in Islam. For this reason, no less than worship, good character in Islam depends on a formation in a heritage of wisdom embodied in aphorisms of both Muslim and non-Muslim provenance. From very early in the history of Islam, such maxims were collected in literary anthologies for the education of the ruling class, but they have also enjoyed wide popularity over the ages to this day, serving as points of contemplation that allow for growth in wisdom in relation to both character and behavior (that is, the inner and the outer life). Such sayings are meant to teach and inspire a particular etiquette, known in Islam as manners of behavior (*adab*, pl. *ādāb*), for every life situation. Such manners vary depending on one's rank in society but generally serve to encourage high-mindedness in one's dealings with others. There are very precise norms detailing how one should eat, travel, address others, deal with family members and neighbors. The point of these norms has been to cultivate "other-awareness." Prominent among such wisdom sayings (*ḥikam*) are many hadiths (prophetic sayings) that call to patience amidst tribulation. One is to remain confident in God's deliverance, whatever the circumstances, rather than compromise one's character. And one will be rewarded by God for such fortitude, because to await God's deliverance is to think well of God, which a prophetic saying describes as a kind of worship.

It is therefore not inaccurate to think of ethics in Islam in terms of what the Christian West has long meant by conscience. Despite debate over its meaning, conscience captures the essence of the ethical life in Islam. On the one hand, conscience is less about a set of fixed rulings and more about awareness of and commitment to ethical principles that shape moral decisions, which may vary depending on a host

of factors. In one situation, it might be better to hold one's tongue, while in another, to speak out. On the other hand, conscience is about morality by conviction, not coercion. Believers know that God observes their character and their behavior, committing them to goodness in the heart no less than in words and deeds. Even apart from the watchful eyes of society and the state, believers know they are accountable to God. The Qur'an makes it clear that one's interior state is known to God no less than one's actions, giving believers the sense that they always stand before God – as if living Judgement Day in real time.

No single word in the heritage of Islam translates for conscience as the term features in the Christian West, but the concept is embodied in a complex of notions, including the idea in the Qur'an of "the self-blaming soul" (Q 74:2). One chides oneself for moral failings. The motive could be fear of divine punishment for one's sins on Judgment Day, but it is often a deeper conviction of right and wrong that results from awareness of God as object of devotion, which, in turn, evokes a sense of freedom from a self-centered need to possess things of this world at the cost of one's character. Again, ethics in Islam is not so much about specific norms as it is a deepening commitment to the moral life that flows from worshipful awareness of God.

This is not to overlook the role of the law – *sharīʿa* – when it comes to moral decision-making in Islam. Obedience to the rulings of God's law is undeniably one element within the ethical formation (*taʾdīb*) of the soul, but it needs emphasizing that the readiness to obey the law of God – with conviction and not by coercion – is contingent upon the cultivation of a sense of devotion to God. After all, when it comes to God's law, there is no distinction to be made between what is legal and what is ethical. That is, believers might dissent from statutory law, remaining or even growing in God's good graces by dissenting from manmade law that is seen as deviating from *sharīʿa*. But dissent from God's rulings, once determined with certainty, is a different matter, not only jeopardizing one's standing before God but also putting the believer at odds with his or her own conscience. Conversely, believers might seek refuge in *sharīʿa* when rulers violate *sharīʿa*-sanctioned rights, such as rights to life and property, which cannot be taken without a *sharīʿa*-approved cause. However, there is no such recourse when it comes to liberties beyond what *sharīʿa* sanctions, including adultery, theft, consumption of intoxicants, and defamation of another's reputation. A contested area of discussion today is the relation of Islam's moral teachings to modern conceptions of human rights, which are often seen as secular in origin and oriented to the moral autonomy of the individual rather than society's common good. A plethora of Muslim scholars, men and women, debate the issue; the conclusions one draws depend to a large extent on one's assessment of individual moral judgment either as arbiter of right and wrong or as personal whim that needs to be restrained by divinely revealed norms. The moral reasoning of Islam has traditionally given more weight to *sharīʿa*-informed communal norms than to individual moral choices. In other words, moral truths guide communities and are thus to be discovered, not determined, by individuals, who flourish only within community. Debates on human rights in Islam take shape according to the state under which one lives and the success of lobbying efforts by Muslims and non-Muslims in favor of one cause or another. A host of controversial issues are at stake from voting rights to female genital mutilation; both issues have received *sharīʿa* approval and *sharīʿa* disapproval. The state decides permissibility, weighing compliance with international conventions alongside national religious sentiment.

Of course, *sharīʿa* rulings come with levels of ambiguity. Muslims have long disagreed on the legal status of a host of issues, even when all appeal to *sharīʿa* reasoning, which is complex in its processes and variegated in its sources. This is not the place to discuss the history of jurisprudence in Islam, but it is worth noting that sources of *sharīʿa* are manifold and not limited to scripture, resulting in a kind of legal

reasoning that takes into account context as well as both benefit and harm to individuals and communities. For example, a Muslim in good conscience will not eat pork or drink alcohol – not because of a health benefit to be gained by abstaining from such things but because the legal consensus holds that consuming such things is a transgression of God's law, since scripture, it is affirmed, is clear on this particular matter. However, in addition to God's law, especially when clearly revealed in scripture, there is also the question of the wisdom behind the ruling, often understood as a calculation of benefit. Thus, *sharīʿa* license is generally given to the consumption of medicine that contains alcohol or pork substance and also to the use of perfume that contains a small percentage of alcohol as preservative. However, others, also using *sharīʿa* reasoning, might calculate benefit solely in otherworldly as opposed to worldly terms. Thus, in this case, they might not permit consumption of such medicine or perfume, despite worldly benefit, since it puts one's otherworldly interest in jeopardy, namely, deliverance from hellfire. Better to forego worldly benefit and preserve one's soul through a simple obedience to God's clear decrees without a casuistic run around them.

Similarly, a believer who follows this type of religious reasoning might conclude that dying as a martyr is preferable to living under infidel rule even if there are worldly benefits to be gained from doing so – such as material prosperity in exchange for peace with infidel rule. However, well-known *sharīʿa* principles controlling the process of discovering God's ruling on a matter generally give weight to worldly benefit. Such principles, including the idea that religion cannot cause distress (*ḥaraj*) or harm (*ḍarar*) to believers, were at play in recent highly controversial decisions to overturn long-standing *sharīʿa* rulings perceived to be based on gender bias: property inheritance and interreligious marriage in Tunisia and divorce practice in India. In these cases, it was held that traditional Muslim positions – where females receive a smaller portion of inheritance than males, are not permitted to marry non-Muslims as males are, and are subject to a potentially whimsical divorce process initiated by husbands apart from state oversight – actually offend the divine will by pretending it privileges one gender over another. However, one might ask whether such state decisions enjoy popular Muslim support. Another example along these lines is slavery. It is in the *sharīʿa* books as permissible, but does it represent *sharīʿa* intents and aims (*maqāṣid*)? ISIS terrorists have used the existence of slavery in the *sharīʿa* heritage to justify the enslavement of captives, but it is arguable that the Qur'an, by encouraging the manumission of slaves, effectively sought to do away with the institution.

Still, in other areas, the global context plays a role. For example, developments in modern science have raised questions about the permissibility of organ transplant, which depends on a non-traditional determination of death, whereby the patient is declared braindead while bodily functions are maintained for the purpose of harvesting organs. This flies in the face of the long-standing assumption that God determines death, not the medical establishment, and yet the benefit to be gained from organ transplant has weight. At the same time, even if a *sharīʿa* authorities permits organ transplant, the sentiments of the faithful, shaped by traditional attitudes of death, may keep them from becoming organ donors. Such controversy is also at play in the case of modern banking practices. Many Muslims have no qualms with interest-bearing accounts. In their view, the usury condemned in the Qur'an is limited to compound interest that accrues on the interest of a loan in default, which is different from the interest of a regular bank account. Nevertheless, recent decades have seen the rise of faith-based economics in Islam where banking operates by a share in the profits from financial investments rather than a predetermined interest rate. The popularity of *sharīʿa*-compliant banking today likely comes from the desire of the believers to conform to God's law as they see it, but in some circles it might be a way to distinguish the

ethics of Islam from non-Islam. The rise of Islamist thinking over the course of the twentieth century took inspiration in part from such figures as the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna (1906–1949), who saw Islam's revelation as a force to separate and protect the Abode of Islam from the West. This risks stripping *sharīʿa* of its global relevance, making God's law not a universally applicable standard but rather the mark of a particular culture in a particular territory over against the rest of humanity. One finds such sentiment, for example, in the view of Abul Ala Maududi (1903–1979) on contraception. Despite a tradition that permits contraception, even if not encouraging it, he argued it was against God's law, seeing the spread of contraception as a ploy by the West to limit the numbers of Muslims. Other Muslims, in contrast, seek to align the ethics of Islam with modern sentiments, for example, around domestic violence, rejecting the plain meaning of Q 4:34 and its injunction to husbands to beat recalcitrant wives as but a byproduct of premodern patriarchal myth-making.

While *sharīʿa* might give substance to ethics in Islam, the latter cannot be reduced to a set of rulings deemed to be God's law that one obeys or disobeys. There have been dizzying discussions over the centuries involving the specific rulings of God on a range of issues, as noted above, and such rulings have shaped the way Muslims behave in society. However, the science of ethics in Islam has long been identified with the spiritual journey (*sulūk*) that stands at the heart of Sufism. There, the goal is the formation of the soul such that it is always oriented to God – a process that works hand-in-hand with *sharīʿa* learning but is not reducible to it. After all, obedience to *sharīʿa* alone is no guarantee of selfless character, which is the goal of ethics in Islam. To be sure, the relation of *sharīʿa* to the science of ethics varies from one group of Muslims to another. For some, ethics is circumscribed by *sharīʿa* rulings. In other words, by obediently following the precedents of the Prophet Muhammad in all things, one is ethically satisfied, that is, confident one will enjoy heavenly reward. However, the possibility that one might obey the law hypocritically inspired many scholars, notably al-Ghāzālī (d. 1111), to ground ethics in love for God as the precondition of obedience to God, not unlike the idea at Psalm 1:2 of King David taking delight in God's law: we obey a divine ruling freely when we do so out of love for divine knowledge. In contrast, we might obey it only grudgingly or even as a result of social or poltical coercion, making its ethical value suspect. Moreover, to limit Islam's ethics to a simple obedience to *sharīʿa* rulings raises questions about the competence of Islam to guide believers in societies where *sharīʿa* is not followed or enforced. What gets you to live as a good Muslim when no one else does? Can you be a good Muslim if there are no signs of public commitment to Islam? Islam's ethics, bespeaking universal values as noted above, offers general character standards by which to live in ethical harmony in a society where Islam is not the norm.

A question that has received hardly any attention in the scholarly literature is the link of ethics in Islam to emotions. Should fulfillment of one's ethical convictions be a cause of joy, failure to live by them be a cause of sorrow? And can one attribute a role to emotions in the formation of one's character? Does a response of joy at the sight of goodness, of sorrow at the sight of evil, contribute to one's growth in the purposes of ethics in Islam? The answer depends in part on how emotions are defined: as disturbances in the soul, in which case they would not benefit and may even harm character formation; or as movements in the soul, in which case they could contribute to the consolidation of good habits in the soul, such as compassion to those in need and incomprehension at the maltreatment of weaker members of society. All this remains to be studied: Does emotional experience work in tandem or at cross purposes with the goals of ethics in Islam? Does a sense of disgust at poor conduct in society strengthen one's sense of ethical conviction or weaken it? Does a feeling of joy make one grateful, a feeling of sorrow ungrateful – gratitude being a marker of belief in Islam, ingratitude a marker of unbelief?

Here, we can only briefly point to possibilities in this understudied area. It is well known that emotional expression can be prompted by social expectation. One might cry from sorrow when one is expected to do so, for example, at a funeral. But one might also cry as a result of a spiritual movement in the soul, underscoring a link between emotional expression and ethics. To illustrate: weeping is not univocal. In Islam, preachers are known on occasion to cry on the pulpit during the Friday Prayer to express contrition for the community's ethical failings. It signals fear of Judgment Day but also a call to repentance, crying indicating sincerity. The tears of the preacher, in turn, prompt the gathered faithful to cry out of remorse for their sins. Here, crying follows social expectation. One should cry in public as a way to demonstrate sincerity of repentance for one's failings. But there are other types of weeping. One might shed crocodile tears to trick people into giving them money. One might cry over something lost. In both cases, this type of emotional expression indicates a soul that is ethically impoverished. One should not be ready to deceive, regardless of gain, and one should not be so attached to worldly goods as to become disturbed at their loss. In contrast, one might cry out of reverent awe of the greatness of God and God's mercy and guidance. It is difficult to link this kind of weeping wholly to social expectation. Well-known preachers, such as Ṣāliḥ al-Maghāmsī (b. 1963) of Saudi Arabia, are known to shed tears amidst a religious lesson as if to signal a sense of being overwhelmed by a sense of God's greatness, but it would not be right to classify all instances of this kind of weeping in terms of social expectation. The fact that one might shed tears in private moments out of a sense of God's greatness suggests that they reflect a genuine spiritual movement in the soul.

Notwithstanding ambiguities, it is arguable that emotional expression, such as weeping out of a sense of reverent awe (*khashīya*) of God's greatness, actually has agency when it comes to growth in the ethical life. It is not the tears of the trickster or those of one anxious over worldly affairs but the tears of reverent awe that work to soften the heart and make one more merciful and compassionate toward others. The emotional movement of tears, then, accompanied by reverence of God, works to elevate one's character. Emotional expression accompanies the process of consolidating the kind of ethics to which the Qur'an calls the Prophet Muhammad, namely, relations with his community that are based not on a hardened heart but a heart softened by God's mercy (Q 4:159). One sees this in two hadiths. In the first one, 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Shikhkhīr reports that he came upon the prophet while in prayer, and from his innards came crying like the whistling of a pot of boiling water. This hadith connects emotional expression to ritual action. While it does not specify the exact cause of the prophet's tears, the context – the prophet at prayer – valorizes this kind of emotional expression as ethically productive movement rather than upsetting disturbance in the soul. In the second hadith, Usāma Ibn Zayd reports that the prophet wept at the death of a grandchild. When the prophet is asked by Sa'd Ibn 'Ubāda how it could be that the Messenger of God might display grief, since, one assumes from the question, grief could be taken as a sign of weakness of faith, Usāma responds that such weeping as displayed by the prophet is a mercy that God plants in the hearts of those who worship God. In other words, the prophet's tears are not the tears of the mourner, inconsolable over the loss of a loved one, but rather the tears of one whose heart has been softened in his or her dealings with others as a result of one's awareness of divine mercy. This, it might be argued, is why prophets are known to have cried for their communities – not from remorse over sins but from a gentle-heartedness that is the fruit of their deep knowledge of divine mercy. Emotions, then, are not just a physical reaction that meets society's expectations. Rather, they express a story in the heart that is basic to the human experience but also productive of ethical dispositions as taught by Islam.

It is not wrong to question religious communities about divergence in ethical standards when it comes to outsiders as opposed to insiders. One verse from the Qur'an (Q 5:45) calls believers to be gentle with one another but stern with unbelievers. Notwithstanding the diverse ways in which such a verse has been understood, there have been Muslims who see it as a mandate for two sets of ethical standards, one with fellow believers and another with non-Muslims or even with Muslims from a different confessional heritage. The way in which doctrinal commitment can limit one's ethics with those seen as doctrinally deficient cannot be overlooked. Some voices within the global movement known as Salafism contend that monotheistic worship is the primary criterion of ethics. Those deemed polytheist – including fellow Muslims accused of undue exaltation of their spiritual leaders – are to be spurned and even attacked. The extent to which such thinking is actually practiced is another question, but one must recognize that in Islam, as in other traditions, even if faith can and does work to strengthen universal ethical commitments, it can also result in a dubious bifurcation of duties to fellow humans. This tension in the ethics of Islam is something for Muslims to resolve in light of global developments and Islam's own teachings. For example, when it comes to the ethics of war, states that constitute what has been known historically as the Abode of Islam, are obliged to treat prisoners of war according to the Geneva Conventions. In contrast, militant groups look to premodern precedent to justify the beheading of enemy combatants and even of non-combatants. As a result, the ethics of war in Islam can appear quite ambiguous. At times, jihad thinking aligns with principles of just war theory and the goal of reducing violence, bloodshed, and property damage. At others, the goal seems to be a quasi-imperialist domination of Islam over others.

Mercy is arguably the ethical trait of Islam par excellence. The establishment of justice, where everyone gets their due, is the task of rulers, but even with just rule, no society can flourish without some witness to God's mercy. On the one hand, society requires a form of governance to establish order, including the adjudication of conflict and the suppression of crime and chaos. On the other hand, in addition to justice, there is also need for a show of God's mercy to soften human hearts, which easily become hardened by life's trials and tribulations as well as by failures of justice in the world. One easily becomes bitter and resentful with harmful impact on one's relations with others. What is it that prompts believers to act with mercy and to forgive those who have wronged them or to seek to reconcile with groups opposing their own? There is a host of factors in the mix, but one cannot overlook the influence of a kind of saintly character in Islam, which in principle works for the reconciliation of hearts in society. Justice is to be served – including punishment when crime is committed – so that order be maintained, but without the power of divine mercy and a resulting impulse to reconcile, hearts will remain opposed and groups will sooner or later clash again. The harmony of society therefore depends on its leaders modeling gestures of mercy. To put the issue in the language of Islam, the law might call people to extend charity to those in need, but models of mercy are needed to inspire people to do so with a willing heart. One might hope for political leaders to model gestures of mercy, but politics is oriented to the display of power more so than it is to the show of merciful gestures. Thus, traditionally, the orchestration of mercy in society has been the role of saintly figures, whose very existence reminds people of God, inspiring them to forget suspicions and enmities and place their trust in God and act with kindness rather than envy and resentment. One classical example of such a saintly figure is Abū Saʿīd Ibn Abī l-Khayr (d. 1049), spiritual virtuoso of eleventh-century Persia, whose intense focus on divine rather than earthly sovereignty inspired kindness and merciful gestures among his followers – in contrast to religious leaders who emphasized the strict letter of the law and sultans who ruled for the sake of their own glory and dominion.

There have always been pious preachers in Islam who call rulers to use power for the common good rather than their own interests and who admonish them when they fail to do so, and there have also always been saintly figures who, as models of divine mercy, inspire a richer ethics in society. The evidence suggests that it is as a result of their own direct experience of God's mercy that they are able to bring about mercy in society, doing so by calling their followers together in what could be called beloved communities in service of the poor as a counter model to the gated communities of the world that lack such compassion for others. In contemporary society, the role of modeling divine mercy is still played by saintly figures but no less by individuals and organizations that exist to serve the needy in society by charity (*iḥsān*).

Of course, while the academic scholar might distinguish the ethical from the legal heritage of Islam, Muslims do not live by such a dichotomy. The two go together, one informing the other. This is clear from the revealed texts – qur'anic scripture and prophetic sayings – where questions of character and questions of law are never bifurcated. To sum up the overall tradition: there is preference for peace, aversion to war, but readiness to use force against wrongdoers, rebels, and sowers of corruption. Those whose soul is rightly oriented to God amidst worldly conflict are deemed martyrs. There is approval of truthfulness, modesty, and reconciliation with adversaries; disapproval of lying, arrogance, hypocrisy, and strife in society (traditionally implying intra-Muslim conflict but today sometimes extended to include enticement to immoral Western ways). The believer is to remain true to the covenant made with God and be mindful of the heavenly merits earned from acting in accordance with divine commands and prohibitions.

Islam's ethical vision is marked by two overarching concepts. The first, *ḥaqq*, is indicant of divine truth, the other, *raḥma*, of divine mercy. The first term also implies the nature of a person, thing, or situation, that is, what is owed to it. Everything has its *ḥaqq* (its due or right). For example, the destitute have a *ḥaqq* in the wealth of the community. Judges are to rule in accordance to *ḥaqq*. It is the *ḥaqq* of believers to be supported by God. The term is contrasted to falsehood (*bāṭil*) and personal whim (*hawā*), suggesting that humans, fickle creatures, are averse to live according to divine truth. Human life can only be taken by *ḥaqq*, that is, on the basis of what is due to it for certain transgressions, three types of which are generally mentioned. The first is wrongly killing a fellow Muslim. Taking a non-Muslim life is a punishable offense that traditionally does not carry the death penalty. In either case, the victim's family has the option of receiving a blood payment in lieu of retribution, effectively forgiving the killer. The second is adultery. (It should be noted that conviction requires the highly improbably condition of four witnesses to the act of adultery, and a woman forced to commit sexually forbidden acts is in principle not subject to penalty.) The third is active effort to undermine Islam in public life, traditionally associated with cases of apostasy that result in harm to society. Other actions without *ḥaqq* include extremism in religion and the arrogant use of power to set oneself up as lord over fellow creatures. God as creator and revealer defines what is *ḥaqq*, including human destiny on Judgment Day. The concept of *ḥaqq* connects to that of justice in the sense of being in right balance with God and society; *ḥaqq* thus features in discussions of commerce, including contracts and trusts. In sum, God intends for humanity to be a balanced community, witnessing to righteousness and to goodness in a system of public morality grounded in the divine will.

Religious duties, such as prayer and fasting, are seen as a *ḥaqq* owed to God, but not to the point of wearing oneself down. The body no less than the soul has its *ḥaqq*, as do family members and friends. Public space, too, is not to be offended; one should lower one's gaze at unseemly conduct, remove annoyances

(such as a thorn in the road), return greetings, and uphold the moral life. Believers are to act kindly to neighbors and hospitably to guests and also to speak a good word or remain silent. (Idle talk and unnecessary involvement in others' affairs are not commended.) Taking land unjustly, breaking promises, and betraying trust are all offensive to *ḥaqq*, as is slander and backbiting, and even losing one's temper at times of disagreement.

Believers are to avoid enmity among themselves, being bound into brotherhood as fellow slaves of God. They are not to accuse one another of infidelity or insult one another's honor and sense of dignity. In sum, Islam is meant to be guarantor of public morality for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, but there is arguably little in the revealed texts on the specifics of rule. There is exhortation to obey rulers so long as they do not transgress *ḥaqq*. Ruling without transgressing *ḥaqq* has been variously interpreted as just rule, rule that does not offend religious sentiment, or at a minimum rule that does not prevent performance of religious duties (e.g. prayer and fasting).

The second of the above two concepts, *raḥma*, mercy, expands the idea of justice as embodied in *ḥaqq*. Here, one is to be compassionate, charitable, forgiving, lenient, and forbearing. The goal is to maintain good relations, even if doing so requires foregoing one's *ḥaqq* (which is not actually given up since mercy is rewarded in the next life). In general, *raḥma* is not as obvious as justice is, requiring a higher level of faith. Those who live by *raḥma* are bound together in community more tightly that those who live only by justice. The quality of *raḥma* belongs to God above all, and the Prophet Muhammad was sent as a *raḥma* for the entire universe. The concept suggests the tight bond one feels to one's clan, that is, one's relation by the womb, *raḥm*, which has the same root as mercy. However, in Islam, loyalty to the prophet takes precedence over all other relations, which will be of no use on Judgment Day. In other words, Islam seeks to extend the concept of clan-based solidarity to all those who submit to God as the true source of mercy, which is now the result of faith and not of blood kinship. This redefinition of mercy is rooted in the idea that all humans spring from a single soul. Indeed, even animals are to be treated compassionately. There are debates on the scope of divine mercy. It extends to all by virtue of being created by God, but a life of mercy-based solidarity is fully expressed only by believers who adhere to God's way in community. (Such solidarity could extend indirectly to all, even to unbelievers, who would witness it in the way believers embody it.) Mercy is shown by God to all who show it to others. No mercy will be shown on Judgment Day to those who, for example, had water but did not share it with the thirsty, to those who pledged allegiance to a ruler only for worldly gain, and to those who invoke God's name for ulterior motives. Indeed, merchants who lie in trade lose the blessing it is supposed to represent.

It is worth noting that the womb-based or kinship-based meaning of *raḥma* is not lost in Islam. There is strong condemnation of those who break off good relations with others, especially with kin. One's mother is most worthy of reverence, even if a polytheist. Breaking off good relations with kin, seen as a cause of corruption in society, bars you from entering paradise. God preserves good relations with those who preserve good relations with others – and breaks off with those who break off with others. Charity is highly praised, and hellfire can be avoided by giving away in charity as little as a date or, if one does not possess even a date, by speaking a good word. One is encouraged to atone for bad deeds with good ones performed for God. Controlling one's anger wins entrance to paradise, and generosity is highly commended, especially to orphans, widows, neighbors, and the poor. Such generosity is a kind of jihad.

It should now be clear that ethics in Islam is not a simple function of obedience to *sharīʿa*, however important that may be. The conceptualization of ethics as discussed in this entry is as fundamental to Islam's way of life as is conformity to *sharīʿa*. It is in this sense that Muslims speak of nobility of character

(*makārim al-akhlāq*) as that which Muhammad was sent to fulfill. Such character allows one to perform *sharīʿa* obligations non-hypocritically and is also the fruit of piety as the faith-oriented life. The concept of nobility of character is generally associated with a level of piety beyond both doctrine and law, where one is constantly aware of being in the presence of God. Thus, while believers recognize that the idea of good behavior predates Islam, they also look to the model of the prophet for the idea of a fuller realization of human ethics that flows from the monotheistic worship of Islam. Ethics in this sense is essential to the meaning of Islam no less than law. Thus, ethics in Islam is not at all about a departure from *sharīʿa*. More primarily, it is about the cultivation of a rightly ordered relation with God, which, in turn, enables cultivation of rightly ordered relations with others in society, including selflessness that goes beyond the law without leading to its neglect. Excellent character is thus no less part of the calculation of divine favor than adherence to God's commands and prohibitions.

Muslims include character in the moral calculation because they have long noted a selfish motive in keeping God's law, namely, deliverance from divine wrath on Judgment Day. In this regard, one keeps the law not so much to please God as to save one's own skin from hellfire. But such a view reduces Islam to a transaction: paradise for obedience. Thus, ethical formation has been essential to ensure against the reduction of Islam to a transactional affair. Obedience to God's law may very well earn the believer paradise, but it will not necessarily win God's favor (*riḍā allāh* or *riḍwān allāh*), which scholars have described as a heavenly station beyond even that of paradise. Why would doing the law only for your own heavenly gain be pleasing to God?

The idea that divine favor is not a simple function of *sharīʿa* obedience is reflected in discussions on the signs of divine favor. How does one know that one enjoys the favor and love of God? The ability to keep God's law is a necessary but not sufficient factor in knowledge of God's favor. Other indicants are needed, among them the love of others for you. People are ultimately attracted to one's ethics, making the love of others for you a sign that your ethical character is pleasing to God. Other signs include a love of listening to the Qur'an (suggesting a rightly ordered soul as part of the calculation of divine favor along with good character and good behavior) and a readiness to listen to advice (suggesting humility and harmonious relations with others). Finally, considerable weight is given to suffering as a sign that one enjoys divine favor. This is confirmed by a hadith that states that when God loves believers, He tests them. If they are contented with God amidst trial and tribulation, God is contented with them. If, however, they show discontent for God as a result of hardship and misfortune, then God is discontented with them. After all, as one saying puts it, should you not be ashamed to expect that God be contented with you when you are not contented with all that God has decreed for you – both good and evil?

In other words, it is adversity that demonstrates, even proves, one's true ethical colors. One might despair and curse God – as the wife of Job encouraged him to do after being afflicted by unmerited suffering – or find that one's faith in God is refined as a result of suffering. Some see such heavenly sent tribulation as God's way of distinguishing the obedient from the disobedient, but it is more accurate to speak of suffering in Islam as opportunity for those who worship God to display the extent of their love for God above and beyond a simple obedience to God's law. At a minimum, when one suffers, one should patiently endure without breaking the faith and abandoning worship of God. However, at a higher level, believers who do not merely put up with suffering but see it as a sign of God's love for them, as suggested in the above hadith, are pleasing to God because they are pleased with God even amidst the suffering God has decreed for them. They take delight in God even in their suffering. It is not simply a matter of

enduring it. The pleasure one might see in suffering trial and tribulation as God's decree is the ultimate mark of ethics in Islam: a display of character contentment in God come what may.

Such commitment of character in one's reverence of God is the signal par excellence of divine favor above and beyond the calculation of acts of obedience and disobedience that will earn deliverance on Judgment Day. How might God not love those who do not curse God even when suffering? The point is not just to keep the law but to live out of awareness of God at all times, patiently and even gratefully, out of a sense of God's mercy, even amidst hardship. It is this that prompts the human soul to take the greatest of pleasures in devotion to God irrespective of life's vagaries. God's law – *sharīʿa* – is never out of the picture, and as God's delegate on earth, the human is to live in society in knowledge of God's will, a notion many today connect to the duty to steward the planet's resources and protect its peoples and, indeed, all creatures. In sum, the key point of ethics in Islam is that duties to God can always be performed hypocritically if not accompanied by a formation in ethics that puts the soul in a rightly ordered relation to God.

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CHAPTER 98

Buddhist Ethics: Modes of Interpretation

Anne Ruth Hansen

Introduction

The starting point for this consideration of how Buddhists have produced and disseminated ethics is that "ethics" – what we might also refer to as ethical or moral values – are historically produced, situated not only in specific cultures and historical moments, but also shaped by the materials and technologies that people use to remember and convey them to each other. Our ways of thinking, and thus our knowledge systems, change depending on the media used to express them. For example, transitions from oral to manuscript cultures and from print to digital media usage have transformed not only the way we produce and disseminate knowledge but also our thought patterns and notions of how and with whom to communicate. This entry contends that the interpretation of Buddhist ethical values should be viewed as a dynamic process relative to specific historical contexts and tied to particular modes of production, expression, and dissemination. The media and technologies Buddhists have employed in producing values are important to understanding what those values are, and how they shape or guide peoples' perceptions and actions in the world.

As an analytical category, "ethical values" is both broad enough to contain the continuum of peoples' moral ideas, expressions and practices, and specific enough to point to the reality that people, including Buddhists, sometimes hold competing or ambivalent or inconsistent moral notions. In the discussion that follows, "ethical values" is used as a synonym for "ethics," though oftentimes, the latter term can also be used to refer to the scholarly disciplines of philosophical or religious ethics, or to indicate a holistic or systematic moral framework or set of principles. Saying that a group of people such as Theravāda Buddhists share "ethical values" allows room for conceptualizing a messy, unsystematic, inconsistent "repertoire" of moral understandings and ways of acting and interacting that are drawn from diverse cultural sources and are applied selectively, depending on the situation (McDaniel 2011, 9–14).

This entry surveys modes of interpreting Buddhist ethical values in the context of Southeast Asian Theravāda Buddhist production and dissemination of different types of ethical media from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries, including written, ritual, visual, and aural sources. On the one hand, this period in the Theravāda world saw dramatic transitions in the technologies and materials used for producing and disseminating written ideas: from the highly ritualized monastic production of palm leaf and mulberry paper manuscripts to printed texts produced and sold by religious organizations led by lay people to digital materials curated by tech-savvy young monks and artists and widely available

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

on the Internet. On the other hand, while the contexts and motivations for some Theravāda ritual performances (such as novice ordinations) changed dramatically and other rituals (such as menstruation and postpartum rituals) have nearly disappeared over the past century and a half, many other rituals, including funerals, life-extension ceremonies, and recitations of the culturally important buddhological story of the *Vessantara Jātaka*, continue to have cultural and moral significance. Throughout this period, aural media have continuously produced "ethical soundscapes" through forms such as sermons, liturgies, story-telling, spoken epic poetry, and more recently, hip-hop (Hirschkind 2006). In the visual and material realm, Theravāda Buddhists convey ethical values through media that range from tattoos and amulets to temple architecture, paintings, photography, textiles, clothing, and art. One of the notable changes over time is a growing commodification and mass production of morally potent objects. Another is the blurring of boundaries between art and religious ethics, evident in the work of the contemporary artists discussed later in this entry.

Ethics and the Written Word in Manuscript Culture

In the mid- to late nineteenth-century Southeast Asian Theravāda world, followers of the Buddha looked to the teachings of the Buddha – the Dhamma or Dharma – as an authoritative source for shaping their moral decision-making and production of values. Their notion of Dhamma encompassed more than the canonical words of the Buddha, *buddhavacana,* and might best be translated, following Steven Collins, as "what is right" (Collins 1998, 604). Although written scriptures were not the only or perhaps even the primary medium for communicating ethical values in communities, they played an important role in transmitting knowledge of the Dhamma among monastic teachers who interpreted and disseminated the message of the Dhamma in a wide range of other ways that will be considered below.

The usual media for written scriptures as well as texts explicating and commenting on scriptures were hand-made manuscripts assembled from palm leaves or paper prepared from *khoi* bushes or mulberry tree fibers. While the Buddhist scripture, the *Tipiṭaka*, was well known and revered, entire copies of the massive corpus of the canonical scriptures were not widely available, maintained only in a few libraries (especially royal libraries). Instead, manuscripts commonly combined short excerpts of different canonical and non-canonical texts such as localized versions of stories of the past lives of the Buddha before he was enlightened, ritual guides, and various texts promoting ethical values such as generosity and selfless giving attached to merit-making (*dāna*). Merit-making was (and still is) a central ritual activity for Theravāda Buddhists. Offering gifts such as food, robes and money to the *sangha* (monastic community) or sponsoring religious building or the creation of manuscripts accrued spiritual benefit for the donor that could be shared with others, including the donor's deceased parents or other relatives. New manuscripts were often sponsored by a lay donor and copied out by a monk-scribe as part of a devotional practice. In other cases, scholar-monks traveled between monasteries to copy texts and carry them back to their home monasteries for educational and ritual purposes (Appleton, Shaw, and Unebe 2013, 1–9, 98–122; Hansen 2007, 80–89; Ginsburg 1989; McDaniel 2008: 83–91, 143–149).

Manuscripts were produced with great care, surrounded by rituals for preparing the palm leaves and ceremonies and regulations that had to be observed by the monks who inscribed them. Once completed, the manuscripts were presented to a monastery or abbot in a ritual ceremony that might include the presentation of specially woven cloth for wrapping the texts or a decorated box for storing them, sometimes

as part of a donation of robes to the monk-scribe in order to effect the passing of merit to the donor of the manuscript, or as the culmination of a merit-making ritual for a deceased spiritual teacher or parent. The value of the manuscript depended in part on its aesthetic beauty and the regularity of its written words, which in turn reflected the concentration and spiritual purity of the monk who inscribed it. Written syllables of the Buddha's teaching in manuscripts or other written materials such as *yantra* (protective diagrams inscribed on paper, cloth and thin sheets of metal or tattooed on skin) were considered as microcosmic representations of the moral power of the Triple Gem (the intertwined elements of Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha), which could bestow protection and blessings besides generating merit. Thus, it was impossible to separate the ethical teachings of a given manuscript from its sheer materiality, aesthetics, and spiritual potency as a moral object (Ginsburg 2000, 118–119).

The *Phra Malai Sutta*, a narrative that emphasizes the importance of merit-making and other moral virtues and is resonant with Buddhist prescriptions for wholesome living (such as the five precepts and the eight-fold path), was a favorite manuscript theme in nineteenth-century Siam, often featured in illustrated manuscripts and used as a subject for sermons at funerals (Ginsburg 2000, 92–111; Brereton 1995; Sims-Williams 2013). The story tells of an especially accomplished monk named Phra ("Venerable") Malai, who through his higher skills in meditation and concentration, was able to visit the hells and heavens to witness the conditions of life for beings reborn in those realms (*gati*). In the hells, he encountered beings tortured in horrible ways commensurate with their past misdeeds, and in the heavens, he perceived the rewards for those who lived virtuously, especially people who had made merit in past lives. From the text's narrative descriptions as well as from iconic and evocative paintings of Phra Malai's travels that appeared in illustrated manuscripts and large paintings displayed in temples, Thais learned about the workings of karma in visualizable form. As awful as hell was for adulterers, hunters, corrupt politicians, and others who violated the Buddhist precepts and created harm for others, even the humble but heart-felt gift of a poor laborer could produce magnificent rewards when mediated through the transformative power of a virtuous monk. In one often-painted scene, Phra Malai carries a pious woodcutter's simple gift of eight lotus blossoms to offer to the Chulamani stūpa – a funeral reliquary in the Tavatimsa Heaven containing a relic of the Buddha – thereby endowing the woodcutter with all the merit accrued from a gift presented directly to the Buddha. One obvious intent of the story was to inspire generosity in listeners. In preaching it, monks might dramatically re-enact certain scenes or recite it with the manuscript's illustrations facing the audience so they could see the gory punishments in hells and the lavish life of heavenly denizens (Brereton 1995; Skilling and McDaniel 2012). But it is important to note that communicating the story was only part of the ethical work done by the manuscript. In Theravāda contexts, sensory encounters with a manuscript such as touching a page of written text or seeing the folded-up manuscript in a glass case, even for those who do not know or understand its content, is understood to yield spiritual benefits. Merely being in the presence of a Buddhist manuscript can help someone become a better person.

The values conveyed by a manuscript's written and painted content and its sacred materiality were also difficult to separate out from its ritual context. *Jātaka*, stories of the Buddha's past rebirths and popular subjects of nineteenth-century manuscripts, emphasized the future Buddha's cultivation of moral virtues as he coursed through rounds of existence before his enlightenment. In Southeast Asia, the stories of the last ten rebirths have been especially revered, known collectively as the *dasa-jātaka* (ten birth-stories). The *Sāma Jātaka,* for example, tells the story of a past rebirth in which the future Buddha was reborn as the child of blind ascetics, tenderly caring for them in the forest where they lived. One day, a

thoughtless and selfish king out hunting intentionally shot him with a poisoned arrow. Although badly wounded, Sāma miraculously revived (and his parents' sight was restored) through the power of his own goodness and the truth-telling vows made by his parents and a goddess perched in a nearby treetop who had been his mother in a previous birth. Depending on the monk who was preaching, the story might highlight a range of virtues displayed by the Bodhisatta such as filial piety, care, loving-kindness, and ascetic purity, while also offering a warning about the potentially immoral effects of the hubris of kings and politicians. At the end of some versions of the story, the Bodhisatta preaches to the king – often slyly depicted in paintings as a churlish ogre rather than a human being – about the duties of moral rulers and teaches him the five Buddhist precepts (Roveda and Yem 2009, 93). A Cambodian listener attending a recitation of the *Sāma Jātaka* by a monk holding a manuscript of the text may not have heard the exact words inscribed on that particular manuscript since the monk-preacher might take poetic license or choose to elaborate one scene and omit others. Furthermore, the ethical message conveyed by the monk-preacher was only part of its impact. The story worked hand in hand with ritual contexts in which it might be preached. A recitation of the Sāma story at a funeral conferred merit on listeners who could then transfer the merit they earned to their parents, providing care for them in their future rebirths as well as in the present. In this sense, the ritual recitation of the *jātaka* provided an opportunity for listeners to *become* like Sāma taking care of his parents not simply to hear about elder care as an abstract moral ideal.

New Ethical Media

Given the attitudes toward religious manuscripts and writing described above, it is not surprising that the introduction of print and the new technologies of knowledge production attached to it reflected and/or contributed not only to a shift in ethical expression but also a change in the focus of peoples' moral concerns. In urban areas such as Bangkok and Phnom Penh at the turn of the nineteenth century, younger reform-minded monks and literati embraced the printing press for its potential role in making scriptural texts more widely accessible. While printed Buddhist texts retained their revered status as sacred objects, these young intellectuals were focused on different categories of Buddhist moral teachings than the older generation of compilers of palm-leaf Buddhist *jātaka*. Modern "scripturalist" monks and educators wanted Buddhist monks and laypeople to learn to read and understand scriptures for themselves rather than relying on monk-preachers to interpret them (Tambiah 1976, 211–212; Hansen 2007, 83–84). At a time when methods of modern science and empiricism were taking hold in many parts of the world, reform-minded scholars emphasized the Buddha's scientific orientation and his method of self-verification for understanding religious truths. They cited the *Kālāma Sutta* as a demonstration of "Buddhist rationalism" and evidence of the compatibility between modern scientific approaches and the Buddha's wisdom. In the sutta, the Buddha urges his Kālāma listeners *not* to rely on oral traditions, received wisdom, scriptures, venerated teachers, or inference to decide whether something was true, but rather to "know for yourselves" through meditation, reflection and moral experimentation. Another favorite text of reformers was the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, a discourse that laid out an ethics of wholesome and beneficial ways to handle family and other relationships for lay people. For reformists, the text articulated their belief that lay people, like members of the sangha, needed to read and understand the Dhamma and take responsibility for purifying their moral behavior.

In championing the *Kālāma Sutta, Sigālovāda Sutta*, as well as other scriptures that dealt with codes of behavior for lay and monastic life, reformists were not rejecting older virtues (such as truth-telling and loving-kindness) attached to narratives of the Buddha's past lives in the *jātaka*s. Rather, their focus on these kinds of texts reflected the shift in their modes of interpreting scripture to include understanding of Pali, philological commentary, and historical readings of scripture. Reformists wanted to downplay or filter out what they regarded as fanciful details in *jātaka* stories (such as the brahmin Jūjaka's stomach bursting open in the *Vessantara Jātaka*) and focus instead on understanding the Buddha's original intentions and cultivate purity of thought and action. While not fully abandoning the *jātaka* tradition, reformists began to turn their energy toward producing and publishing new critical editions of the scriptural texts and commentaries they found instructive.

As the historical context of Buddhist ethical reflection shifted again during the postcolonial Cold War period, the *Kālāma Sutta* remained important – but for different reasons. Responding to transnational circulations of Cold War ideologies, in their speeches and journal articles, Southeast Asian Buddhist intellectuals associated with the World Fellowship of Buddhists frequently cited the same passages in the *Kālāma Sutta* reformists had referenced decades earlier to demonstrate that Buddhism was compatible with democratic (as opposed to communist) values, and further, to point to the emancipatory significance of Buddhism as a world religion that advocated total freedom over any sort of "blind faith." Statements highlighting Buddhism's valuing of freedom, including freedom to examine one's conscience, freedom of choice, freedom to practice religion, and freedom of allegiance became frequent motifs in writings by Buddhist intellectuals during the Cold War period. Burmese missionary monk U Thittila explained that in the historical moment of the post-World War II world, "now Asia is threatened with Communism and every Buddhist must frankly face the incompatibility of the Communist and the Buddhist way of life. ..." Among the many threats posed by communism, "[a]s proved by its record in Russia and in the countries brought under its sway, Communism... attacks religion – it is therefore anti-Buddhist [and] it attacks individual liberty of thought or deed. ..."[1] In a 1966 article in the newly established Buddhist magazine *Banlỹ Buddhacakr* [*Illumination of the Buddha-wheel*], Cambodian Prince Sisowath Monireth wrote, quoting the *Kālāma Sutta*, that the Buddha's insistence on "freedom of thought" was unparalleled in the history of world religions (Sisowath 1966, 32–33, 43–45). Likewise, Thai Princess Pismai Diskul, in her capacity as president of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, argued that "...there is nothing compulsory whatever in the Buddha's doctrine. The Buddha's instruction to the Kālāma people may be cited as confirmatory evidence" (Poon 1975, 5). Explicitly and implicitly, such writings and speeches advocated for "freedom" and "liberation" as prominent Buddhist values at the same time that they situated these Buddhist actors' opposition to communist ideologies.

The post-independence period in Southeast Asia saw the development of new media that were used to consider and disseminate Buddhist values understood to be compatible with modern life, nation-building, and individual and social development through radio broadcasts, newsreel and film. Buddhist monk Bhikkhu Hat-Chak's 1954 address on Cambodian national radio, for example, aired soon after Cambodia gained nationhood, elaborating the *Dullabhā Sutta* on gratitude (*kataññū*) and connecting the importance of showing gratitude to teachers, parents and others who offered unconditional care for

1 Kurt F. Leidecker Archives, Leidecker Center for Asian Studies Collection, Mary Washington University: U Thittila (n.d.).

moral development of their children and students to the development of the nation. In his address, he explained that moral education was essential for "national progress" and "national unity" in a Buddhist nation like Cambodia.[2] Nineteen fifty-seven-newsreel captured the installation of a new relic of the Buddha as palladium of the nation, likewise associating national progress with Buddhist morality,[3] while Khmer films based on local Buddhist folktales with moral themes were introduced in the early 1960s by film-maker Ly Bun Yim and became wildly popular with the public in Phnom Penh and elsewhere in the country (Li and Muan 2001, 150–151, 170–172).

Ethical Values in Ritual Performances

Buddhist ritual has served as another key medium for interpreting and communicating ethical values in the Southeast Asian Theravāda world. From small daily offerings that homeowners and farmers offer to the spirits of the land they occupy and ancestor spirits who watch over their behavior and health to lavish state-sponsored offerings to the Buddhist sangha, ritual performances are occasions on which ethical values are produced and prominently displayed and disseminated. As with written texts that can be interpreted differently depending on the context and subjective composer, reader, reciter, and audience responses, the ways in which people interpret the ethical values communicated in ritual performances are complex, contingent and fluid; no matter the intentions of the ritual officiants or sponsors of a given ceremony, participants can come away with a range of interpretations and reactions as well as a sense of shared purpose and collective values.

A young Cambodian friend recently spent an entire day at an elaborate merit-making ritual organized by his mother for the benefit of her deceased parents in their home village, a drive of several hours from the town where he and his mother live. She and her friends prepared food offerings for days in advance and she even hired a large bus to ferry relatives and friends to the ceremony. When I asked a few detailed questions about what had taken place, the young man admitted sheepishly that he had not paid the least bit of attention; he was just there to support his mother, with whom he was close. Even though he was in his thirties and lived independently, he explained, "she always washes my clothes and cooks food for me. I really appreciate her."[4] His attendance at her religious event was a show of support and gratitude toward his mother rather than coming from any sense of moral responsibility to the family village temple, monks or his grandparents, he explained.

This ethnographic story suggests that while individual understandings of the values created by rituals can be varied and ritual participants may hold multiple and even contradictory ideas about whether the values they are ritually enacting are valid, rituals – like texts – are situated within a larger world of interconnected religious ideas, actors, relationships, aspirations, practices, and so on that shape an integrated "moral universe," allowing participants to interpret their own and others' ritual actions

2 National Archives of Cambodia, Phnom Penh: Bhikku Hat-Chak Tikkhaññ a o's address was broadcast in 1954 and later published in a 1958 cremation volume as "Dhammakathā," Box 511.

3 Bophana Media Archives, Phnom Penh: "Cambodia: L'An 2500 de L'Ere Boudhique," Bophana Access no., INA_VI_000290, source National Audiovisual Institute (France), 1957. "L'An 2500," Bophana Access no., GPA VI-000716, source Gaumont Pathé Archives, collection Gaumont (Journal Gaumont), 1957.

4 Author's field notes, July 2018.

(Ladwig 2012, 137). Although the mother and son described above participated in the ancestor worship ceremony for different reasons – she out of filial piety and a desire to make merit for her parents, he out of good-natured appreciation for his mother – in both cases, the event displayed the importance they attached to gratitude, care and filial piety for parents and allowed them to enact their obligations to support their parents. It also shows us that the dynamic ethical values produced by ritual performances add up to something that can be examined ethnographically and historically by scholars. In other words, even though ritual ethics are slippery, by paying attention to participants' multi-layered motivations, reactions, attitudes, emotions, and actions, we can learn something about what people value and how those moral values shape their decisions and behavior.

A few examples of common rituals show how these rituals produce and communicate ethical values concerning care for self and others. For Cambodian Buddhists, *sraoc dẏk* ("sprinkling water") is a simple protective ritual that might be initiated by a layperson who has lost her job or is feeling out of sorts or by her concerned family members who are worried about her change in fortune or mood. She heads to the local monastery to seek out her favorite monk-spiritual teacher who performs a ceremony in which he chants protective blessings and showers her with lustral water filled with flower blossoms. The performance of the ceremony, participants explain, helps them feel more assured, positive and hopeful, and better able to manage whatever challenges they are facing.

A more elaborate contemporary ceremony of care for "extending the life" of elders is *puṇy caṃroen preaḥ janm*. This life extension ceremony is organized on behalf of older people to help them enter into the last phase of life, typically around the time of their sixtieth birthday, to ensure their good health, long life and prosperity. In different local contexts and even among different families in the same area, the ceremony can vary in form, though like many related protective rituals, it involves presenting gifts and offerings both to Buddhist monks and spirits, chanting of *paritta* [protective prayers] by monks, pouring or sprinkling of lustral water and tying protective threads around participants' heads or wrists – followed by a large communal meal for the participants and guests after the monks' noon meal is over. There are wide variations in the performance of this ritual, which demonstrates that not every detail of a ritual needs to be enacted in exactly the same way in order to communicate ethical values. At the same time, it enacts and communicates an ethic of care for and respect toward elders that is recognizable across performances.

The record of a 1953 life extension ritual, held for the benefit of a provincial sangha dignitary named Venerable Īv-Duat on the occasion of his sixty-first birthday, explains his students' motivations for organizing the ceremony. Besides his many accomplishments as a monk – such as sponsoring religious building and renovation projects, composing and commissioning scriptural manuscripts, writing books on the Dhamma, and starting schools – he always showed loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and sincerity toward his monastic students. He taught and guided them in moral behavior and was never harsh in his treatment of them, not even with so much as a cross glance. He was someone who helped the populace with their troubles with no thought of gain for himself, a "fountainhead" of moral inspiration and a "force for creating unity (*sāmaggī)* and cohesion" among them.[5] The ceremony provided the students with an opportunity to show gratitude and care to Īv-Duat, while also holding up the values they felt he embodied.

5 National Archives of Cambodia, Phnom Penh: *Puṇy Caṃroen Preaḥ Janm* [Life extension ceremony], Box 508.

Multi-year ethnographic studies of Buddhist rituals by Anthony Irwin and Patrice Ladwig, scholars of Southeast Asian religion, argue that one of the central values created by different types of collective rituals is care for the community, achieved through the creation of a sense of cohesion or "unity," what the northern Thais studied by Irwin refer to as *samakkhi* or what Ladwig refers to as "communal karma" or "socio-karma" (Irwin 2018, 222–260; Ladwig 2012, 130). In his study of a collective Lao ritual called *boun khau padab din*, an annual festival in which the living extend care to the hungry ghosts of the dead, Ladwig observed the ways in which the ritual created a sense of "communal karma" among the temple community's participants. Gathering at night outside of the temple, community members left specially prepared packets of food on the ground and lit candles for the dead, speaking to them with declarations such as "My family and relatives. Come to take the gifts and eat. May you be reborn in better circumstances and in prosperous conditions because of these gifts" (Ladwig 2012, 23). While care for the dead (and with it, associated values like social integration, compassion, protection, and fertility) is the primary stated aim of the ritual, Ladwig concludes that care for the deceased and spirits "is also a form of care of the community" (Ladwig 2012, 136).

Ethics in Objects and Art

Material objects and art have served significant roles as sites for ethical production and reflection in the Theravāda world. Buddhist material objects are sometimes not simply ethical media meant for symbolic, ritual or protective use, but, as Donald Swearer (1976, 1998), John Strong (2004), and Anthony Irwin (2018) have shown, they can exercise moral agency in and of themselves. Relics of the Buddha can travel to places that will benefit from their presence, stūpas and other sacred sites can summon people to them to perform religious offerings, images can exert an influence on those around them. If we are to take seriously the project of re-enchanting religion, Irwin argues, we also have to consider how ethics is enchanted. Numinous forces in the landscape, caves and religious ruins in northern Thailand seek to make people more reverent, respectful, unified, and pious (Irwin 2018, 45, 308–312).

Since scholars of religion and ethics have tended to associate ethical expression with *written* expression, this leaves to the side the production of ethics by people who are not literate or not highly literate but who nonetheless consider themselves to be good, moral people and who are capable of sophisticated moral expression. In Theravādin Southeast Asia where literacy was taught primarily in monasteries prior to the early twentieth century, boys could gain basic literacy during stints as novices or monks, but girls' access to skills in literacy and writing was more limited since women's ordination lineages no longer existed. Women, like men, participated in religious life as laypeople, hearing sermons, attending and sponsoring religious ceremonies and festivals, making merit, meditating, and consulting with monk-teachers about auspicious events in their lives such as marriage. Even if they were not highly literate, women were often the creators of textiles used in rituals, including such materials as funeral flags used to guide the spirits of the dead to rebirth, *sarong* fabric for wearing to festivals and funerals, and ceremonial cloths for display in the temple (Hall 2015, 358–362; Green and Chakrabongse 2008, 10–28).

Until the mid-twentieth century, ceremonial weavings known as *pidan*, used on occasions such as funerals, were made by Cambodian weavers for the explicit purpose of conveying moral values. The silk textiles were elaborately woven with intricate pre-determined pictorial motifs using a multi-step *ikat* dying technique. A *pidan* might for instance feature the scene from the *Vessantara Jātaka* in which

Vessantara is forced into exile in the forest. He is accompanied by his beloved wife Madī and their two children who choose to leave their comfortable palace life to follow him to the forest. Motifs of this brave act might alternate with the wrenching scene of Vessantara giving away his children as slaves to the cruel brahmin Jūjaka. The repetition of these two motifs on the ceremonial textile, conveyed the weaver's understanding of ethical values such as love, loyalty and sacrifice, as well as the profundity of the path to enlightenment (Green and Chakrabongse 2008, 28–32).

Textiles involving this level of artistic complexity to produce were often commercial commodities as well as devotional objects. Some of the most elaborate pictorial *pidan* that have been preserved were probably commissioned by courtiers for special royal occasions or by colonial French officials for display in world expositions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Green and Chakrabongse 2008, 140–145). Nineteenth- and twentieth-century weaving motifs were typically transmitted from mother to daughter, a tradition that was severely disrupted by the wars, bombing, dislocations, and political violence of the late twentieth century in Cambodia. In the 1990s and early 2000s, while it had become rare to see ceremonial *pidan* hanging in a monastery, with support from NGOs devoted to reviving "traditional arts" in Cambodia, weavers began to re-introduce *pidan* with Vessantara motifs for the tourist market (Green and Chakrabongse 2008, 145). On one occasion, when I asked a market vendor about the motifs in a *pidan* she was selling, she settled herself onto a low plastic stool in her stall to recap the entire *Vessantara Jātaka*, explaining the love between Vessantara's family members and conveying the joyfulness at the end of the story, when parents and children were finally reunited. This incident is noteworthy for showing us that even in highly commodified forms, ethical media can still serve as sites for communicating ethical ideas. For scholars of ethics, this incident also forces us to consider what happens once ethical media are removed from cultural and historical contexts in which many people are able to recognize, understand, and reflect on the ethical values and ideas they convey. Are the ethics conveyed in visual and material media as transportable as some of the objects themselves? In other words, once the tourist has taken her *pidan* home and hung it in her dining room, is the textile still doing ethical work?

There are different ways to approach this question. Given the moral and spiritual potency of Buddhist objects, as in the case of manuscripts discussed above, one answer is that from a Theravāda Buddhist perspective, simply being in the presence of the *Vessantara* imaginary depicted in the *pidan* affects viewers in morally beneficial ways. Furthermore, the weaver's own moral insights and experience is embedded in the object she wove; her own knowledge and interpretation of Buddhist imagery is part of what gives it value, even in the marketplace. A third answer, following anthropologist of visual ethics Kenneth George, is that the "material and affective dimensions" or qualities embedded in an object (such as a textile) that make it morally potent cannot be separated from it, no matter where it is displayed (2016, 57). Among the material qualities of silk fabric are its light-weight portability and flexibility. Far from being tied to a specific place (like a rock pillar or massive image), it can be easily moved, adapted, carried, or stored away. Another intrinsic quality might be described as its "intentionality"; it necessarily carries with it the meticulous foresight and consciousness required to plan and weave an *ikat*-style *pidan* in the first place. All of its scenes and patterns must be carefully pre-determined and dyed accordingly. The complexity of the design is consciously intended to inspire admiration and require further inspection; a *pidan* is meant to be a visual feat and as such cannot be comprehended with a glance. The fact that an object brings together specific material qualities such as lightness and flexibility, and that affective qualities such as admiration and appreciation of its complexity "stick" or adhere to it, George argues (drawing on work on materiality by Web Keane and Sara Ahmed), makes visual objects more than mere vehicles

for "conveying ethical values supplied by this or that religion or this or that ideology in visual form." Rather, George sees the material and visual as *sites* for everyday "ethical and affective encounters, aspiration, possibilities, and dissent" (2016, 64). The *pidan,* like the story of Vessantara itself, does not convey a single or straightforward ethic but it supplies viewers with a means of encountering and formulating perspectives on homelessness, generosity, filial piety, kingship, and other morally charged ideas. Finally, following from George's argument, then, another response to our question about the transportability of ethical values communicated in ethical media is that transplanting an ethical medium such as a *pidan* to a new context in which its viewers are not cognizant of the efficacious thought worlds in which it was produced, might well change the way it is experienced and understood, the ideas it communicates and the very reasons it is valued. Whether or not it remained an "ethical medium" would depend on the uses that its new viewers ascribed to it.

The contemporary art scene in Southeast Asia provides one further arena in which to consider these questions. As fewer people take up formal monastic life in Southeast Asia, contemporary multi-media art has become an increasingly important site for moral reflection. Contemporary art is produced for many reasons of course, including self-support and profit, creative and aesthetic self-expression, preservation of culture, social critique and resistance to political oppression, witness to injustice or trauma, and processing social change and new forms of expression. As a site for the production of ethical discourse, contemporary art poses further complications for our discussion in the sense that few contemporary artists identify themselves solely or primarily (if at all) as "Buddhist artists." Nor do they produce art as devotional and soteriological labor, as anonymous scribes and craftsmen might have done in the past.

One of the most globally prominent artists to emerge from the Theravāda world in the recent decades, Thai artist Montien Boonma (1953–2000) often drew on decidedly Buddhist themes and imagery such as monks' alms bowls in *Alm* (1992), temple bells in *Lotus Sounds* (1992), and meditative breath in Nature's Breath: *Aryokhayasala* (1995). These installations were not intended to speak only or primarily to Buddhists or to act explicitly as "Buddhist art," but rather to serve as part of Boonma's exploration of "the meaning of life and hope."[6] Some of Boonma's installations consciously used Buddhist iconography as sites for producing the kind of ethical interactions and affects that George describes in his discussion of visual ethics. In works such as *Sala of Mind* (1995), *House of Hope* (1996–1997), and *Melting Void: Molds for the Mind* (1998), Boonma created empty spaces into which viewers could move "inside" and "take refuge," occupying and looking out from the head of a buddha image, a temple or a stūpa in order to see the world differently and cultivate feelings of calm, peace, healing, hope, and compassion (Bond 2004; Monthīan et al., 2003).[7]

The ambiguity of artists' relationships to Buddhist identity is made visible in The Buddhist Bug, a playful series of works by Anida Yoeu Ali, begun in 2009 in Chicago, in which the bug – inhabited by Ali who is herself a Cambodian-American from a minority ethnic Cham Muslim background – roams around the American and Cambodian countryside in an elongated saffron-colored segmented tube capable of stretching to 40 meters, simultaneously invoking the robes of Theravādin monks and *hijab*, a head cov-

6 Atelier Montien Boonma, Bangkok: Interview with the artist's son Bank Boonma, August 5, 2018.

7 Atelier Montien Boonma, Bangkok: From the exhibition catalogue for *Those Dying Wishing to Stay, Those Living Preparing to Leave* at the 51st International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia 2005, Sutee and Luckanna Kunavichayanont, "The Art of Healing the Living and Relieving Souls of the Dead," pp. 49–50, Atelier Montien Boonma (Bangkok), courtesy of Bank Boonma.

ering worn by many Muslim women in Southeast Asia – inviting interaction from interlocutors (Ali, 2010, 2014, 2015). The work, Ali explained, uses religious aesthetics and iconography to bring people into conversation about religion, tolerance, and intolerance, and the very "in-between" identities that Ali herself inhabits as a transnational, diasporic Cambodian-American and Cambodian-Muslim. The bug seeks to interact with "ordinary people" and to occupy "ordinary moments," wrapping itself around bridges, stairways, tables, and altars. In a particularly striking image of the creature in Morning Prayers (The Buddhist Bug Series, Digital C Print, 2014), the bug is statuesquely situated under the arched gate of a Cham mosque surrounded by amused and curious young children and a cautious-looking teen, vividly capturing the ambiguity and poignancy of Ali's multiple hybrid identities and her use of art as a means to invite dialogue about issues that are both difficult and ordinary, like race, religious identity, belonging, and displacement. Reactions to the bug vary widely, Ali explained in a 2015 interview, from accusations of inappropriateness to hugs and embraces, but most viewers have reacted to it with humor, an affect that the work tries consciously to cultivate (O'Hara 2015, 5:00–6:01).

The impetus to make art that is ethically expressive and productive is not exclusive to global art figures like Boonma and Ali. At the local level, making art serve as a site for the production of "ordinary" ethics is represented in the work of the self-taught Cambodian hipster artist Phok "Bee" Sopheap, whose paintings have focused on themes like love and relationship (Glasser 2013, 2014; Vachon and Naren 2014; Nelson 2014). At one of his earliest exhibits, he showed me entangled figures in shades of red, with conjoined noses, hair, limbs, and sarongs. The entwined figures were all looking in different directions, which was intentional, he told me; they had their own individual lives, destinies and directions. But they were also interconnected and inseparable, depicting the nature of "family." Another painting showed four figures who were obviously a family: two parents cradling their two tiny children, their genuine mutual affection evident through the manner in which they were touching. For me, the painting recalled Vessantara and Maddi and their children. No, said Bee. His imagery and ideas sometimes came from Buddhist (and Christian and Muslim) stories as well as Hollywood movies like "The Transformers" – but this was just an ordinary family. This was a painting about love, not religion.[8] My perspective as a scholar of Buddhism shaped my reading of the painting, causing me to assemble images and ideas culled from my own Buddhist imaginary. But as a painter in provincial Battambang trying to adopt an aesthetic language he understood to be global and human, Bee's own artistic and moral repertoire was not particularly concerned with interpreting Buddhism, though some of his images draw on Buddhist deities and other characters from Buddhist stories such as at the earth goddess Neang Thorani from the Buddha's biography and Neang Maccha from the Khmer *Rāmayāna*, who along with the Statue of Liberty and the Sphinx make up the painted figures in The Wonderful Ladies with Wonderful Things (2012).

There are an infinite number of ethical media since any kind of object or practice can be invested with ethical relevance and thus serve as a site for moral reflection and analysis. The history of Buddhist ethical media in Cambodia, Thailand, and elsewhere in the Theravāda world shows us clearly that there is no single Buddhist mode of interpreting ethics, and that the most resonant medium for ethical reflection depends on the materials, technologies of production, and aesthetic and moral repertoires available to individual producers and disseminators of ethics in a given historical context, the interactions this medium engenders, and the values, aspirations, and ideas that Buddhist individuals and communities use it to create.

8 Author's interview with Phok Sopheap, Make Maek Gallery, Battambang, July 10, 2012.

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CHAPTER 99

Modes of Interpretation (Indian Religions)

Shyam Ranganathan

Introduction

This entry contrasts two modes of explanation: *interpretation* (explanation by way of belief or truth) and *explication* (explanation by way of deductive inference, entailment or validity, in which case a conclusion of an argument is true if the premises are true). Much literature in the Analytic and Continental traditions of Western philosophy – through authors such as W. V. O Quine (1960, 59), Donald Davidson (2001, 101, 1986, 316), Martin Heidegger (2010), Hans George Gadamer (1990, 1996) – acclaims the importance of what I have called interpretation – often employing the term itself (Quine, Davidson) or an analogue such as "hermeneutics" (Gadamer) or "Auslegung" (Heidegger) that is readily paraphrased or translated as "interpretation." It continues in the widely influential idea that reflection is about arriving at an equilibrium of considered judgments (Rawls 1971, 18). Following these leading figures of twentieth-century Western philosophy, I mean to use the term "interpretation" to cover *any* explanation reducible to what the explainer takes to be true; any explanation based on the explainer's beliefs, and which ultimately the explainer has to believe. What I call "explication," is just one alternative. Good explanations for the explicator are not entailed by their beliefs and they do not have to believe them. For instance, the explicator can render explicit the reasons of the interpreter, but for the explicator these reasons are false, and the theory is not worth believing. The interpreter in contrast is forced to understand by way of what they take to be true, and hence they will attempt to assimilate explication as some variant form of interpretation that they endorse.

Interpretation has deep connections to the standard account of thought in the Western tradition, which is traceable back to the ancient Greek idea of *logos*, which unifies thought, belief (account or story) and language in one idea. At base it is what we could call the *linguistic account of thought* – accordingly, thought is the linguistic meaning of what we say. The identification of thought and belief is not arbitrary: if thought is the same as linguistic meaning, then to deny a thought is to deny the meaning of what one says, which is absurd. And hence, to avoid this absurdity, one must believe every thought one entertains: *logos*. Or put another way, to treat the meaning of what one says as the content of one's thought is to adopt the cultural vantage of one's language, which is to say its beliefs, or perspective, as a matter of course in thinking. If thought and belief amount to the same thing, then every explanation by way of thought is an explanation by way of belief: interpretation. In the Chinese tradition, in the *Analects*

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

(XIII.iii.4–7) Confucius defends or assumes a linguistic account of thought while Taoists, such as Lao Tzu (in the *Tao Te Ching*), pour scorn on it. In the Indian tradition, no one took it seriously. Yet it is the default account of thought in the Western tradition. The main ground for challenging interpretation is logical. But as it is a theory of understanding that licenses the use of beliefs and tradition, given its Western heritage, one is also thereby taking stock of and criticizing a tradition traceable back to the ancient Greek idea of *logos*, which I call the West, which is not a geographic or ethnic notion, but a political force.

In part due to research in non-Western approaches to thought (such as Patañjali's Yoga) that have been applied to the challenge of cross-cultural moral understanding, inquiry into procedural questions of translation and abstract philosophical questions of propositional content (Ranganathan 2017, Ch. 4, 2018, Ch. 5), an alternative has been recently identified (Ranganathan 2017, Ch. 1, 2018, Ch. 2) – though as a procedure it is the bedrock of philosophical practice going back to Socrates. This is what we might call *explication*: explanation by way of validity, the property of logical entailment such that if the premises of an argument are true, the conclusion has to be true. To explicate is to render *explicit* reasons that logically entail (via validity) controversial conclusions (often by someone), and to further discern via entailment the concept at the heart of a debate as what competing explicated theories converge on as they disagree. Whereas interpretation routes explanation through our own beliefs as explainers, explication does not: at no point do we have to appeal to what we take to be true or believe in order to explicate. More importantly, logical validity (and all forms of reason) involves drawing a distinction between what one takes to be true, and the logical support of reasons for conclusions. To explicate is to hence forswear interpretation and to interpret is to render oneself incapable of explicating.

Interpretation and explication are incompatible. Even before we understand the logical reason for their incompatibility, we may observe their practical differences:

- Explication leads us to identify the common concept at the heart of a philosophical debate (such as a debate about ethics or dharma) as what competing theories (of ethics or dharma) in a debate converge on while they disagree (THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD). It is parsimonious.
- Interpretation proliferates concepts for terms (such as "ethics" or "dharma") in proportion to the divergence of the beliefs of the interpreter and what is being interpreted. It is unparsimonious.
- Explication treats differences across perspectives and traditions as a matter of theoretical disagreements over common concepts, defined as the topics of disagreement. (In disagreements over ethics or dharma, this is THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD.)
- Interpretation identifies concepts as the proprietary constituents of perspectives, and has to help itself to the idea of competing "conceptual schemes" to explain differences across traditions. (For interpreters whatever the concept of ETHICS it is the proprietary part of their outlook, and alien traditions are better understood as operating with different concepts.)
- Explication can account for radical disagreement across perspectives.
- Interpretation treats disagreement across perspectives as a failure of explanation.

The main logical difference between the two approaches is their take on truth:

- Explication rejects that truth is determinative of rational explanation.
- Interpretation affirms that truth is determinative of rational explanation.

The decision of which procedure to choose is made easy by the observation that interpretation violates the basic constraint of all forms of reason by confusing what one takes to be true with what is reasonable.

For the study of religion and ethics, and the crossover of religious ethics, the distinction between interpretation and explication is of the first importance. If we interpret via the *W*est, normative contributions *from* the European tradition will be acclaimed as rational and philosophical (as they can be derived from European beliefs) or relegated to its prehistory (Homer for instance) while everything originally non-Western (such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, etc.) will seem opaque and traditional, and mystical in proportion to their divergence from the European – they will not be counted as straightforward contributions to moral philosophy but identified as demarcating the outer boundaries of secular or rational philosophy – called "religion." Indeed, Western interpretation gives rise to what we might call Secularism_2, where the secular is the non-religious and the religious is anything originally non-Western.

Explication in contrast focuses on theoretical disagreement and hence provides no grounds for distinguishing the secular from the religious. Indeed, the entire process of investigation via explication is what we might call Secularism_1 – undogmatic, unconstrained philosophical disagreement. Explicated, we not only observe that most "religions" are identifiable with a normative theory about the *right* procedure or the *good* outcome, Hinduism is shown to be continuous with the basic disagreements of moral theory (Ranganathan 2018, Ch. 3).

In the next section background distinctions necessary to make sense of the debate will be reviewed. In the third section differential outcomes of the two models in application will be examined. In the fourth section some objections will be considered. In the fifth section will be the conclusion.

Background Concepts and the Distinction

To appreciate the distinction between interpretation and explication, on logical grounds, some analytical distinctions are useful. The first is the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. An object is something that can be perceived from differing perspectives: how it looks may differ depending on one's perspective but the thing in question (say a chair) is the explanation for the asymmetry of one's impressions relative to one's vantage. Objects are hence things we can disagree about from differing vantages. Our descriptions of the thing in question can be inconsistent, and we isolate the object as the explanation for this disparity. The subjective in contrast is what can be appreciated from one perspective only and it cannot be assessed from competing perspectives; the room for disagreement of the sort we find in the case of objects is curtailed. A mirror is a useful model for the distinction, for while a mirror is objective (it plays a central role in accounting for how it appears differently to us given the vantage we take relative to it), the reflections we see in a mirror are better explained by our perspective and vantage. Hence, the mirror is objective, and the reflections we experience relative to the mirror are subjective.

Another important distinction that is required to make sense of the distinction between interpretation and explication is the distinction between a proposition (thought, which I shall symbolize as "*p*") and a belief about such a proposition. A belief (in the first instance) is a propositional attitude like fear, or

doubt: it takes a proposition as its object. But in the case of a belief, the attitude is one of assent to a proposition. Hence, the description of the belief *x believes p* is true if *x* believes *p*. Remarkably, if we understand that *x* believes *p*, we thereby agree with a description of the belief. Yet, *p* in this case could be false. For instance, I might believe *p* (it is raining outside) and the description of the belief is true if I believe it, but it might be false that *p* (it is raining outside). We may even disagree that *p* (it is raining outside), but agree that *x* believes *p* if *x* believes it. So while beliefs take on propositions as their objects, the truth of a belief and its embedded proposition are independent. Nevertheless in ordinary contexts, this seems to give rise to what Ludwig Wittgenstein (*Remarks on the Foundations of Psychology* §472) called "Moore's Paradox": there is something strange about saying "It is raining outside, but I do not believe it" (Moore 1944, 204). While this seems to present problems for understanding why someone would apparently have a belief at variant with the truth of the embedded proposition, this is not a contradiction as beliefs and thoughts are logically distinct.

The final distinction that we require in order to understand the difference between interpretation and explication is the distinction between validity, and invalidity. Validity is the essential property of good deductive inferences: if the premises (reasons) are true, the conclusion has to be true. For an argument to be valid is not the same as having true premises and a true conclusion. A valid argument may have false premises and a false conclusion. And an invalid argument may be comprised of true premises and a true conclusion. Hence,

- Truth is neither necessary nor sufficient for validity.

In the case of valid arguments with true premises, we call such arguments *sound*. Determining the soundness of an argument is a two-step process: we have to first determine whether the argument is valid, and this involves ignoring the question of the truth or falsity of the premises for validity is not determined by truth or falsity. We rather have to test the argument to see whether the conclusion would have to be true if the premises were true. If an argument clears this hurdle, we can determine whether the premises are true, and if they are the argument is sound.

Validity as something that comes apart from truth or falsity is objective: we can converge on the validity of an argument from different perspectives as we converge on a chair, for instance, while disagreeing about our description of the argument as we disagree about our description of a chair from differing perspectives. From some perspectives, the argument may appear sound, while from many others it may appear valid only, but we may further disagree about the truth or falsity of its premises or conclusion. Invalid reasoning, which attempts to promote arguments on the basis of the truth of premises, violates validity, but thereby also soundness.

Validity is a characteristic of deductive logic. But there are other forms of reasoning: induction and abduction. Interpretation sympathizers may wish to assimilate or explain interpretation by way of one of these alternatives. This is problematic.

An inductive argument is an argument whose premises support a conclusion, probabilistically. Inductive arguments can be strong but yet fail to be valid. Yet a distinction can be drawn between strong inductive arguments and the cogent arguments, which corresponds to the distinction between validity and soundness: strong inductive arguments are those whose conclusion are strongly supported by the evidence, but the premises in this case need not be true or credible – the cogent arguments in contrast are the strong arguments with true or credible premises. Abduction, or inference to

the best explanation, attempts to identify one explanation as superlative relative to the alternatives. But the best explanation need not be the true one, and in the end we may have to settle for identifying the best of candidate explanations relative to the known possibilities that in the fullness of inquiry, is shown to be mistaken. Both kinds of reasoning processes are used in the empirical sciences, and here too as in the case of validity, we see that:

- Truth is neither necessary nor sufficient for reason.

The objectivity of reason (that we can comprehend it and yet disagree about it) is predicated on a distinction between the truth of the premises and the credibility of the explanation. From these considerations, we can draw a generalization about reason:

- Efforts to make truth the primary marker of reason fail and moreover violate the objectivity of reason.

This violates the highest standard of reason – validity – but as noted, abduction and induction also respect this standard as neither *form* of reason expects that the merits of reason come down to truth. Put another way, neither *form* of reasoning entails that we should disregard validity as a standard of reason. But interpretation in contrast does, for if we have to restrict ourselves only to explanations that rely on what we take to be true (or is true), we disregard validity as a basic standard of reason. So on further consideration we can draw a distinction between forms of reason that fail to live up to the standard of inference (including abduction and induction) and a *form* of explanation that simply disregards the standards of reason: interpretation.

It may seem that interpretation is like abduction, for when we interpret we rely on beliefs, and it may turn out that an embedded proposition in a belief is false in the way that the best explanation on balance might turn out to be false, though we believe it to be the best. So, the problem with this analogy is that believing an explanation to be the best is not the same as believing it to be true. And, moreover, a belief is a propositional attitude that a proposition is true.

The Distinction

To explicate a perspective *P* – augustly called a "philosophy" – about topic *t*, is to *E*:

- Discern the reasons of *P* that constitute *P*, which explain *P*'s use of "*t*" and to arrive at a systematization of *P*'s reasons that explains the uses of "*t*." The systematization of *P*'s reasons that entails *P*'s t-claims is *P*'s theory of *t*. The reasons of *P* may be what *P* explicitly says, or what is entailed by *P*.

This is the first step. This is when we look to a perspective to provide the reasons that entail its use of a controversial term, like "dharma" or "morality." Its reasons are its theory of dharma or morality. Then there is the second step:

- Compare theories of *t*: what they converge on while they disagree is the concept *τ*.

This comparative step also assumes validity in so far as the concept that constitutes the disagreement will be entailed by an aggregate of competing theories. We could call this second step the *consilience of perspectives*. In short,

- Explication is the explanation of a perspective in terms of its entailed theories that entail the perspective's controversial claims.

We can see Socrates engaging in this activity in Plato's dialogues, especially the first step of explication, where he attempts to understand the theory of his interlocutor that would explain the kinds of claims the interlocutor makes with a controversial concept (whether *JUSTICE* or *KNOWLEDGE*).

Then there is interpretation. To interpret some package *P* is for the interpreting subject S to I:

- Use S' s reasons (or if you prefer, "premises," "assumptions," "beliefs," "truths," and even "tradition") r_S in the explanation of *P*.

In short,

- Interpretation is the explanation in terms of the beliefs of the interpreter.

The failure to identify the distinction between interpretation and explication is all the more remarkable as interpretation has two problems, which explication does not:

- it is subjective
- it violates validity (and all reason for that matter)

Interpretation is subjective for interpretations depend on the beliefs of the interpreter: change these beliefs and one changes the interpretation. But it is also irrational for interpretation is committed to violating the basic standard of reason that truth is neither necessary nor sufficient for reason, for it treats what one takes to be true as the basis of explanation. In effect, it consists in confusing propositions (which we can disagree about) with beliefs (which we cannot disagree about).

Interpretation and Explication in Action

If a Kantian who endorses Deontology (the idea that rights and duties are goods of moral theory to be justified by procedural considerations), were to interpret a Utilitarian (someone who thinks that agent neutral ethical ends, like harm reduction or the maximization of happiness, should justify moral action), the Kantian could only explain Utilitarian uses of "ethics" as meaning what the Kantian takes to be ethical when the Utilitarian uses coincide with the Kantian perspective. In every other case, the Kantian would be inclined to correlate Utilitarian uses of "ethical" with what the Kantian takes to be true in that case. Hence, when the Utilitarian uses "ethical" for "happiness" the Kantian would interpret this to mean "happiness" for this is what the Kantian takes to be true in this case. When the Utilitarian uses "ethical" to mean "harm reduction," the Kantian would similarly interpret it as meaning "harm reduction" for this is what the Kantian takes to be true in this case. In this way, meanings of "ethical" in the Utilitarian outlook are multiplied relative to the Kantian scheme. Similarly, if the Utilitarian were to repay the favor, the Utilitarian could only interpret Kantian uses of "ethical" as meaning ethical when the Kantian uses the term in a manner consonant with the Utilitarian outlook. In every other case, the Utilitarian would interpret the Kantian as using "ethical" to say whatever the Utilitarian takes to be true in the same cases. In effect, their interpretations of each other would not converge (for each uses different definitions of "ethical" as the basis of their interpretations), the meanings they attribute to "ethical" in each other's lexicon would be many, and they would have very different accounts of what the topic of contention is: each would use their own theory or outlook to define the topic. Further, if a Hegelian (following the *Philosophy of Right*) were to enter the picture, who draws a distinction between ethics (socially

encoded values) and morality (normative principles that arise from reflection) then yet another very different approach would ensue: likely the Utilitarian would appear to say nothing about ethics or morality on the Hegelian account, and the Kantian would apparently have views on morality but not ethics as Kant's moral theory is about generating moral principles from reflection.

Explication in contrast asks us to look to a perspective that logically entails a theory about a term such as "ethical," "ethics," "moral," or "morality," that entails all the perspective's controversial claims about ethics or morality – this would be the perspective's theory of ethics or morality – and further asks us to identify the basic concept of a debate as what competing theories about a term ("ethics" or "moral" as the case may be) converge on as they disagree. In the case of ethics or morality, if we apply this procedure, we discover that the basic concept of disagreement is about *right* procedure or *good* outcomes: *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*. In this case of explication, the Kantian and the Utilitarian would be able to agree about the proper explication of each other's theory of ethics, and moreover what the basic topic of disagreement is. Whereas interpretation multiplies meanings of alien term usage in proportion to its divergence from the interpreter, explication consolidates such usage, and accounts for it in terms of the common concept of contention, which in ethics is *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*. The Hegelian too would be understood as having two contrary descriptive views on *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*: one the Hegelian calls "ethics," the other "morality" – and this is something that all would be able to converge on as they disagreed about theories about *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD* variously articulated with terms such as "ethics" or "morality." From the comparison of the two methods, it is clear that explication is the basic method of philosophical research for the following reason: philosophy is a discipline and disciplines allow us to disagree about various theoretical matters and explication allows us to not only understand each other's theories, but also disagree. Interpretation in contrast does not allow for understanding of the alien or disagreement as the interpreter uses their own outlook as the measure of all.

If we were to interpret the Indian tradition, from a conventional Eurocentric starting point, we would have to conclude that "dharma" is a term that has been used in a "bewildering variety of ways" (Larson 1972, 146) and that "*DHARMA* is a concept difficult to define because it disowns or transcends distinctions that seem essential to us" (Lingat 1973, 3). "It stands for nature, intrinsic [ontological] quality, civil and moral law, justice, virtue, merit, duty and morality" to name a few (Rangaswami Aiyangar 1952, 63). There is no exhaustive list of the various meanings of dharma, though it is widely acknowledged as having many irreconcilable meanings: what meanings "dharma" has depended upon the beliefs of the interpreter and what they are willing to say in the context that "dharma" is used by an Indian author. At this point it might seem helpful to acknowledge some thinker who especially embodies the interpretive approach to Indian thought. It is however sadly easier to acknowledge the critic of this approach (me) than an exemplar of the interpretive approach as it has been the default approach to the study of Indian thought in academia, and is to be found anywhere authors assume that a term such as "dharma" variously used across competing traditions has many meanings, disambiguated by what the explainer takes to be true about a range of substantive issues.

If "dharma" is the term that Indian philosophers used to articulate their theories of dharma and to disagree about *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*, interpretation would result in the conclusion that Indian thinkers were generally uninterested in moral theory and hence moral philosophy. This position, that Indian thinkers did not discuss what "we call moral philosophy," was clearly articulated by the imminent Indologist, Bimal Matilal (1989, 5). But he was merely articulating common consensus among Indologists that is a function of Eurocentric interpretation and hence was (and in some corners continues to be) the

standard view: that Indian thinkers did not discuss ethics or moral philosophy extensively. Indeed, the unparsimonious approach to the meaning of "dharma" and the idea that Indian thinkers were uninterested in ethics go hand in hand (for a recent review of the literature, please see Ranganathan 2017, 52–55).

Yet, if we were to explicate every Indian *darśana* (perspective) we would not use our own perspective on controversial philosophical terms as a frame for the study of Indian thought. We would rather look to each perspective to entail its own theory of "dharma" that further entails the perspective's controversial claims about dharma and what we would discover is that what these theories converge on as they disagree, is *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*. In short, we would come to *discover* that disagreements about dharma and disagreements about ethics or morality are disagreements about the same concept: *THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD*. This procedure can be applied to any body of literature. For instance, in explicating Chinese philosophy, we will discover correlatively that disagreements about the *tao* (the way) amount to disagreements about THE RIGHT OR THE GOOD.

By explicating traditions of philosophy, we would discover four basic ethical/moral/dharmic/tao theories:

- Virtue Ethics: The Good conditions or produces the Right.
- Consequentialism: The Good justifies the Right.
- Deontology: The Right justifies the Good.
- Bhakti/Yoga: The Right conditions or produces the Good.

On this way of dividing up the options, theism (which characterizes many familiar religions) is a version of Virtue Ethics: accordingly God is the paradigmatic virtuous agent, and right procedure and moral guidance follow from God's essential virtue. But many other religions that give pride of place to virtue (such as Jainism) find a home here (Soni 2017). Other prominent religions, such as Buddhism, explicable as a version of *Consequentialism*, also fall into this list (Goodman 2009). A notable Orthodox Hindu option, known for its defense of Vedic ritualism, is deontological according to the above reckoning, namely Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. Classical authors in this tradition argue that the gods are not real, and we do not require them to take dharma seriously.

Bhakti/Yoga

Bhakti/Yoga, a very influential Indian theory, which is often conflated with theism, is the opposite of theism, which is a version of Virtue Ethics. Bhakti identifies the procedural ideal of Unconservativism and Self-Governance as the Lord – it is Right not Good – and approximating the Lord in practice brings about the good, namely our own Lordliness. Yoga/Bhakti is importantly distinct: it does not define the Right thing to do in reference to the Good, as we find in the other three competing moral theories. The Right is defined by the procedural ideal of personhood: the Lord. One approximates the Lord (the Right) in one's own life by devotion to this intentional practice of personhood defined as the Lord: yoga. The good is merely the perfection of this practice. One can practice this devotion correctly without thereby being good at it and the goodness of the practice is irrelevant to its moral value as Right.

This position was formulated canonically in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra*, and later defended by the extremely influential Rāmānuja. Whereas this work begins by defining Yoga as a conquering of waves of external influence by taking responsibility for thinking, later in Book 2, we find the practice

re-explained in terms of three procedural ideals: *Īśvarapraṇidhāna* (approximating the Lord), *tapas* (the practice of creating friction, going against the grain and being unconservative) and *svādhyāya* (self-study, which in the case of Yoga amounts to self-governance as studying consists in controlling objects of inquiry). So not only is the ideal of the Lord analyzed into two procedural ideals (*tapas* and *svādhyāya*) by virtue of the procedure of approximating the Lord, but (I have noted elsewhere) the entire model corresponds to the iconographic depiction of Ādi Śeṣa (the cosmic serpent) floating over waves of external influence by virtue of devotion to the deities, Viṣnu (depicting himself as unconservatively transcending his own past choices as manifested presentations, or *aṃśas*) and Lakṣmī (depicting herself as someone who sits on herself and hence governs herself). The historical connection between the deity Vishnu and traditions of Bhakti/Yoga is hence analytical. Worth stressing additionally is the importance and role that *svādhyāya* (self-governance) plays in this account. According to Patañjali, the practice of self-governance reveals one's own chosen ideals (*iṣṭadevatā*) (YS II.44). This is to say that we are responsible for the ideals we set ourselves – including Yoga. Yoga and its ideals are hence not explainable by tradition, revelation, or faith, but by our own choice to set our own ideals as an exercise of our own Lordliness. But it also entails the historically liberal attitude that South Asians (and Hindus) have had to gods and philosophical freedom.

To be a person on this account is to be the kind of thing that has an interest in its own unconservativism and self-governance. The Earth and other animals are hence people on this account as they thrive given their own unconservativism (freedom not to be constrained by the past) and self-governance (freedom to move into a future suited to themselves). But understanding and practicing one's personhood is correlatively not a proprietary matter: it is by virtue of the abstraction of the Lord that people are what they are. And hence being devoted to the intentional practice of one's own personhood (yoga) involves an activist's approach to deflating harms of the external world to allow for a diversity of people sharing an interest in their own Lordliness.

Politically and ethically, Yoga/Bhakti in the *Yoga Sūtra* constitutes one of the earliest articulations of an inclusive politics of direct action that treats non-harm as the first political commitment: not merely as an negative action of avoiding harm, but also as a positive intervention in transforming social dynamics to make room for diversity (YS II.30–35). The theory was extremely influential on the thought of M. K. Gandhi who referred to Patañjali numerous times as originating the policy of nonviolent direct action (Puri 2015), and indirectly Martin Luther King. Modern environmental and animal rights movements of direct action with Bhakti like accounts of moral standing, that look back to Gandhi for support, can be traced back to the Bhakti/Yoga of the *Yoga Sūtra*.

Secularism

A political morality of Bhakti that encourages diversity and the importance of self-governance in setting one's own ideals may strike many as modern and Western. Ironically, this is not an approach to ethics that has any deep, historical roots in the *W*est, which since Plato through to Hegel has emphasized the communitarian importance of shared goals and ideals defining definite societies. The first theorist typically associated with this brand of liberalism that emphasizes intellectual diversity as a constituent of healthy and thriving societies is J. S. Mill who was a colonial administrator of India. While *On Liberty* is well known for its racist depiction of brown folks as incapable of benefiting from freedom (I.10), Mill elsewhere recommended that we look to India to inform our political theorizing (cf. Mill 1861, 573–579).

Mill's orientation is unsurprising when viewed as a Westernized, continuation of elements of Bhakti, and the Indian tradition.

Explicated, the Indian tradition is a continuous disagreement about dharma, and such an explication reveals nothing like religion. Indeed, religious identities in India such as "Hinduism" had to wait for British colonialism. To generate religious identity, one must either treat the European tradition going back to Plato as the content of reason, interpret, and identify positions that fall outside of one's interpretive Eurocentrism as religion, or one must identify a criterion that defines the religious in contradistinction to the secular, and employ this in understanding, which would also be an interpretation. So contrary to the usual expectations, secularism as a free and open philosophical disagreement (Secularism_1) is indigenously South Asian, and religious identity requires interpretation, itself a historically *W*estern mode of explanation. And, moreover, "Hinduism" a term coined by the British to identify all indigenous South Asian religion that is not Islam, is continuous with the disagreements of philosophy and hence we find within it the full range of basic ethical theories (for a tally, please see Ranganathan 2018, Ch. 3). Hinduism, explicated, is an example of Secularisim_1.

Typical discussions of secularism rely upon the notion of Secularism_2 where secularism is what is not religious, and the religious is what is not interpretable via Eurocentric doxography. One of the challenges of Secularism_2 is accounting for how secular freedom is possible without paradoxically assuming certain basic liberal values. John Rawls in his famous *Political Liberalism* argued that the basic values required for a liberal and secular society had to be internal to perspectives compatible with a secular environment, and this, in addition to observations about South Asia and the European development of Secularism_2, has led to the charge that secularism cannot claim to be neutral as it itself is substantive and culturally arbitrary (Roover 2015). A solution to this problem is to treat the values that we require for a secular society as those we converge on as we are free to disagree (as opposed to the values we must already be committed to) made possible by adopting an explicatory approach to understanding. And these values that we converge on as we are free to disagree are those of Yoga (Ranganathan 2018): a devotion to Lordliness (in the abstract) and the constitutive responsibility to set our own ideals in a world safe for others to do the same.

Objections

The standard objection that explication elicits from defenders of interpretation is that explication, and any attempt to engage in objective reasoning, is naïve, and an attempt to ignore the inescapable: that all understanding is some version of interpretation and hence is itself historically conditioned by the tradition of the interpreter. This is a line of argument defended by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his *Truth and Method*, which has been especially influential in (European) Indology. Gadamer's conclusions about the inescapability of the (inter) subjective element of interpretation, and that we are always interpreting against the backdrop of our own tradition, are produced after a survey of salient intellectual options in the Western tradition, such as Historicism (the notion that we can appreciate how prior moments in history produced opinions that were a function of their circumstances) or J. S. Mill's enlightenment optimism about the scientific objectivity of reason, that Mill reduced to the laws of psychology. These movements and figures tried to transcend the contingencies of their era, but were themselves functions

of their times lacking historical awareness. Gadamer writes, "the naïveté of so-called historicism consists in the fact that it does not undertake this reflection, and in trusting to the fact that its procedure is methodical, it forgets its own historicity" (Gadamer 1996, 299) – and indeed, this criticism seems to be generalizable to any alternative. When we are trying to understand a text or what someone is saying, on Gadamer's account, we are trying to understand "how what he is saying could be right" (Gadamer 1996, 292). More to the point, "A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting" (Gadamer 1996, 266–267). Certainly if understanding is this exercise of sympathy where we try to understand how something could be right, our own biases and prejudices would play an indispensable role in our narrative, and Gadamer would be right that "all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice" (Gadamer 1996, 270). The uptake in all of this is that "The prejudicial character of understanding means that, whenever we understand, we are involved in a dialogue that encompasses both our own self-understanding and our understanding of the matter at issue" (Malpas 2018).

The explicator's initial response is to point out that the very theory of interpretation – the attempt to understand how something could be right, which further entails that all understanding involves some prejudice – is itself an outcome of a historically and culturally contingent approach to understanding, and as I have noted, it is closely associated with the West's historical model of thought as linguistic meaning. Yet, the interpreter exempts the theory of interpretation from being considered a historical bias: it is rather presented as a universal theory of understanding and is hence used to judge ethics from alien traditions. For the explicator, this constitutes a *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory itself, for properly contextualized it would be rendered exactly how it is explicated: as a contingent approach to understanding given a model of thought that, moreover, only yields an account that is consistent with the beliefs of the interpreter. It is hence doubly contingent – historically and personally.

Second, explication does away with the key feature of interpretation,

- treating explanation as something entailed by the beliefs of the explainer.

In adopting this, interpreters render explanation radically contingent upon their own biases and tradition. In rejecting this model of explanation, explicators reject that understanding is necessarily a matter of self-understanding. When we explicate the thesis and reasons of the interpreter for instance, we are free to endorse it or reject it: it is not entailed by our commitment to explication or even the belief that explication is the appropriate method of understanding. (In contrast, when the interpreter attempts to understand explication they, by virtue of their method, attempt to understand explication as an entailment of their own theory, which confirms in their view the inescapability of interpretation.) The methodology of explication in using logic to focus on the reasons and conclusions of the explicated (as opposed to misusing logic to generate explanations of third parties based on our own convictions) is *prescriptively* universal (in the sense of abstract). For not only does it respect the basic principle of logic (that reason is not reducible to truth or what we believe but inferential support) but it also helps transcend our cultural context, by allowing us to render explicit third-party explicated positions as *logically independent* of the explicator's commitments. Hence the objectivity of the method requires no denial of the historical contingency of the explicator's beliefs.

The third point of departure of the explicator from interpretation as Gadamer explores it is that the interpreter is committed to treating the event of understanding as characterizable by the truth. As

Gadamer concludes, "In understanding we are drawn into an event of truth and arrive, as it were, too late, if we want to know what we are supposed to believe" (Gadamer 1996, 490). This characterization of understanding as truth confuses two different varieties of claims:

- *p* (e.g. "interpretation violates basic standards of reasons"), and
- *x believes p* (e.g. "you believe that interpretation violates basic standards of reasons")

The two claims are importantly different: *p* is true just in case *p*, and *x believes p* is true just in case *x believes p* – *p* may be false – or we may not know whether to believe *p* – and it may be true that *x believes p*. Distinguishing such claims is part of the basic practice of yoga, as the control (as opposed to the believing) of thought (YS I.2–3). Yet, by conflating these two varieties of claims, understanding *p* is about (someone) having some belief about *p*. This is in effect to engage in the fallacy of *begging the question*: it assumes (the inescapability of interpretation) what is to be proved (interpretation), made possible by equivocating two varieties of claims (also a fallacy). But this conflation is also to project on to critics who dissent from interpretation the charge that they too are engaging in interpretation. This is the fallacy of *tu quoque*. By departing from both formal and informal standards of reason, the interpreter is able to conflate the understanding of someone else's argument with their own self-understanding and maintain that the process of understanding is characterized by the truth as a disclosure of what is understood. On the flip side, this conditions a worry that any understanding we have about past figures and their perspectives is flawed, for it would seem that any account of what they might have been committed to in this past form of life, such as *p*, is reducible to *our* historically disconnected belief they were committed to *p* (a worry that depends upon the conflation of *p* and *x believes p*).The explicator's route engages in none of these errors (starting with the logic violating assumption that truth is the basis of explanation and ending with fallacies of *begging questions* and *tu quoque*). We may be entirely agnostic about what we explicate *because* we render explicit historical reasons that do not have to be endorsed to be understood. And as this process involves reason, which is independent of truth, understanding is not characterizable by truth. Moreover, having duly explicated interpretation, by our practice of yoga, we might also notice that it is unobjective and self-defeating for basic reasons of reason!

Future Directions

As noted by the editors of *The Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*, "the very terminology. . . of "religion" and "ethics" is Western." Does it follow that the conceptuality of ethics is Western? If we conflate linguistic meaning with conceptual content: yes. Then, we are down the path of interpretation. Alternative models of thought and their parts (concepts) are to be found in India, and no doubt elsewhere, that free us from having to understand concepts in terms of the cultural contingency of our language. In this entry, we have not explored these alternatives, but we have noted that the identification of moral theoretical disagreement across traditions does not depend upon the West's intellectual tradition. Rather, it relies on a methodology central to philosophy but paradoxically peripheral to the West: explication. At present, this insight, made possible by the interpretation-explication distinction, has led to rethinking about Indian religions as simply Indian moral philosophy, interpreted by the West. Future directions can and will, no doubt, extend this insight to religion as such.

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CHAPTER 100

Modes of Interpretation in African Religions – A Yoruba Axiological Perspective

John Ayotunde (Tunde) Isola Bewaji

Introduction

Yoruba civilization is one of the most ancient, advanced, and urbanized in the world. Because Yoruba society is trans-continental, though concentrated in Western Nigeria, it has radiated through various circumstances of dispersals and historical exigencies of forced and voluntary migrations to other parts of Western Africa, the Americas, and the Caribbean. It is well-nigh impossible to annotate a neatly homogenous value system to which this community subscribes. An awareness of this signals a cautionary caveat, that as much as even a small community of humans may display individual value variations, when it comes to large segments of humanity, ascribing a common value system or tradition to an even larger community becomes even more challenging. Regardless, it is still meaningful to speak of a common value system from which most critical issues are understood, meaning made, narratives created, and decisions effected.

Our interest in this discussion is to appreciate as modes of interpretation the linkages between an overarching Yoruba ontology and the value members of Yoruba society display toward their environment (natural, social, political, moral, cultural, and so on). We will use Yoruba ontology (metaphysics), epistemology, and axiology to evince Yoruba intellectual modes of interpretation of reality, creating what we call Yoruba ecosophy. We will show that the Yoruba value systems are eco-respecting, eco-friendly, and geared toward sustainable human habitation in a world in which humans constitute one small fraction of sentience. Our discussion will respond to the following questions: a) What are values? b) How are values derived? c) Are there Yoruba values? d) What is the environment? e) How are concepts of environment derived? f) What is the relationship between values and the environment? g) What is the relationship between Yoruba values and the environment? h) Do these axiological orientations have implications for a holistic approach to the construction of modes of interpretations for geo-sustainable human future?

Modes of Interpretation and the Question of Values

Modes of interpretation are closely connected to the question of values. Human beings are language-using, concept-developing, and communicating animals. However, other forms of life also engage in communicative and other purposive activities even though we are unable to understand their modes of

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

interpretations (Fagunwa 1950). Functioning to present the modes of interpretations are symbols, images, and stereotypes which are special aspects of languages developed by human beings in attempts to convey ideas and maintain comprehension, apprehension, and drive certain attitudes and modes of behavior that conform with certain expectations.

It is the same way with other language-using sentient beings. Our ignorance of their languages and the diversity of their uses does not excuse our underestimation, even denigration, of these languages. Among humans the choice of symbols and images that enter into the representations speak volumes about beliefs, epistemes, expectations, fears, hopes, prejudices, and values embraced by persons making the representation. Largely, getting behind the representations to distil the presuppositions or the modes of interpretation that give them meaning is not always easy. In many instances the origins of the ideas have been lost in the milieu of socio-genesis of the ideas. However, we can make retroactive explorations which may not get at the intention of the ideas, but which may help understand the consequences of the ideas for Africans especially and humanity generally.

The need to appreciate modes of interpretation from different cultural perspectives is necessary even in appreciating the relationships that exist within and among peoples of the same hue and color. Consider for example the ideas, images, and perceptions between peoples of different ethnicities living within the same country such as Nigeria. Symbols and images are projections that capture attributes that are derived, at times based on observation, but at other times based on abstractions with little or no understanding of what is represented. They fill the gaps in cognitions and raise themes of characterization that may or may not have relation to any truth or reality. This opens the insidious possibility of manipulating the gullibility of the masses with pernicious narratives.

Values

In virtue of human dispositions, values undergird all aspects of human existence. Values have evolved in various ways, consciously and otherwise, to authenticate the processes of being. Evolving values are also reflections of the modes of interpretation of reality. Every society evolves values based on deliberate and accidental events in the lives of members of the society. The critical component of Yoruba values can be understood in relation to beliefs about collectivities that constitute the foundation of socioeconomic, political, religious, and other ideas. This accounts for why even in a monarchical system of governance there is allowance for gender equality, respect for the disabled, young, pregnant, elderly, foreigners, and those challenged one way or the other. The modes of interpretation weave together spiritual, moral, and social ideas in the minds of members of society backing social responsibility. And those who seek to take advantage of weaknesses, either of the system, or of other humans or natural elements are speedily dealt with in order to restore the equilibrium (*Efunsetan Aniwura – Iyalode Ibadan* and *Agbalowo meeri, Baale Jontolo* are instances, while the destooling of the king of Owo (Olagbegi), and Akure (Deji) reinforce the unnaturalness of anti-social, amoral, and spiritually reprehensible behavior. What, then, are values?

The concept of "value," on the face of it, derives from human appreciation of worth, importance, or utility of some/thing, where "something" or "thing" could stand for a being, an idea, a material or resource, a location, and so on. To this end, "value" can be used to describe an ascription of intrinsic content not necessarily dealing with utility as such, but marking the interpretive ideas of objective integrity of things. In that case, value annotates the regard the item/thing/being deserves. To have value in these senses is to be important, to be of worth and to be useful. But that is not all: to have value also

means the principles, ideologies or standards by which one lives, relates to others, makes decisions or determines modes of existence.

From these ideas it would be clear that values suffuse all aspects of existence and moderate relationships between humans, animals, nature, and the un/mult/iverse. They become refined and reified over time, even projected to the supersensible to give it reverence and authority, thereby assisting in determining the modes of being which members of different societies exhibit in their spiritual and secular lives. This is often obscured by the fact that in many instances the values are not explicitly formulated. Humans may be too busy just living/surviving to have enough time to examine the metaphysical presuppositions that underlie the ways of being that make a people who they are.

Value determines conditions of being and non-being, determining relationships as well as goals and processes. Values determine how we see what we see, what actions are worthy and how these are to be pursued. This is where historical factors play important roles in the engineering of values in society. The engineered values are then regarded as cultures: they are enshrined in the stories, theories, technologies, arts, educational systems, religious practices, patterns of relations (economic, political, filial, relaxation, sexual orientations) for making peace, war, conflict management, and so on. They underwrite what society considers important to preserve, perpetuate by propagation, or jettison by rejection or destruction.

In a sense, what has happened to global humanity has been the capacity of segments of humanity to determine what would constitute values, not just for themselves, but for the rest of humanity. The fact of epistemicide and epistemic deficit in Africana societies have bred a generation of Africans who doubt whether their ancestors ever had any values or capacities for such abstract constructs. It has led to the *Black Skin, White Mask* or double consciousness that plagues African intellect and daily existence. The indignities that this has brought have been compounded by the double assault of poverty and ignorance of traditions to create the leverage for the destruction of indigenous knowledge systems in favor of pernicious imported fads and consumer items. While it may be difficult to recoup or excavate old values, traditions, and beliefs, there is nothing stopping us from at least recognizing what was, evaluating it, and determining whether there is still any place for them in our existential circumstances. The benefit will be the knowledge and even modified application of those values, ideas, and beliefs.

Sources of Yoruba Values

In order to understand Yoruba values, just like attempts seriously to understand American values, European values, Chinese values, or any other value system, one has to revisit the metaphysics/ontologies and epistemologies constructed by the people as explanations of reality, knowledge of reality, relationships, and so on. These are the grounding modes of interpretation that supersede even religion or politics. In terms of origins, there are two prevalent traditions of how the world came to be and how Yoruba people originated.

According to Stride and Ifeka (1971, 289),

> The traditional history of Oyo goes back to the founding of Ile-Ife, the primary dispersal centre of the Yoruba people. One tradition of origin is a mythical creation legend which intimates that the Yoruba were the original inhabitants of the Ife area. At the dawn of time, the world was a watery waste. On the orders of his father – the supreme god, Olorun – Oduduwa climbed down

> a chain from the sky. He brought with him a handful of earth, a cockerel and a palm nut. He scattered the earth upon the water and it formed land at Ile-Ife. The cockerel dug a hole in which Oduduwa planted the palm nut and up sprang a mighty tree with sixteen branches, each the ruling family of an early Yoruba state. To this day Oduduwa's chain is preserved among the sacred relics of the Yoruba.

There are various renditions of this story of creation. The constants are the agencies of Olodumare or Olorun, Orisha-nla or Oduduwa, a pigeon or cockerel, a palm nut, blending divinity with deity/god/humanity, "lower" animals and plants in the process of creation, thereby providing a representation of all that is – supra-terrestrial, terrestrial, humans, animals, and plants. The significance of the multi-agency collaboration in the creation (*ni igba Iwase*) of what there is will become evident when we examine the nature of values in Yoruba culture and how this determines relationships between supernatural beings, human beings, and all other things in nature.

According to Stride and Ifeka (1971, 290), Yoruba people also have another story, a migratory one, depicting their understanding that they originated from somewhere. They say,

> Another tradition indicates that the Yoruba people were produced by inter-marriage between a small band of invaders from the savanna and the indigenous inhabitants of the forest. The story is that Oduduwa was the son of Lamurudu, sometimes described as a ruler from the East, sometimes as a prince of Mecca. When Islam was introduced into his homeland, Oduduwa refused to forsake the religion of his ancestors and he and his supporters were expelled from their native land. After long wanderings, they settled among the forest people and founded the state of Ife.
>
> Oduduwa had seven descendants. Some traditions say they were his sons; others call them grandsons. These seven young men moved out to found the ruling families in seven new Yoruba states. These were named as Owu, Sabe, Popo, Benin, Ila, Ketu and Oyo.

Clearly, this myth of origin is rich in culture, civilization, humanity, and values. We find that all aspects of Yoruba existence, as individuals, in communities, within groups, relationally to the cosmos and even in the structuring of otherness, are governed by higher order rules.

We will return to a proper attenuation of the relationship between Yoruba conception of reality as the harbinger of a rich value system, which ensures the proper relationship to reality. For now, we will explore the other element of our discussion – the environment – before linking both to make our point that for sustainable preservation of the environment to ensue, there is the need to revisit and adapt indigenous traditions of Yoruba values.

The Environment

The common orthodoxy of Western education teaches that the "environment" is the totality of everything that is around us. In this conception, there is a distinction made between what is characterized by a false polarity of "living" and "non-living" beings. Strangely, this conception of environment only looks at the material aspect of the universe as elements in what humans are able to access for their gratification. Those that are classified as living beings are the only beings that "live" in their environment.

The reason for that is that they are in constant interaction with their environment consciously and unconsciously adapting to conditions of their environment. This remarkable bifurcation of beings into living and non-living enables one to privilege human beings and render in rank anthropomorphic terms the narrative of other existences in purely utilitarian and instrumental terms. The extent to which living beings are able to derive benefits from non-living beings is the extent to which the non-living are to be valued.

However, it is best to look at the holistic way in which the Yoruba creation narratives factor in all elements of reality to understand human relationships with each other, as well as with every being in the uni/multiverse, and the attendant values derivable from these ontologies and epistemologies. In Yoruba culture, the environment is *gbogbo oun ti o n be l'ajalaiye ati ajule orun*, which must be understood as the aggregate of surrounding beings, things, conditions, or influences. This includes the totality of the ecosphere with all the various natural resources, the air, the minerals, the organisms, as well as the non-natural aspects emanating from our relations with each other in social, cultural, and other ways, to shape our relations with nature, all material beings, and non-material beings.

Extant Yoruba literature of all genres, written and otherwise, performed or otherwise point to the environment being seen in this all-encompassing way. The way Yoruba believe that the world was created, the agency of Olodumare, the Supreme Being; those of the divinities; those of the animals; the contribution of the plants and all things in nature; the way in which indigenous knowledge systems are generated; the position of all categories of humans – young, old, women, men, leaders, followers, abled, challenged, and so on – all conduce to an systemic appreciation of what constitutes well-being of all beings. This is encapsulated in various didactic lessons for all. It is not possible to conceive of any aspect of reality in singular terms, where the nature, the identity, the destiny of any one of them does not coalesce into the constitutive categories that empower each one. Let us see these concepts presented in the Yoruba understanding of nature, the environment, reality, and essence.

When it is said that Orisha-nla/Orumila or Oduduwa descended from the sky to carry out the instruction of Olodumare to create the universe, the rope has significance. If the rope had not played its part effectively and got broken in the process of the descent, then there would have been chaos. For this, it is said *bi itakun o ba ja, owo ko ni te okere l'oko*; that is, if the rope is not broken, there is no way the squirrel can be captured. It is also said that *adiye ba l'okun, ara o ro'kun ara o ro'diye*; that is, the fowl is perched on the rope, there is no peace for the rope, there is no peace for the fowl. In essence, it is the maintenance of the equilibrium in all circumstances and each thing performing as expected that lead to peace and harmony. When any aspect of reality is dislocated, for whatever reason, unless redress is done, by whatever means indicated, then the dislocation will affect all aspects of reality.

In the various stories about the tortoise, the stalking folk hero animal of Yoruba mythology, it is clear that the values of respect, diligence, accountability, truthfulness, honesty, devotion, loyalty, and so on, are never below the surface in human endeavors and interactions with others and with non-human others. And when it comes to ideas about knowledge, belief, truth and meaning, it is clear that Yoruba respect all humans, because no one can pre-empt the cognitive ability of any being unless given that opportunity to use what they know.

In D. O. Fagunwa's novels these metaphysical and axiological ideas are amply demonstrated. Whether in the tale of *Ireke-Onibudo* (1965) or *Additu Olodumare* (1964) or *Irinkerindo Ninu Igbo Elegbeje* (1961) or *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* (1950), there is the clear interlocking connection between all aspects of reality and the manner in which the values that Yoruba profess are enunciated. The various scriptural

texts on *Ifa* by Wande Abimbola (1976), *Ifa* by E. M. Lijadu (1972), *Esu* by Ade Dopamu (1986), *Awon Oriki Orile*, *Akojopo Alo Ijapa* by Adeboye Babalola (1983a, b), *Aye ye won tan* by Akinwumi Isola (2009), and other authors attest to this element of Yoruba understanding of reality and values. And the Yoruba epistemological stance is respectful of every perspective, be it from the young, the old, male, female, even the mentally challenged (because, *asiwere lojo tire* and *were ile la fi i koju were ita*).

Remarkably, the dichotomy between realms of being that suffused Western paradigms of polarities does not exist within Yoruba cognitive and metaphysical consciousness as well as the Yoruba value system. This does not mean that Yoruba does not separate good from bad, or right from wrong; it is the understanding that there is a continuum of natural and unnatural relationships which mean that the movement of things from one domain to the other is never as absolute as many may think. It is for this reason that the creation story of descent on a rope from the sky/heaven does not seem paradoxical. And in Ile-Ife, there is the belief that there is a spot you can actually go to, to travel to the world beyond. The story of Orunmila and his movement between heaven and earth is a clear example of this. According to Wande Abimbola (1968), in *Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa – Iwe Keji*,

> ALAYE DIE NIPA IFA
> I IFA
> Ifa je orisa kan pataki laarin awon Yoruba. Awon Yoruba Gbagbo wi pe Olodumare lo ran Ifa wa lati ode orun lati waa fi ogbon re tun ile aye se. Ogbon, imo, ati oye ti Olodumare fi fun Ifa lo fun Ifa ni ipo nla laarin awon ibo ni ilee Yoruba. "A-kere-finu-sogbon" ni oriki Ifa.
>
> Awon Yoruba gbagbo pe in igba kan ri, Ifa gbe ode aye fun igba pipe ki o too pada lo si orun. Ni igba ti Ifa wa ni aye, o gbe die ni Ile-Ife, o sig be die ni Ado (Ado-Ekiti).
>
> Sugbon ni igba ti Orunmila fi wa laye yii naa, o tun maa lo si ode orun leekookan ti ilodumare ba pe lati waa fi ogbon re ba oun tun ode orun se. Nitori naa, gbayegborun in Ifa ise.
>
> Oirisiirisii itan lo wa nipa ohun ti o mu Orunmila pada si ode orun ti ko si fi pada wa sile aye moo. Okan ninu awon itan yii wa ninu iwe yii. Itan yi so fun ni wi pe omo mejo ni Orunmila bi nigba ti o wa laye. Nigba ti o di ojo kan ti Orunmila nse odun ni okan ninu awon omo yii tii se abikehin patapata ba se afojudi si Orunmila. Ni Orunmila ba binu fi aye sile lo si ode orun. Ni "Ifa ba rele Olokun ko de mo. O keni te e ba ri, e sa maa pe ni baba".
>
> Sugbon Orunmila fun awon omo re mejeejo naa ni ikin merindinlogun. "O ni be e ba dele, be e ba fowoo ni, eni te e maa bi nuun . . ."
>
> Ikin merindinlogun naa ni a nlo loni lati beere nnkan lowo Ifa. (Abimbola 1968, 5)

In literal translation, this can be rendered as follows:

> A LITTLE EXPLANATION ABOUT IFA
> I IFA
> Ifa (also referred to as Orunmila) is an important deity among the Yoruba people. The Yoruba people believe that Olodumare, the Supreme Being, sent Ifa into the world to assist in ordering the world with his infinite wisdom. The wisdom, knowledge and insights which the Supreme Being gave Ifa is responsible for his place of preeminence among the divinities. He is often referred to as "the small one with the incomparable wisdom" by way of cognomen.
>
> The Yoruba believe that once upon a time, Ifa lived in the world for a long time before returning to the abode of the divinities. When Ifa was among human beings, he lived for a while in Ile-Ife

(the cradle of Yoruba race), and he lived for a while at Ado-Ekiti. But when Orunmila was alive, he often visited the heavens once in a while when Olodumare, the Supreme Being, requests him to come back to assist him in solving problems which require his wisdom. For this reason, he is often called co-resident of heaven and earth.

There are different stories about why Orunmila returned finally to heaven and did not return to the world. One of them is that Orunmila had eight children. One year, Orunmila was celebrating a festival the last born disrespected him. For this reason, he departed the world and did not return, For this reason, anyone can now be called father.

But before he left, he gave his eight children sixteen (ikin) divination nuts. "He said to them, when you reach home and you want anything, ask the nuts. . ."

It is these sixteen nuts that we use today to ask for wisdom and guidance from Ifa.

Yoruba people believe that all animals have their own traditions, their languages, their histories, their natures; hence, that all animals have their own cultures (Fagunwa 1950). These are what makes them distinct in their different species, and also ensure their capacity for survival as distinct beings. If humans were able to listen to the voices of animals and other beings in nature, we would be surprised at the kinds of discourses that take place between them. It may be that even the divides that take place between ethnic groups among humans are non-existent among animal species; and the same may be true of plants, rocks, rivers, seas, and so on. Maybe this explains why streams flow into rivers, rivers like to flow into seas, and seas like to flow into oceans. Maybe this is why the earth is round and everything relates to everything, and going constitutes coming, while dying constitutes the coming into being. It is even possible that this accounts for understanding aberrant behavior and choices.

Relationship between Values and the Environment

The Yoruba metaphysics/ontology has within it the malleability and instructibility required to ensure that Olodumare does not become a victim of His greatness, and that human beings never forget that whatever they have received in trust for use must be maintained for posterity.

If the creation of *terra firma* was a product of the agency of multiple entities – Olodumare instructing, Orishanla/Oduduwa descending through a rope, pouch of earth, pigeon or cockerel, palm nut, and so on – then the appreciation of process and product places a consciousness of value on everything concerned. There has to be the value of respect for the integrity of all that exists, past, present, and future. The creation of the human being is even more instructive. In the case of Yoruba, a divinity makes the body, another the head, and the individual is responsible for the choices of good and bad, right and wrong that he/she originates. Humans are not passive receivers of bounty for which no responsibility ensues. On the contrary, the human being contributes to the state of the world, a world in which there is no perfection, either in the extra-terrestrial realm or in the terrestrial realm.

In the Yoruba narrative, there may be times when the Supreme Being, Olodumare, gets befuddled with the affairs of his domain and needs to consult the divinity charged with wisdom, Orunmila, Baba Ifa, who traverses both the spaces of the divine as well as that of the material. Opele and Ifa divination is used to assist God and humans in navigating the variegated conundrums of existence. To show that charging any being with absolute wisdom, power, and truth is ludicrous, the Yoruba use the tortoise. The tortoise claims to assemble all wisdom in a gourd and tries to carry it to the top of a palm tree so that no

one will be able to access it, except himself. Yet he did not realize that the placement of the gourd on his belly would make climbing the palm tree well nigh impossible until a passerby pointed this out to him. He changes the location but still fails until another person pointed out that the location made his ascent impossible. The moral of the story is that no one can claim to know everything. This is even better reinforced in the belief that it is through the combination of the wisdom of all that Ile-Ife was founded – *omode gbon, agba gbon, la fi se isedale Ife* (children are wise, elders are wise, this the foundation on which the ancient city of Ile-Ife was built).

Yoruba values recognize that certain things remain valid even while everything continues to evolve. For example, human nature may indicate that certain activities and needs are constant, but there is recognition that how these needs are met and how the activities are carried out may vary. This is why they would say, *aye n yi lo, a n to o* (the world is changing and we are changing with it). This not only speaks to the rotation and revolution of the earth around the sun, but also the evolution of how humans have to live in a changing, interconnected, and shifting existential terrain. Certainly, the Yoruba people would have been shocked to see that there are people who would want to take everything for themselves and leave nothing for others because, for them, *agbedo, enikan ki i je, ki ile fe* (it is forbidden, when only one is rich there will be no peace).

This expression of Yoruba values can also be seen through the practice of democracy in Yoruba lands. Everyone is equally important and make contributions through self and other representations. While it may, on the surface, look like monarchy, autocracy, or other forms of power, the fact of the matter is that no king, chief, or leader in Yoruba land could survive as a dictator, because, after some time, *omi a gbe lehin eja oluwa e* (water dries in the fish pond, endangering the fish)*; eniyan ni m be lehin agbon, oun la fi bu omi si ti ko fi jo* (when there are persons covering the basket, water will not leak from it)*; agbajo owo, oun la fi n so aya* (one can thump one's chest with the fist, not with one finger). The value system does not allow for tyranny as each individual has an intrinsic worth, even while being seemingly challenged, as in the case of *a fo'ju, a di'ti, amukun, aro, abuke, tabi arara b'ori pete* (the disabled generally). In any case, they are all specially treated, because they are *eni orisa* – special persons to the divinities, thereby commanding special respect and provisioning.

There are also clear values relating to nature – all aspects of nature. In many communities, trees, rivers, caves, and other natural resources have assisted the communities to survive in the past. For this reason, everything in nature deserves respect, recognition, and attention, so that they can continue to be useful and sources of sustenance to future generations. When a herbalist goes to assemble leaves, roots, and barks of trees, but ensures that the sun is up before doing so, or speaks to the plants to seek permission to take some in the aid of nature's interconnected assistance to each other, the untutored may think this is superstition. So, the cognitive environment is not left out. Epistemic responsibility values the collective effort, memory, and ownership of knowledge, ideas, technologies, and so on.

Yoruba Values and the Environment

In the Yoruba cultural intelligence that we have explored, the question of agency is a universal one that pervades not just the domain of humans but also animals, plants, and other entities in nature (e.g. streams, rivers, seas, oceans, wind, clouds, rainfall, sunlight). Such a holistic reflective view of the uni/multiverse requires cognitive respect for all things, which in turn leads to care and attention to what is revealed through the agencies in entities environing our spaces. Thus, while Yoruba culture celebrates

wonder and inquisitiveness, encouraging evidence gathering efforts as means of gaining knowledge, there is no arrogation of intellectual supremacy of omniscience to any being, whether natural or supernatural: Olodumare consults his diviner (Orunmila) when confused or in need of an understanding of events past, present and future. According to Wande Abimbola (1976, 5),

> According to the myths, there were occasions when, there being no physical barrier between heaven and earth at that time, Ifa was summoned by Olodumare (God Almighty) to heaven to use his great wisdom to solve problems for Him. Ifa finally returned to heaven in annoyance due to an insult given to him by one of his children. Shortly after this, the earth was thrown into great confusion. Famine and pestilence raged throughout the earth. So great was the calamity that the fertility cycle of human beings was disrupted.
>
> Aboyun ko bi mo
> Agan ko t'owo ala b'osun
> (Pregnant women no longer delivered;
> Barren women remained barren.)

The supernatural has obligations of respect and responsibility, and the natural has obligations of attention and respect toward that which not only makes life happy but meaningful.

Hence, it is not strange for humans to learn from things around us; as humans observe the habits and behavior of animals, plants, and things in nature to gain insights into the use, tendencies, and the beauties of everything. Such a cognitive attentiveness and respect does (can) not lead to arrogance, nor does it translate into the appropriation of the intuitive beings of things that do not speak our language or that seem to be of lower rank. It is understood that if everything were to be uniform, the world would have been impossible to live in. Things would not have had the systemic interdependence which makes for the working of everything together for good and ill. The good has its own inner capacity to become ill, and the ill, if only there is patience to learn from nature to use the insights to correct and make amends, the inner capacity to yield good.

Modes of Interpretation and Values (Ethics) in Yoruba Religion

When the Europeans first came to the Yoruba lands, the narrative claims that they were received with sympathy, as family members who had wandered away in the very distant past, and who as a consequence had met a terrible mishap, which led them to suffer skin bleaching, to the point of their blood nearly leaking out of their bodies. This is the reason, according to mythology, why white people are called "Oyibo" – meaning literally persons whose skins have been removed by the terrible winter/Harmattan climate where they got lost.

They were received as distant members of the family and accorded deserved hospitality which such travelers, albeit inveterate wanderers, had suffered. They were not mistreated, because they were members of our human family. In any case, all sentient beings deserve respect; this even more so with persons who are our distant family members.The reasoning is that, if animals, plants, and things in nature are accorded their respect as part of our world, how much more the persons who are very much like us, but who have suffered some terrible mishap in the course of their wandering.

In Yoruba society there are records of strangers, foreigners, serfs, "slaves," and poor people who have risen to positions of prominence and leadership, intermarrying with the people without any prejudice. This is what is meant when it is said that, *bi ewe ba pe l'ara ose, a di ose*. What determines the station of life that you create for yourself is your character, hard work, and respect. The obverse is that you may be born to royalty, yet become poor as a consequence of laziness, bad character, or disrespect.

The ultimate goal of life in Yoruba society is that of mutual survival. When you tap the palm tree for wine, you do it respectively without cutting the shoot, even though it would have brought you more juice. And it is the height of abomination to uproot the palm tree, set fire to it at the bottom, to drain the juice from the top, even though what you get will be instantly more potent. These are practices that exist in neighboring cultures, but which Yoruba people abhor. When you fish, you do not catch the "children" or "babies" of the fish, and it is wrong to slaughter for delicacy the infant of the lamb or goat! When you farm, the prayer is that there be no hunger to make us eat both the yam and the seeds of the yam, or to start harvesting the yams before they mature. Such unnatural behaviors are regarded as killing the future of the various entities that surround us and which conduce to our welfare.

In the final analysis, the values which govern all aspects of existence are such that they come together to help promote the understanding that if those of us who live on the ground (*eepe, ile aye, agbalaaye*) are not healthy; those that live in the air (birds) and in the sea (fishes) cannot be healthy. When examined carefully, the ontology of respect and empathy, protection of the weak and vulnerable, whether humans, animals, plants, or other entities in our environment is predicated on the idea that our health is connected to the health of everything around us. Even morality of interpersonal relationships has much to do with the individual's health, family health, community health, and global health.

Conclusion

One of the biggest issues facing Yoruba people, and indeed Africans, is the conscious and subconscious destruction and loss of the fundamental cultural values that support human social relations. There are myriad indigenous knowledge systems, values, and ideas enshrined in language, which are lost when the language is allowed to die. A corollary to that is the possibility that within a generation foreigners may have to be teaching Africans the languages of their ancestry. These foreigners are studying and mastering languages because of the intrinsic values of the cultures they enshrine. Even more significant are the indigenous social, aesthetic, and spiritual knowledges surrounding the living conditions of humanity in Yoruba society, not to mention those related to knowledge of plants, animals, rivers, seasons, etc. To sustain the one universal and inclusive health approach to global existence, it means there is a need for the rediscovering of those cultural intelligences encapsulated in Yoruba ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies. These invaluable ideas can help guide the Yoruba relationship with the totality of our environment.

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CHAPTER 101

Mode of Interpretation – The Chinese Tradition

Ellen Y. Zhang

The tradition of Chinese ethical thought represented by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism (known as "the Three Teachings") is centrally concerned with questions about how to lead to a good and meaningful life. Confucianism that plays a key role in shaping the basis of Chinese moral codes and ethical guidelines is focused around ideals of character building that constitutes virtues. Daoist ethics, in contrast, is more skeptical about systematizing moral codes and recommending concepts of right and wrong. It lays more stress on the value of "spontaneity" and the action of an "authentic person." Buddhist ethics are traditionally based on the teachings of the Buddha concerning the question of suffering and path toward enlightenment. This entry will explicate how the Chinese ethical thought and moral judgment are formed in different ways by these three religious traditions. The entry will also address modes of interpretation and reconstruction that accommodate contemporary ethical concerns.

Religious Ethics Understood in the Chinese Context

Religious ethics are generally perceived and conceptualized as the moral principles that guide religions and that set the standard for what are right and wrong behaviors. Yet before our discussion of religious ethics in the Chinese tradition, we shall first take a look at the words "religion" and "ethics" involved in the term. For a long time in past decades, scholars in the West have raised the question insofar as how "religion" or "ethics" should be appropriated and understood in traditional Chinese thought.

The Chinese term *zongjiao* is a compound consisting of *zong* (an ideogram of an ancestral altar) denoting a "sect," and *jiao* meaning "teaching." *Zongjiao* thus carries the connotation of sectarian teachings. The original appearance of the compound *zongjiao* was identified with a sect of Buddhism in early medieval China, and by the late nineteenth century Japanese translators of European texts chose to retrieve the term to mean "religion" (for more information on *zongjiao*, see Company 2003 and Adler 2005). However, part of the problem arising from the modern coined term is that traditional Chinese religions under the rubric of the "Three Teachings" (*San Jiao*) since the fourteenth century, referring to Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, do not put too much emphasis on doctrinal differences and religious exclusivity as monotheistic religions do. The essential character of religion in China is that the Chinese have never considered themselves exclusively "Confucianists," "Buddhists," or "Daoists." As a common saying goes, "Every Chinese wears a Confucian cap, a Daoist robe, and Buddhist sandals." In

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

addition, the definition of "religion" in its strict sense gives rise to the debate among Chinese scholars as to whether Confucianism should be viewed as a religion since it does not have a creation story, deities to worship, theories of afterlife and external transcendence, the system of priesthood, etc., things we often see in other religions. There are Confucius temples (*kongmiao*) across China, but people pay respect to him as a sage or great teacher, not a god. Those who regard Confucianism as religion argue that Confucianism, especially in its early form, emphasized rituals and rites in worshipping heaven and ancestors, which had a strong religious element.

Nevertheless, if we take religion in a broad sense as a form of "ultimate concern" (Paul Tillich) or "a means of ultimate transformation" (Frederick Streng), Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism all fit into such kinds of definition since all of them are concerned with a process that leads to self-transcendence or "transformation" (*hua*) in the face of the finitude and limitation of human condition. The notion of the "ultimate," according to Joseph A. Adler, means that "the starting point, process, and goal are defined in relation to whatever the tradition in question believes to be absolute or unconditioned" (Adler 2005, 1582).

Similar to religion, the Western concept of "ethics" was first used by Japanese scholar Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944) who borrowed the Chinese term *lunli* (meaning the moral code of relationship) to translate "ethics" as *lunlixue* (*rinrigaku* in Japanese). Later, the word "moral" was adopted as well by ascribing to the Chinese compound *daode*, originally used in Laozi's *Daodejing*, denoting the ideas of the "way" and "virtues." The two ethical terms *lunli* and *daode* in the Chinese tradition are sometimes used interchangeably, indicating moral guidelines regarding a well-lived life, yet neither of them means the same as "ethics" usually understood in contemporary context. So far as Buddhism is concerned, there is not even a word for "ethics" in early Indian texts, as Damien Keown, one of the leading Buddhist scholars of Buddhist ethics, has suggested (Keown 2005).

If we take ethics as "normative ethics" or "philosophical analysis of moral norms," concerned with the justification of right and wrong actions, then the Chinese moral teachings may not be viewed as ethical theories or ethical deliberations. However, it is quite obvious that there is a profound history of ethical thought in the Chinese tradition that is centered on issues about how one ought to live and what kind of person one ought to be. The ethical consideration covers a wide scope of human life, ranging from the personal and the familial to the communal and the societal at large. Therefore, it is significant to explore how "ethics" should be understood in the context of Chinese religious teaching and practice.

Religious Ethical Systems of China

Confucianism

Confucianism and Daoism represent major indigenous traditions of China whereas Buddhism is an "imported religion" rooted in Indian culture. Among these three religions, Confucianism plays the dominant role in shaping the basis of Chinese moral codes and ethical guidelines, and it has spread outside China to such places as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. The term "Confucianism" or "Ruism" (i.e. the School of *Ru*) is a loose one, referring to a collection of teachings and doctrines that covers morality, rituals, politics, and history. Etymologically, the word *ru* means "weaklings" and related to the aristocratic class of antiquity, well known for their knowledge of history, rituals, music, archery, etc., and thus regarded as experts in the literary and cultural tradition (*wen*). Early Confucian ethics was based on the teachings of

Confucius or Kongzi (ca. 551–479 BCE) and Mencius or Mengzi (c. 371–289 BCE), both centrally concerned with the ideal of character building that constitutes virtues (*de*). Eventually, Confucianism or the School of *Ru* came to refer to the ethical wisdom of the past, transmitted by Confucius and later Confucians. Confucius believed that society could be transformed by the moral cultivation that starts from the personal to familial, ultimately to the state levels. In the *Analects*, the most frequently discussed ideal personality is that of the *junzi* being rendered as "gentleman" or "superior man" who represents the virtue of *ren* (humaneness, human-heartedness, love, or benevolence) (for debate among Confucian scholars regarding *ren*, see Slingerland 2003). Apart from *ren*, Confucius also spoke of the virtue of *shu* (reciprocity), submitting that "Not to do to others what you would not have them to do to you (*Analects* 15:23). This state is well known in the West as the "negative Golden Rule."

Since the ethical system of Confucianism is marked by its emphasis on virtues and character development, most Confucian scholars see Confucian ethics as a form of virtue ethics. Recent studies have shown some disagreements. Roger T. Ames, for instance, argues for what he calls Confucian "role ethics" that is different from the virtue of the individual subject, since interactive relationships among individual, family, and society are key concerns to Confucianism. Rather than "What kind of person I should be?" says Ames, the Confucian looks for "specific roles for stimulating the forms that association takes within lives lived in family and community" (Rosemont and Ames 2016, 12). In other words, relationality is the base for Confucian ethics, and a person behaves morally in accordance with the role he or she plays in specific human relationships. It is true that relation and relational thinking are crucial for Confucian morality, just as the virtue *ren* suggests.The word *ren* with the combination of radicals of "human" and "two" indicates an emphasis on human relationships. For Confucians, ethical behaviors start with "five relationships" (*wuchang*), that is, the ruler-minister, father-son, husband-wife, the elder-younger, and friend-friend. Among these relationships, three are family relationships, while the other two are based on familial models. However, *ren* as the cardinal virtue in Confucianism is not confined to relational concern since the practice of *ren*, according to Confucius, requires a person to express concern for the well-being of others, which demands a virtue of love or humane understanding for all human conditions. To an extent, *ren* has a transcendent dimension that goes beyond specific behaviors in relationships. To put it otherwise, the Confucian concept of *ren* ultimately aims at the development of character rather than at the development of discrete behavior.

Ren is also closely related to *li* (ritual or propriety), referring to moral codes of behavior. It should be noted that Confucianism has been perceived traditionally by many as a kind of humanistic philosophy attractive to the literati or scholars rather than a form of religion. Nevertheless, Confucian moral teachings in terms of *li* have a religious dimension in that the ritual practice that was later transformed into proper behavior is linked to the Confucian notion of "mandate of *tian* or heaven" (*tianming*). *Li* has played such an important role within Confucianism that the tradition is also known as the "Teachings of the Ritual" or the "Religion of the Ritual" (*lijiao*). *Li* provides the forms through which one governs one's own emotions, thoughts, and actions. According to Adler, the Confucian *li* "was not merely a means of enforcing social order, nor was Confucius's innovation a turn from religion to philosophy; rather it was a philosophical deepening of a fundamentally religious worldview" (Adler 2005, 1585). *Li* not only reflects the ethical sensitivity of a person, but also the proper social role a person plays. If we say that *ren* describes the inner moral character then *li* refers to the outward expression of *ren*.

Like Confucius, Mencius was concerned about moral character and moral cultivation, and developed his idea of human nature and moral psychology. The Chinese word "human nature" (*xing*) is a compound

including the radical "heart-mind" and the radical of "growth" or "offspring." According to Mencius, the human being is one who has received from the heaven the innate endowments of human nature with a faculty of moral discernment. Therefore, Mencius is best known for his argument that "human nature is good" (*xingshan*). Yet, instead of speaking of human nature at an ontological level, Mencius intended to argue that humans have a tendency to become good if raised in an environment that is healthy for them. As the word *xing* has suggested, nature does not indicate something static, but something that is subject to change. It is in this sense that Confucianism emphasizes the importance of moral education.

Mencius maintained that the human capacity for goodness is rooted in our nature, supported by the existence of moral sprouts (*duan*), that is, the inborn moral preferences or inclinations. He argued that moral virtue or proficiency could be cultivated through the nurturing of these sprouts through moral reflection (*si*), a process of analogical "extension" from paradigmatic moral situations to novel ones. His argument that all humans possess compassion, through the famous allegory of the child about to fall into a well (2A6), presents him as a natural opponent to psychological egoism.

When asked about his claim that human nature is good (6A6 and 6A15), Mencius replied, "As for what they are inherently, they can become good. This is what I mean by calling their natures [xing] good. ... Humans all have the feeling of compassion. Humans all have the feeling of disdain. Humans all have the feeling of respect. Humans all have the feeling of approval and disapproval. The feeling of compassion is benevolence. The feeling of disdain is righteousness. The feeling of respect is propriety. The feeling of approval and disapproval is wisdom" (Van Norden 2008, 149). Human nature is good, on this view, because becoming a good person is the result of developing our innate tendencies toward benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, and propriety. Mencius' emphasis on the powers of human nature did much to shape the religious sensibilities of ethical thinking in China.

Based on his understanding of human nature, Mencius developed a sophisticated moral psychology as an elaboration of Confucius' ethics of *ren* and account of the virtuous sage. His idea of "sagehood within and kingship without" has strongly influenced the Confucian vision of politics. The moral virtue of *ren* is extended to the political order where it is defined as humane government (*renzheng*), that is, a government of moral persuasion qua a sage-ruler. As P. J. Ivanhoe has pointed out, "Confucians strongly believed in the power of Virtue [*de*]. The example of the good person was thought to have a magnetic, motivating, and uplifting effect. It draws people to the sage-ruler and inspires them to be good – like the sage" (Ivanhoe 2011, 38).

The renaissance of Confucianism during the Song dynasty (960–1280 CE), known as "Neo-Confucianism" in the West, developed its own moral theories and ethical thought based on early Confucianism, and supplemented by its own metaphysics. Neo-Confucianism was perceived as a rationalistic revival of the various strands of Confucianism. The best-known Neo-Confucian school was *lixue* (i.e. the study of principle) or *daoxue* (i.e. the study of the way) represented by Zhu Xi (1130–1200) who established the standard Confucian curriculum that not only influenced the imperial civil service examination system but also Confucian moral discourse and ethical theory in the following dynasties. In Zhu's Confucianism, a great deal of emphasis was placed on moral self-cultivation through reading and reflecting upon the true meaning of the Confucian classics as a form of meditative practice known as quiet-sitting. Meanwhile, Zhu advocated the method for examining external things and the principle, the pattern of the universe, in order to cultivate the essential goodness of the heart-mind. Zhu's method of moral cultivation was questioned by another trend of thought known as *xinxue* (i.e. the study of heart-mind) represented by Wang Yangming (1472–1529) in the Ming dynasty. Wang promoted the idea of the

genuine realization of the self which, according to Wang, was identical with the pattern of the universe. His model of the mind-heart-cum-nature offered an alternative interpretation of Confucian teachings. Although Neo-Confucianism attempted to reinterpret the Confucian ethical system so as to respond to the challenge from Buddhism, it is quite obvious that both *lixue* and *xinxue* were highly influenced by Buddhism.

It should be noted that the politicization of Confucian moral principles after the Song dynasty made Confucianism a state ideology, which created a popular version of Confucianism such as the "cult of chastity" for women. Confucian virtues such as filial piety, chastity, and loyalty were promoted at the state level.

Daoism

The word "Daoism" refers to both philosophical Daoism (*daojia*) and religious Daoism (*daojiao*).

The key figure of Daoism is Laozi, a mythical sage known as the "Old Master," the writer of the *Laozi*, said to have been an older contemporary of Confucius. Philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism are different from each other but also interrelated (e.g. common canonic texts, common veneration of Laozi and other real or mythological figures, and common jargon). The best-known book devoted to the early thought of Daoism is the *Laozi*, also known as *Daodejing* in which the meaning of the cosmic way (*dao*) and its power (*de*) are expounded. Unlike Confucianism, philosophical Daoism is not interested in promoting specific moral virtues, and is critical of the idea of regulating society with norms and standards of behavior. As such, Daoism has sometimes been dismissed as a mystical tradition or amoral philosophy which is seemingly indifferent, if not forthrightly hostile to the ethical system or the moral life (Creel 1970, 3; Moeller 2009, 29–39). It should be noted, however, that some Daoist scholars disagree with the idea that Zhuangzi as an amoralist who is unconcerned with moral values and indifferent to the world. For the representative work of such works, see Lee (2014). Daoist concepts of naturalness or self-so-ness (*ziran*) and non-action (*wuwei*) focus on self-authenticity, non-coercive action, and spontaneity (i.e. going with the flow of things). In chapter 38 of the *Laozi*, we read: "When Dao is lost, then arises the doctrine of virtue (*de*); When the doctrine of virtue is lost, then arises the doctrine of humaneness (*ren*); When the doctrine of humaneness is lost, then arises the doctrine of righteousness (*yi*); When the doctrine of justice is lost, then arises the doctrine of rituals (*li*)..." (*Laozi* 38). This passage with its structural negations describes a Daoist view that stands in marked contrast with the Confucian moral teaching. Such negative view on Confucian morality is even stronger in the *Zhuangzi*, another representative work of Daoist philosophy when it mocks Confucian virtues and rituals.

Nevertheless, Daoism has its own distinct language and moral vision that address the question of "how we should live." Daoist ethics can be better understood as a form of "negative ethics" which, according to Hans Saner, can be explained in four aspects: (1) a radical renunciation of morality as a result of disgust with ethics and its failure; (2) a normative ethics that assumes that the good as such cannot be determined and that it therefore can only be explained negatively; (3) no general ethical guidelines or principles can be established since morality is always concrete and embedded in particular situations; (4) an ethics that does not believe in the primacy of action but rather in the primacy of refraining from intervention and thus advocates an ethics of "letting-be" (Saner 2005, 27–30). To a certain extent, we can see all these four aspects in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, although Daoism is neither skepticism nor relativism in a restricted sense. Daoist ethics is best characterized by negativity in terms of transcending positive

morality. In other words, Daoist ethics rejects categorization into any ready-made standard of right and wrong. Generally speaking, the Daoist ethics does not set out divine commandments or absolute principles but offers a guideline (*dao*), and very often in a negative way. Some Daoist scholars, however, consider Daoist ethics as therapeutic, a kind of a rhetorical or psychological device for the purpose of changing one's mind.

Early religious Daoism, the School of Celestial Master (*Tianshi Dao*) for example, did not follow philosophical Daoism in rejecting Confucian virtues and norms. Rather, they advocated "secret virtue," that is, good works done secretly and known only to the gods. Yet in practice many Daoist sects regulated morality in a variety of ways, including requiring followers to confess their wrong-doings and petition the heavenly authorities for forgiveness. Religious Daoism "was characterized by a literate and self-perpetuating priesthood, a pantheon of celestial deities, complex rituals, and revealed scriptures in classical (literary) Chinese" (Adler 2005, 1580–1613). At the same time, religious Daoism fully accepted some key moral ideas in the Laozi and Zhuangzi, such as naturalness, compassion, humility, and simplicity. To a certain extent, religious Daoism also adopted Confucian ethical norms such as reciprocity, and loyalty as well as Buddhist precepts of self-discipline such as avoid harming animals and avoid lascivious or depraved thoughts. Livia Kohn, one of the leading scholars of Daoism, has observed that the members of the Daoist religious community traditionally follow societal norms in accordance with specific morals, values, behaviors, disciplines, and responsibilities to those in the community (Kohn 2004, 3). Nevertheless, instead of preaching virtues and morality to others, Daoists encouraged people to find their own ways as how to lead a meaningful life in agreement with the Dao. Meanwhile, the Daoist notion of community was beyond the family-based one accentuated in Confucianism, despite the fact that both traditions spoke of the common good of the community. According to Kohn, Daoist ethics focuses the connection between virtue, the community and the cosmos, and that the Daoist practitioner is concerned with resolving inner conflicts, creating good karma, and reaching the level of divine beings (Kohn 2005, 109).

Another aspect that requires special attention is the holistic view on body, mind, and soul in Daoist ethical thinking. Its belief in longevity (*shou*) and immortality (*xian*) is expressed through an explicit concern for the somatic dimension of self-cultivation. The Daoist meditative practice aims at returning the body to its primordial state of purity and power with its *yin* and *yang* in proper balance. Daoist religion has many gods that form the Daoist pantheon, yet those gods indicate the power of the organic microcosm of the human body or what Robinet calls "bodily gods" (Robinet 1993, 56) rather than powers that are external to humans and nature. Schipper in his groundbreaking work *The Taoist Body* conceptualizes the Daoist "image of the country" in light of the human body. What Schipper intends to point out is not only the Daoist holistic view on body, mind, and soul but also its holistic view on humanity, nature, and the universe. As Schipper puts it, the emphasis on country reflects the interdependence of the human being and his/her environment (Schipper 1993, 101). The idea that "the environment is within us" had a great impact on the ethical thinking in traditional China.

Buddhism

Compared to Confucianism and Daoism, Buddhism is an "imported religion" from India, which is primarily concerned with the question of suffering and path toward enlightenment. Buddhism has a clearer soteriological dimension than indigenous Chinese religions although it was Sinicized from the very beginning in that Chinese Buddhism, especially Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism, tended to be more

this-worldly oriented. Since the most important early Chinese Buddhist texts were translated by people who were either ex-Daoists or influenced by Daoist philosophy via the "method of matching the term" (*geyi fa*) as a translation technique, Chinese Buddhism was a conflation of Indian Buddhism with Daoism, and the result of which formed a unique view of life which combined the moral teachings of the Buddha with the intellectual vigor of the Daoist sages. The form of Buddhism which was introduced to China was predominantly Māhayāna that emphasizes the idea of enlightenment for all.

Like Daoism, Buddhism acknowledges that life is complex and it does not therefore suggest that there is a single course of action that will be right in all circumstances. Rather than speaking of actions being right or wrong, Buddhism tends to speak of the being skillful (*kusala*) or unskillful (*akusala*) in a situation of moral judgment. This approach to ethics leads to a different understanding of what ethics is within the Buddhist tradition. Nevertheless, since the immediate focus of Buddhist concern is the problem of suffering, Buddhism has developed a tradition of theories to deal with the problem. While questioning if there is normative ethics in Buddhism, Damien Koewn claims that Buddhism "shares many features with Aristotle's notion of the good life and being one devoted to the cultivation of virtue and culminating in condition of happiness" (Keown 2005, 286).

Peter Harvey offers a systematic treatment of basic issues concerning Buddhist ethics. Harvey uses the term "ethics" to describe three related issues: (1) the Buddhist thought on the bases and justification of moral guidelines and on the meaning of moral terms; (2) specific moral guidelines, in other words, applied ethics; and (3) how people actually act based on moral guidelines of Buddhism (Harvey 2000, 2). Christopher Queen, on the other hand, speaks of fourfold categorization of Buddhist ethics: (1) the ethics of disciplines; (2) the ethics of virtue; (3) the ethics of altruism; and (4) the ethics of engagement (Queen 2000, 1–17).

To understand Buddhist ethics, the starting point is to look at the core teaching of the Buddha, that is, the five precepts that link with the monastic order, which can be rendered as saying that a person is prohibited from (1) taking life; (2) stealing; (3) sexual misconduct; (4) lying; and (5) taking intoxicants. For Buddhists, these five precepts are training methods for self-discipline rather than rules or commandments or what Harvey considers "moral guidelines." Christopher Queen calls such an approach to moral life "the ethics of disciplines" (Queen 2000, 11). Yet from a broader perspective, the core of Buddhist ethical teaching cannot be fully comprehended without looking at the existential claims made by Buddhism, specifically speaking, the doctrine of "Three Marks of Existence" (*trilakṣaṇa* in Sanskrit, *san fayin* in Chinese) which provides us with the basic framework of Buddhist ethical thinking. "Three Marks of Existence" refer to impermanence, suffering, and no-self. They are important for Buddhism because it means wisdom is required for one to start to see things, situations as they really are. Inner wisdom (*prajna* in Sanskrit, *zhi* in Chinese) is a kind of virtue needed in the Buddhist path of enlightenment.

The Buddhist concept of *dukkha* (*ku*), often rendered in English as "suffering" is not simply an unpleasant feeling. Rather, it refers to a basic vulnerability of uneasiness due to misapprehending the nature of reality. Since the immediate focus of Buddhist ethics is the problem of suffering, and a conception of the self is at the core of the Buddhist response to that problem. The idea is significant in Buddhism, because it means we start to understand ourselves and the world by seeing things, situations as they really are. The doctrine of non-self (*anatman* in Sanskrit, *wuwo* in Chinese) entails two points: (1) Nothing has a self-nature; and (2) Everything is impermanence. While the first point indicates that everything in the world is interconnected the second point suggests that everything changes

and nothing stays the same. From an ethical perspective, it means suffering is suffering; it does not matter whether it is "my suffering" or "your suffering." It also means that self as a substantial entity is the result of delusion.

For the basic moral teachings of the Māhayāna tradition, Bodhisattva is the most revered image besides the Buddha because Bodhisattva signifies the moral concept of compassion. The word "compassion" (*karunā* in Sanskrit; *bei* in Chinese) is thought to dwell on the negative aspect of human existence, sharing the suffering and pains of others or a willingness to bear the pain of others; such kind of compassion is sometimes translated as "pity," "mercy," or sympathy." But compassion also refers to "sympathetic joy," that is, sharing the happiness of others. In both cases, compassion is not merely a feeling of mercy or sympathy, but is understood to mean "active sympathy," that is, to do something with a helping hand. Then the question for us is: Does Bodhisattva or the idea of compassion represent a virtue? This question diverges in an ongoing debate among Buddhist scholars. Queen takes Bodhisattva as an example of "the ethics of ultraism" while others contend that there is a utilitarian aspect involved when a Bodhisattva asks the question "What should I do to benefit others?" which denotes the idea of bringing about good consequences rather than either doing one's duty or cultivating one's character. It does not matter how we appropriate Buddhist moral teachings in contemporary frameworks; compassion, along with wisdom, are two interrelated qualities that Māhayāna Buddhism emphasizes in its ethical teaching.

Generally speaking, Buddhism appealed to Chinese intellectuals and elites and the development of "gentry Buddhism" was sought as an alternative to Confucianism and Daoism since Buddhism's emphasis on morality and ritual practice appealed to Confucians and the desire to cultivate inner wisdom appealed to Daoists. At the same time, Buddhism was also in conflict with the Chinese culture and Confucianism in particular, for Buddhism focused on monastic life and individual salvation while Confucian filial piety stressed family duties. Nevertheless, there was far more integration than confrontation between Buddhism and Chinese traditions. The integration can be seen by the white-robed Guanyin, the female image of the Bodhisattva and the story of "Mulian Who Rescues His Mother": the former represented syncretistic ideals of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism while the latter fully absorbed the Confucian virtue of filial piety.

In addition, other concepts in Buddhism that have influenced the ethical thinking of the Chinese include *karma* (*ye*) and *samsara* (*lunhui*). The moral and ethical rewards/sanctions of *karma* and rebirth reinforced the Chinese folk belief in the idea that "good begets good; evil begets evil." According to Buddhism, *karma* carries the meaning that every act one performs has repercussions in the present moment which also reverberates into the future. Are acts bad because they are punished by *karma*? Or are they punished by *karma* because they are bad? The ethical interpretation of *karma* remains contested because it seems to involve the notion of victim-blaming or indifference to others' suffering in that the *karma*-consequence (*vipaka* in in Sanskrit; *bao* in Chinese) aims at excusing or justifying suffering as a necessary good. However, to connect *karma* to victim-blaming misses the point since what karma really emphasizes is the personal moral responsibility.

To sum up, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism as the "Three Teachings" have formed the basis of the Chinese morality and ethical sensibility. Apart from these three traditions, other "imported" religions such as Christianity and Islam have also played an important role in China and shaped Chinese ways of thinking in their own terms. Owing to the limited space of this entry, this point cannot be elaborated.

Mode of Interpretation in Contemporary Context

Over past two decades, Confucianism, along with Buddhism and Daoism, has progressively acquired a new visibility since China's reform and opening-up. With the emerging market economy and the collapse of communist ideology, China has been facing a moral crisis. The revival of traditional moral norms has been encouraged by the government to promote a sense of social responsibility amidst the rapid rise of individualism, consumerism, and economic competition. However, given the fact that China is still, officially, an atheist state, religious influences are quite limited.

Confucianism was harshly criticized as the biggest obstacle for China's modernization by the "New Culture Movement" initiated by Chinese intellectuals influenced by Western liberalism in the beginning of last century. After the Communists took power the anti-Confucian rhetoric only intensified. The revival movement based on Confucian teachings today known as "New Confucianism outside of mainland China" (*haiwai xin rujia*) became popular outside mainland China and then made the scene to the mainland after China's reform. The Confucian notion of cultivating one's own virtues was reintroduced and Confucian values such as harmony, meritocracy, humane authority, and civility were promoted and viewed by many as new values that could supplement, if not replace, the rigid (mainstream) ideology. At the same time, new Confucian scholars have been also deeply engaged in an active dialogue with Western philosophy and religion, and the effort of which is to reconstruct or "modernize" Confucian ethics to make it more relevant to the contemporary concerns such as democracy, human rights, and gender equality. Jiang Qing, a Confucian traditionalist, challenges the New Confucians, claiming that what they are doing is nothing but trying to tailor Confucianism to fit the garment of liberal democratic ideals. Jiang, instead, argues that Confucianism is a kind of all-embracing ethical system that embraces all dimensions of society: personal virtue, family values, social structures, and political order (Jiang 2012, 30–32).

At the same time, there was a "Confucius fever" at the popular level over past decades, represented by various kinds of popular series of TV lectures on Confucianism sponsored by the government and the rise of private "Confucian Schools" teaching children Confucian moral codes. Yet it remains unclear what the revival of Confucianism entails for China. It is certainly answering a hunger among the Chinese people for spiritual and cultural familiarity amidst tremendous change. Confucianism-inspired religiosity today might be more imaginary than real. Even less than Confucianism, the roles of Buddhism and Daoism in shaping the ethical life for the Chinese today are quite limited.

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3 Global Interactions

CHAPTER 102

Christianity (Global Interactions)

Devaka Premawardhana

Introduction

Today, Christianity is growing most robustly far beyond the regions with which it has long been associated. Beginning in the late fifteenth century, European and, later, North American missionaries labored to evangelize populations of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Yet it is in the postcolonial period that the greatest demographic expansion has occurred. With the globalization of Christianity beyond the West and the rise of secularization within it, the twentieth century saw a dramatic drop in the worldwide proportion of Christians residing in Europe, from two thirds to roughly one quarter. Observers speak of this as a shift in Christianity's center of gravity, from the Global North to the Global South. This entry explores some implications of that shift for the field of religious ethics. It considers the specificities of Christian ethics in the formerly colonized world, a world marked by legacies of political subjugation and economic exploitation, of racial domination and cultural derogation.

There can be no doubt as to why an investigation into the global dimensions of Christian ethics matters – certainly not after 2013. That is the year the archbishop of Buenos Aires adopted the name Francis upon being elected to the papacy. With that, the Roman Catholic Church came for the first time to have as its leader a denizen of the Global South. Pope Francis has become known, however, for far more than his geographic origins. He has famously and forcefully pronounced on a range of ethical issues. He has challenged the consumerism at the root of environmental degradation, for example, and critiqued the economic structures underlying global inequality. Yet Pope Francis's ethical engagements have gone beyond even such overt pronouncements. At the heart of his papacy is his choice of name, and what it says about his regard for a thirteenth-century moral exemplar. Also noteworthy is that, as a Jesuit, Pope Francis performs the Ignatian spiritual exercises each year, a series of self-evaluative meditations intended to connect practitioners to the ultimate exemplar, Jesus Christ (Molina 2013).

The case of Pope Francis raises numerous issues pertaining to Christian ethics. The two upon which this entry focuses include: first, the articulation of norms and values respecting the demands of justice; and, second, the formation and flourishing of the self, often through embeddedness in communities beyond the self. Historically and in the global scope of contemporary Christianity, these two orientations have overlapped in a variety of ways. This entry begins by considering the ethical dimensions of modern European missions, then turns to issues of colonization, class, race, culture, and religion addressed by contextual theologians of the Global South. While Christianity's geographic reach certainly extended

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

beyond the Mediterranean prior to the late fifteenth century, this entry addresses only the tradition's global interactions from the early modern period to the present. During that time, the demography of global Christianity changed tremendously, ushering along with it a far more global awareness of the scope of Christian ethics and the nature of Christian selves.

Christian Missions in the Age of Empire

The modern period, up to the twentieth century, witnessed two distinct waves of Christian expansion beyond Europe. The first, the so-called age of discovery (1492–1773), was primarily a Roman Catholic phenomenon; the second wave (1792–1914) was mainly Protestant. Assumptions about morality and personhood differ significantly between Catholicism and Protestantism, but across both periods and both traditions one ethical consideration outweighed all others: that of the relationship between Christianity and imperialism. Conquistadors and slave traders hailed from and worked in the same locales as Christian missionaries, a confluence that raises questions about complicity and collusion, and about the possibilities of critique. Yet inseparable from the relationship between religious mission and political domination are two subtler ethical problems also shared by Christian missionaries throughout this era, namely the interconnected problems of how to evaluate the moral status of the non-European, non-Christian other, and how to advance the ethical formation of the self.

Catholic Missions

Early modern expansion into the "new world" occurred through both the cross and the sword, the missions of the Catholic Church and the militancy of the Iberian states. With the expulsion of Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, a new optimism and enthusiasm propelled Catholic missionaries – particularly Franciscans, Dominicans, and newly founded Jesuits – overseas. From the perspective of Spain and Portugal, the usurping of new lands and the baptizing of new converts constituted twin aspects of conquest. Some legitimized invasion by drawing a parallel between the violent takeover of Canaan by Israelites – manifest destiny in biblical times – and the Iberian conquest of unknown lands (Marty 2007, 145). Yet the domination and especially the enslavement of indigenous peoples in the Americas generated a rift when missionaries based in the Americas raised their voices in opposition to the abuses of empire. The Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas, well-known for his account of the suffering of native populations at the hands of his fellow Spaniards (de las Casas [1552] 1992), earned for his efforts the title of "Protector of the Indians." He devoted his life to arguing that colonial atrocities violated the rights of indigenous people as well as basic Christian ethical standards. Likewise, Jesuits frequently positioned themselves between slave traders and Amerindians by sheltering large numbers of their converts in Christian villages known in Spanish as *reducciones*. Defending the dignity of indigenous peoples and combating the brutality they saw around them, missionaries largely came to operate as the conscience of the crown (Bevans and Schroeder 2004, 175).

Underpinning it all were deeply held values and convictions regarding the moral standing of indigenous people. De las Casas's intellectual adversary, the Spanish theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, contended that dark-skinned natives were inferior to Europeans, invoking in reference to them Aristotle's category of "natural slaves." De las Casas and others countered that Amerindians were created in God's

image, possessed immortal souls, and thereby deserved to be evangelized through peaceful proclamation. They should be free, not forced, to choose the Christian faith. There were, of course, limits to this ethic of care and compassion. Jesuits protected Amerindians through their *reducciones*, but treated them paternalistically within, never fully allowing them to shape their own futures. De las Casas opposed the enslavement of Amerindians but initially had no qualms with the enslavement of Africans (though late in life, he did). Early modern Catholic missionaries, even the most prophetic among them, remained products of their time. They fell short of their ideals, but remain noteworthy for their biblically based vision of human unity and equality, for their efforts to disaggregate cross and sword by working to curb the violent excesses of their fellow expansionist Europeans.

For Catholic missionaries working in the Asian outposts of the European empire, foremost ethical concerns centered less on physical freedom than on cultural and religious freedom. Earlier missionary models reflected the conquest mentality of Iberian imperialists; conversion to Christianity required the destruction, sometimes by force, of preexisting beliefs and practices. This *tabula rasa* approach was clearly rooted in ethnocentric assumptions of Western superiority. A different approach, geared toward accommodation rather than annihilation, developed through the work of such prominent sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jesuits as Alessandro Valignano, Matteo Ricci, and Roberto de Nobili. Collectively, these missionaries concerned themselves with in-depth learning of the local languages, religions, cultures, and politics. By translating the Bible, catechisms, and prayers, and by respecting local norms regarding architecture, dress, and diet, they disaggregated Christian missions from European conquests and contributed to a more dialogical approach to intercultural and interreligious relations. Ricci and de Nobili went so far as to adopt the dress, study the texts, and embody the lifestyles of intellectuals and holy persons in, respectively, the Confucian traditions of China and the Hindu traditions of India. Underpinning this accommodational method were numerous philosophical and ethical factors: the principle of what Valignano called *il modo suave*, which elevated sweetness and gentleness over hostility and aggression as missionary virtues; the Renaissance humanist view of preexisting civilizations (whether the Greek and the Roman, or the Japanese and the Chinese) as potentially enriching allies rather than enemies of Christianity; and, finally, the program of ethical self-formation developed by founding Jesuit Ignatius de Loyola and known as spiritual exercises (Bevans and Schroeder 2004, 194–195). These exercises – comprising directives, meditations, prayers, procedures, and rules – offered to the Jesuits who practiced them a method of self-evaluation, self-reflection, and self-critical awareness. It enabled missionaries to reflect on any situation in ways that would lead them to challenge conventional wisdom, whether that of the Church or of the state. Not all Jesuit missionaries disavowed Eurocentric cultural hegemony, while many non-Jesuit missionaries did, but it was especially the Jesuit accommodation of ancestral rites in China that sparked an ecclesiastic controversy in Europe that culminated in the 1773 suppression of the Jesuit order. Thus ended a significant chapter in Catholic missionary encounters with the non-Western world, and along with it an exceptionally innovative period in the history of Christian ethics.

Protestant Missions

Newly formed Protestant mission societies took over from Catholic missionary orders in the late eighteenth century. During their first two centuries of existence (from the early sixteenth century on), Protestant churches remained mostly inactive overseas. That was due partly to their focus on developing identities and doctrines of their own, partly to the countries associated with the Reformation not initially

engaging in imperial expansion. That changed when Britain and the Netherlands became colonial powers, just about the time mission societies in those countries, beginning with the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, were founded. Reflecting the individualism of Protestant conceptions of the self, these were voluntary societies, comprising self-selecting individuals and operating independently of institutional church authority and certainly of the state. With the birth of Methodism in the late eighteenth century and the Second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth, overseas missions became a Protestant priority. This was the period of high imperialism, when individual nation-states in Europe and North America considered themselves to be in possession of a unique calling, one that left them no choice but to spread to "heathen" lands the three "Cs" of Christianity, commerce, and civilization. Racism was rampant in European and North American attitudes of this period, missionaries themselves rarely questioning attitudes of Western superiority and often colluding with projects of colonial rule.

At the same time, certain aspects of Enlightenment thinking softened attitudes among some Protestant missionaries who touted such values as progress, efficiency, and human perfectibility. The Social Gospel Movement, forged in Gilded Age United States and grounded in a vision of God's reign as a present ethical reality, influenced mission-founded churches and partially explains the imperative many missionaries felt to open schools, hospitals, and community service centers around the world. Tensions existed around whether missionaries should stress evangelism or humanitarianism, the saving of individual souls or the reforming of social structures, but equally part of the Enlightenment legacy that pervaded Protestant missions was the view of Western culture as uniquely advanced and unquestionably superior. This manifested as a retreat from early Jesuit accommodational practices, although the Protestant emphasis on vernacularizing scripture did afford opportunities to document if not, in fact, to preserve local languages and worldviews (Sanneh 1989).

In both Protestant and Catholic cases, it would be simplistic to conclude that missionaries were either wholesale philanthropists or agents of imperialism. Yet in the realm of informal politics, in conceptions of and experiences of the world and of the self, missionaries had a definite impact (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986). They introduced modern distinctions regarding agency, subjectivity, and religion. In determining, for example, which aspects of their host societies could be accommodated and which could not, missionaries dichotomized "religion" and "culture," a dichotomy premised on a modern view of religion as an aspect of life rather than life itself. Likewise, by privileging belief over practice and meaning over materiality, Protestant missionaries, in particular, promulgated what anthropologist Webb Keane calls "the moral narrative of modernity," one that construes the self as ideally possessed of individual conscience and unimpeded by physical and social entanglements (Keane 2007). Thus, while the relationship of Christian missions to Euro-American imperial politics was variable and indeterminate, the ethical impact of missionaries on the colonial frontier was clear. Western missionaries helped usher their converts, and even those who resisted conversion, into the epistemological and moral framework of Western modernity with its own ideas about self and society, culture and religion, moral agency and modern progress.

Theological Ethics from the Global South

If the story of Christian missions on the colonial frontier has, as so far presented, emphasized European agency, that is not because communities and cultures on the receiving end were passive and permissive. On the contrary, Christian converts never but adapted the faith to their political contexts, cultural frameworks,

and religious backgrounds. Acts of appropriation and negotiation are evident from the start, yet indigenous theologies came to be formalized and disseminated only quite recently – from the mid-twentieth century as the age of European imperialism began winding down. With political independence came a degree of ecclesial and intellectual independence, with which Global South Churches and theologians began challenging the hegemony and presumed universality of Western Christianity by revalidating and re-centering their own experiences. Theology came to be seen as contextual and multiple, reflecting the particularities of a people, rather than universal and singular. In every case, formally articulated contextual theologies encompassed profoundly ethical dimensions. They recast the Christian tradition as a resource for addressing and redressing some of the most enduring legacies of colonialism: inequalities of class and race, for example, and denigrations of cultures and religions. Latin American, African, and Asian theologians also pushed back against the West's "moral narrative of modernity" by tapping into their own cultures' more relational conceptions of what it means to be human, excavating thereby significant but buried elements of the Christian tradition itself.

Latin America

Latin American nations were the first of the Global South to gain formal independence from European rule, though poverty, domination, and dependency under global capitalist structures continued far beyond. An ever-expanding gulf between rich and poor, the rise of military dictatorships in the mid-twentieth century, and the Roman Catholic Church's own adoption (via the Second Vatican Council) of a more accommodating stance toward the world combined to spark a radical turn in Latin American Christianity. The region's Church leaders began a process of reevaluating the role of Christianity in their own contexts, to find ways of engaging politically and of challenging the Church's conventional alliance with the status quo. This they did in a monumental bishops' conference in 1968, in Medellín, Colombia, which ended up distancing the Catholic Church from institutions seen as too closely tied to political and economic power. Seeking to respond to the impoverished condition of most Latin Americans, these bishops condemned neocolonialism and institutionalized violence, declaring the Church to be in solidarity with the oppressed, based on what they considered God's own "preferential option for the poor."

In 1971, Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez published *Teología de la liberación* (*Theology of Liberation*), which bestowed academic legitimacy on the fledgling movement (Gutiérrez [1971] 1988). Gutiérrez helped further redefine the mission of the Church, but he is especially known for articulating a new method of theology. From being a deductive enterprise, privileging the perspectives of the powerful, theology became far more inductive – arising as a second step that follows practical engagement in the social problems of a given community. Marxist assumptions and values underpinned much of Latin American liberation theology, particularly its emphasis on class struggle as the driver of history. This connection to Marxism drew scorn and rebuke from the Vatican, as well as from local economic elites. Yet liberation theologians defended their project on biblical grounds: the Exodus narrative that aligns God with the suffering and subjugated, the prophetic books that denounce injustice and inequality, and the New Testament critiques of wealth and worldly power.

While explicitly enjoining the Church to respond ethically to exploitative conditions, liberation theologians also reconceived basic theological categories to reflect a more expansive conception of the self. Rather than attributing social problems to individual failings or personal guilt, liberation theologians defined sin and salvation collectively, forcing attention on structures and institutions. Accompanying

this was also a critique of post-Enlightenment European views that cast religion as a private matter of individual conscience. Unabashedly, liberation theologians integrated religion with politics and society. In so doing, they successfully transformed the Church from a supporter of the wealthy and powerful to a force for democracy and human rights. Yet liberation theology failed to sustain itself as a widespread, popular movement. Tightened control by the church hierarchy and the rise in the 1990s of Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity have led many scholars to herald the demise of this once vibrant tradition. Others contest this narrative, arguing on the one hand that the economic and political thrust of liberation theology has simply become diffused into the Church and into non-ecclesial social movements, and, on the other hand, that the movement has simply taken a spiritual turn, wherein liberation theology retains its ethical imperatives but replaces the discourse of Marxism and macro-scale revolution with the language of spirituality and compassionate intersubjective relations. Pope Francis, the Latin American head of the Roman Catholic Church, illustrates both processes at work insofar as he speaks out against capitalism in ways that evoke the early days of liberation theology, while also embodying the preferential option for the poor in his everyday actions and interactions (Jacobsen 2015, 97–98). Regardless of how it manifests today, the ethical impulse behind liberation theology remains one of the most potent in postcolonial Christianity, not only for what it accomplished in Latin America, but also for what it helped inspire in other locales of the Global South.

Africa

Africa is one such locale, specifically South Africa where white settler populations introduced and sustained until as recently as 1990 a system of apartheid that segregated black Africans and denied them basic civil rights. Apartheid's supporters managed to find biblical justifications for the ideology of separateness and the politics of racial domination. Yet anti-apartheid advocates also drew from the Christian tradition, including black liberation theology, which arose in the United States together with class-based liberation theology in Latin America. Making race and racialized oppression its primary analytics, black theology argued that God, by identifying with the concerns of oppressed people, must be identified as black. This view supported and inspired resistance to institutionalized oppression, and church leaders – such as Desmond Tutu, the former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town – became fierce antagonists to the white South African regime. The Kairos Document, written by an ecumenical group of South African theologians in 1985, distinguished three types of theology, arguing for the ethical imperative that Christians embrace the latter: state theology, which sanctifies the status quo; church theology, which by professing personal piety and neutrality helps sustain the status quo; and prophetic theology, which directly challenges the status quo (Chidester 2000, 534–535).

The ethical project of African Christian theology has taken another form within but also beyond South Africa: opposition to the disparagement and diminishment of African cultural traditions. Although European missionaries always needed, or were always forced, to translate Christianity into local idioms and beliefs, by the early twentieth century when almost all African nations were under European rule, white missionaries held disproportionate power in the continent's churches. They used this privilege to introduce Western theologies, values, and virtues, and promote them as more advanced than the "heathenism" and "primitivism" indigenous to Africa. This missionary paternalism did not go unchecked, though, particularly as Africans' own thirst for independence and knowledge of the Bible increased. African prophetic figures came to lead new churches designed to exist freely from foreign influences.

Known as African Initiated (or Indigenous) Churches, these churches emphasized aspects of African religion and culture previously ignored or invalidated: prophecy, healing, and spiritual power, for example. Theologians, for their part, began articulating an African theology of inculturation, one that sought to disaggregate Christianity from European cultural norms, and, by affirming local ways of being, to clarify that one may be proudly African while also being devoutly Christian.

Some of the most creative theological work coming out of Africa attempts a synthesis of these two theological strands – liberation and inculturation – seeing both as rooted in a common project of uplift and freedom, whether from foreign political rule or foreign cultural domination (Martey 1993). This more holistic approach resonates with a refusal, by most Africans, to separate religion from other aspects of life, an integrated view also reflected in an ethical principle most African intellectuals see as foundational to African subjectivity: the principle of relational humanism. Expressed in the Nguni word *ubuntu*, which may be translated as "humanity toward others," leading African theologian John Mbiti elaborates its meaning with what has become a well-known aphorism: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti [1969] 1990, 107). As a communal conception of humanity and human flourishing, *ubuntu* provides the basis for a critique of Western notions of the self that privilege the sovereign autonomy of the isolated individual. African ethicists, theologians, and moral leaders ground *ubuntu* in both biblical Christianity and African tradition, arguing that the latter helps reawaken dormant truths of the former. Tutu in fact made it the guiding principle of South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which he, in light of his prominent moral leadership, was called to lead. Through the application on a national scale of Christian practices of confession, repentance, and forgiveness, the TRC brought healing and restoration to South Africa after the tumultuous and protracted fall of the apartheid regime. The notion of *ubuntu* also informs the relationship Africans by and large maintain with ancestors, those humans who have died but whose spirits are perceived as still present among the living. It is from the ancestors that ethical guidance is frequently sought. Neither abstract rules nor ethical imperatives allow one to negotiate the moral complexities of life. Since ancestors, before dying, had to, they are understood to have the wisdom and experience to provide proper guidance amid the ambiguities and uncertainties of existence (Jacobsen 2015, 67–70).

Asia

On the Asian continent, large and diverse though it is, some broad traits of Christian ethics cut across the countries and cultures. Asian theologians commonly write of the "triple dialogue" in which Asian Christians must engage: with the poor, with the cultures, and with the religions. Mahatma Gandhi, though never joining a Christian church, exemplifies this confluence of ethical concerns. His own choice for an ascetic lifestyle, his leadership of the Indian independence movement, and his activism on behalf of outcastes (Dalits) in the Hindu caste system were largely inspired by his readings of the Gospels. Gandhi held that Jesus Christ's principle of unconditional love and its implications for nonviolence as a political philosophy were not the sole possessions of institutional Christianity. The measure of one's faithfulness would be one's ethical orientation, not one's ecclesial affiliation (Chidester 2000, 466–469).

Gandhi's Hinduism, as well as the Buddhist tradition present throughout South, East, and Southeast Asia, promote asceticism and thus frequently view Jesus Christ as exemplary for his ideals of simplicity and service. Yet, Dalit and feminist theologians warn against romanticizing poverty and self-denial; they emphasize instead the life-giving powers of Christ. Here, as seen also in Africa, lies a significant tension

between the dialogue with cultures and religions, on the one hand, and the concern for liberation from oppression, on the other. This tension most clearly manifests in India, given the complexities of the caste system. Entering into dialogue with Hindus has usually meant doing so with members of the priestly caste and their sophisticated philosophical schools. The question arises of how one does that while still showing solidarity with low-caste or outcaste communities. Nevertheless, India has proven itself a laboratory for the development of theologies of religions, of dialogical or interreligious theologies. Catholic theologians especially, after the Second Vatican Council, engaged and even adopted aspects of the non-Christian religions to such an extent that the Vatican expressed concern and condemnation on several occasions. Theologian Peter Phan has argued persuasively for the possibility, indeed the benefit, of "being religious interreligiously," noting how, among Vietnamese Christians, such as himself, Confucian norms shape the reception of Jesus Christ, as do traditional cosmologies that position Christ as preeminent among the ancestors (Phan 2004). In Japan, likewise, some Protestant churches opposed the exclusivism of Western Christianity by regarding Asian religious scriptures as sources of revelation, and by adopting indigenous religious practices. In South Korea, where Protestant Christianity has especially flourished, the continued influence of shamanistic religions has been identified as one factor behind the popularity of especially the country's more charismatic Christian movements.

Underpinning this willingness of Christians to engage and even incorporate other religions may be the simple demographic fact that Christianity throughout Asia (with the exception of the Philippines) is a minority religion. Christians generally are not, as they are in the West, free to encounter non-Christians on terms of their choosing. The ability to interact amicably with friends, neighbors, and family who adhere to other faiths constitutes the practical knowledge held by most Asian Christians. On a more philosophical register, feeding into this ethic of everyday engagement may be a widely shared principle of harmony and holism, conveyed most concisely by the Chinese yin-yang symbol, which models how opposite or even contrary forces are mutually dependent and essential for the larger whole. Religious traditions may be different and even opposed, but this does not negate the goodness and wisdom, even the necessity, of them. Also emerging as an ethical implication of this relational principle is the Korean theological concept of *han*, which refers to the experience of being harmed by others' sinful acts (Park 1993). From an ideological stance that stresses harmony and relationality, the emphasis in Western Christianity on sin and the sinner comes across as one-sided. It potentially doubly harms the victims of injustice, as their experiences lack significance relative to those of sinners. By complementing the concept of sin with the concept of *han*, repentance comes also to entail reparation – absolution not only for the committer of sin, but for its victim as well.

Conclusion

This entry has explored two different aspects of Christian ethics in the Global South: European Christianity's expansion into Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and the theologically inflected response of Latin Americans, Africans, and Asians to those expansions and their far-reaching consequences. While the relationship between Christian missionaries and imperial politics must be judged variable and indeterminate, nearly all contextual theological movements worked, in one way or another, to advance certain conceptions of freedom, justice, and rights (whether human, cultural, or religious). Questions about the ideal path to human flourishing – whether through autonomy and self-sufficiency, or in communities and

collectivities – permeate both aspects of the history explored here. While missionaries, particularly Protestant missionaries, helped universalize a modern, individualist conception of the self, Christian ethical concepts such as liberation (in Latin America), *ubuntu* (in Africa), and *han* (in Asia) suggest a far more embedded and embodied understanding of human well-being.

In recent decades, interactions and intersections between Euro-American and other forms of global Christianity have increased, a trend likely only to continue with time. Symbolically, one sees this most clearly in the presence within the European heart of Christianity – Vatican City – of a Pope from the Global South. More substantively, this trend manifests in the increased attention paid by Western churches, seminaries, and universities to the intellectual implications of Christianity's growth in the Global South, as well as in the migration waves that have brought Asian, Latin American, and African Christianities squarely into Europe and North America. These varied points of contact will surely come to constitute yet another chapter in the global history of Christian ethics. Suggested by this entry is that among that chapter's likely themes will be the potential for conflict – or perhaps conciliation – between what are currently competing conceptions of ethical selfhood.

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CHAPTER 103

Global Interactions (Islam)

Muhamad Ali

In the contemporary geopolitics and culture, many scholars and other people are interested in knowing and understanding what the 1.8 billion person Muslim populations have said about controversial moral problems. Many have perceived Islam as a violent and God-submission-religion thus resisting the idea of Islam as being an *ethical and humanist religion*, whereas others seek to correct that misperception by emphasizing it as fundamentally the religion of peace and humanity. According to the Pew Forum 2013 global opinion survey, the majority of Muslims say it is necessary to believe in God to be a moral person, and that they say drinking intoxicants, sex outside marriage, homosexuality, and committing suicide are immoral, although they disagree on other moral questions such as those related to marriage, divorce, polygamy, and family planning. These Muslims and non-Muslims perceptions suggest the global impact of Islamic ethics, and a better understanding of the factors and impacts may be had by considering three-fold dimensions: text and context, theory and practice, and religion and secularity.

Text and Context

In the post-Muhammad era, Muslims everywhere, generally hold to depend on the Qur'an and the textual tradition attributed to the Prophet Muhammad known as the Hadith, for their moral and ethical guidance. For example, a Muslim would cite the Qur'anic text "We sent thee not but as a mercy for all the mankind" (Q. 21:107), and be publicly committed to follow Muhammad as the embodiment of moral behavior (Q. 33:21). They would also cite the Qur'anic message to invite people to the path of God with wisdom, good teaching, and the best possible debate when necessary (Q. 16:125). Through preaching, teaching, and interactions, they are aware that God's mindfulness and piety is the standard by which God will judge the actions of diverse human beings, rewarded or punished in the hereafter. They see Muhammad as the living Qur'an whose main message is to improve morality of all mankind. For them, Islam is both faith and action. Muslim elite and ordinary people in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Africa, and China, cite Qur'an 2:83 "those who believe and do good deeds shall be the inhabitants of Paradise, to dwell therein forever." Quoting God's words written in the Qur'an, Muhammad in the hadith, and in other cases, citing Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law Imam Ali ibn Thalib (d. 661), or Muhammad Al-Ghazzali (d. 1111), Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273), or any other Muslim scholars considered authoritative, are characteristics of moral training, debates, and practices across the contemporary Muslim world. Contemporary Muslims

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

have employed the various different hermeneutic and discursive strategies to examine and negotiate the problems associated with modernity and globalization (Afsaruddin 2015).

Qur'anic and hadith references are abundant in the Declaration on Human Rights in Islam in Cairo, Egypt, formulated on August 5, 1990, by the leaders and scholars of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), as a response to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Cairo formulation stipulates each article with a restraining statement "so long as it doesn't contradict the Islamic law." The right of religious freedom and women's rights, for example, have been particularly scrutinized and revised. They have asserted that human rights exist only in relation to human obligations to God and others, and the idea of freedom belongs to the community rather than individualism. This trajectory, considered mainstream and popular is in contrast to the progressive scholars and activists who value human rights not in their disregard of obligations and who emphasize individual autonomy over conformism to the community. Another less mainstream position but not a less important one, is a more liberal intellectual standpoint that stresses the universality of human rights beyond faith and culture. They disagree on how to interpret God's will, His commands and prohibitions scattered in the Qur'an, hadith, and pious scholars and teachers.

The diverse trajectories seek to take guidance or to justify their moral judgments on old and new moral issues. Muslim scholars cite the Qur'an verses, such as Q. 60:8, "Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just," which invites the community of believers, to show kindness to those people as long as they do not attack them nor drive them out from their homes, and to act justly toward them under any circumstances. They are commanded to act justly so that they be near righteousness *(taqwa*). The life of suffering in many forms: the crisis of faith, the loss of hope, this integration of the Muslim community (*umma*), and the lack of sense of purpose, have conditioned many Muslims to reflect and find practical answers to God, Muhammad, and religious authority. Many follow Islam primarily as a source of identity, and fight for a just social, political, and economic order. They treat justice as a practical norm rather than an abstract concept, although there have been studies of justice and other ethico-religious concepts derived from the Qur'an.

The idea of justice has been discussed and evaluated in many domains of life, including the family, focusing on Muslim women's powerless condition and their empowerment. Therefore, there have emerged global movements for gender justice and equality in the family and society, such as the *Musawah* network (musawah.org). The network was originally launched by Sisters in Islam in Malaysia, and then has advanced connection to more than two hundred Muslim women and organizations around the world. For this network, the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are more compatible with the Islamic legal principles than family law provisions in many Muslim countries and communities. But they have to cite and contextualize the Qur'anic teachings on men and women (Q. 30:21; 2:187; 9:71; 2:222; 4:2, 34). They also revive the objectives of the Islamic law formulated by classical and medieval scholars, in light of their knowledge about the international discourses and laws of human rights as well as their reading of the realities of the lives of Muslim women locally and around the world. One of the organizations in their network, Rahima (which stands for "compassion") in Indonesia, reinterprets the Qur'anic concept of the natural state of being (*fitrah*) by considering social construction of gender roles in history and restressing the balance of rights and responsibilities, and the complementary relationships between husbands and wives. They seek to tackle the issue of domestic violence and

divorce as well as the prevalent female circumcision, by engaging the texts, traditions, modern ethical and legal vocabularies, and contemporary problems and challenges.

In contemporary Egypt, grassroots Muslim women have organized themselves to fight for gender justice, from within their pre-Islamic and Islamic patriarchies, and selectively appropriate modern notions of liberation and gender justice learned from mosques and their social environment (Mahmood 2005). In contemporary Indonesia, the traditionalist Muslim women and Sufis, seek to rise to power and authority challenging and negotiating normative Muslim patriarchy while establishing their local Muslim authenticity, a contemporary practice examined by using local discourses and vocabularies beyond the Middle Eastern feminist and Western discourses. To study these Islamic social movements engaging Islamic texts and local and global contexts is to enrich the existing interpretative studies on women and sexual ethics drawn from the Qur'anic, Hadith, and legal interpretative traditions. Recent studies discuss Islamic textualism and contextualism in terms of modern terms and concepts, such as the examination of the tension between masculinity and femininity, egalitarianism and hierarchy, and justice and power. Islamic ethics of sexuality has been inclusive of the various sexual and gender orientations, utilizing literary, historical, and anthropological approaches, offering even more diverse and innovative ways of knowing, doing and being a Muslim (Cesari and Casanova 2017).

Women, gender, and sexuality issues have not overshadowed the other issues. Abortion, euthanasia, organ donation, and other body-related issues, continue to be discussed and debated, sometimes theoretically in light of the classical and medieval textual Muslim traditions on health, suffering, life, death and dying, but more often now in light of the modern advancement in organ transplant, cosmetic enhancement, contraception, and reproductive technology (Brockopp and Eich 2008; Sachedina 2009). The Indonesian Muslim religious scholars council, formed in 1975, issued numerous religious rulings (*fatwa*) related to contemporary moral problems, including a religious ruling in 2000, in response to the increased number of cases of abortion in the society. The ruling prohibits abortion after the beginning of God's insertion of the soul in the embryo in the womb, except for medical reasons, such as saving the mother's life. The fatwa makes reference to the Qur'anic passage on the development of the embryo (Q. 12:14), another Qur'an passage on the illegitimacy of killing the souls, except for good reasons (17:33), such as during the war for defending Muslims' lives, and to the hadith regarding the beginning and development of the human soul and the medieval jurisprudential scholarships on the parallel or analogous issues. The ruling makes a reference to the Islamic medieval principle of beneficence: "To avoid harm is preferred to providing benefit," and another principle "emergency conditions overcome prohibition" (Majelis Ulama Indonesia 2011). Other Muslims look to common sense and their doctors without explicit recourse to scriptures and past scholarships. There are various different Islamic ideas and theories of being good, but there is also a gap between theory and practice.

Theory and Practice

There is always a gap between theory and practice on Muslim ethics. On the issues of climate change and ecology, for example, the lack of action for a sustainable ecology in Muslim countries has often been attributed to Muslims' theology and cosmology centering God and human submission toward God, rather than humans and the natural environment. The mainstream fact is that many Muslim leaders and

communities are preoccupied with their immediate and pressing economic and political problems. Muslim leaders, scholars, and activists have held local, regional, and international conferences, workshops, and many have created curricula to include ecology, connecting scholars, activists, journalists, teachers, and often producing books, articles, and fatwas on Islamic eco-ethics. In educational and scholarly circles, Muslims' normative approaches to the natural environment have changed. There are now more studies in the elaboration of the unity of God, the unity of humankind and creation, the balance in nature of humans' vicegerents of God on earth, and humans' responsibility not to destroy the world, in terms of environmental justice. There are more efforts to produce Islamic environmental law and authoritative legal opinions on key environmental issues. Muslim scholars and activists have created a distinctly Islamic environmentalism, different from the European and American ones, while other Muslims emphasize the universality of the ecological values and activism (Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003). Many Muslims have joined green movements, faith or secular-based, or else they have created their own environment-friendly spaces within their mosques, schools, and communities. Many Muslims have engaged the environment for the sake of Islam, and others have reinterpreted Islamic texts and tradition for the sake of the environment. In light of this, scholars of the humanities have called for the study of Muslim theories of the environment as developed in the Qur'anic interpretation, Sufism, art, science, and diverse community engagements across global contexts (Gade 2019). But the most important challenge remains in socialization and implementation. Deforestation, overexploitation, wastes in private and public spaces, overconsumption, pollution, and flooding in many urban areas, have become the prevalent facts in many Muslim-majority environments.

Another important yet understudied topic in scholarship has been the Muslims' ideas and experiences of charity, philanthropy, and humanitarianism both at local and global levels. The ethics and act of almsgiving (*zakat*) and its inseparability with prayer is well-known (Q. 9:16) but the ways it is interpreted and implemented have been examined only in few studies (Clark 2004; Fauzia 2013). The rise of the Islamic humanitarian organizations such as Islamic Relief, the Red Crescent, and Muslim Aid, as well as local Islamic organizations, has been linked the increased awareness among Muslims of their ethics of charity, compassion, voluntarism, and activism. In contemporary Indonesia, for example, the modernist organization Muhammadiyah has created a charitable body combining the religious ethics of charity and entrepreneurship and recently established a disaster management center, originally in response to the earthquakes, but developed into a wide range of activities including relief efforts across Indonesia. At the same time, international Islamic and secular humanitarian organizations, such as the United Arab Emirates' Asian Muslim Charity Foundation and Qatar Charity, and the International Islamic Relief Organization, have worked in collaboration with them and other local religious and secular organizations in Indonesia. For another example, from Turkey and then America, Fethullah Gülen, from around 1999 onwards, has led a global Islamic movement with some non-Turkish and other religious affiliations, coordinating schools in over one hundred and eighty countries and humanitarian aid in many of them. The movement claims it is based on an Islamic ethics of peace and service, although its practices and developments have been subject to domestic and global debates. There are few more, but smaller global movements such as the World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists, a network of individuals, foundations, and corporations. They seek to advance effective and accountable acts of giving, in response to the prejudice, suspicion and negative publicity regarding Islamist charity movements. There has been an increased global concern among Muslims for balancing business profits, through the creation of Islamic banks and charities emerging in the 1970s, and humanitarianism, developing from 2000 onwards. They

wish to coordinate the available resources in the efforts to reduce poverty, illiteracy, natural degradation, and disease. These developments are opportunities for scholars and students to study the concepts and practices of Islamic philanthropy and humanitarianism, normatively and empirically, locally and globally. One can study, for example, to what extent postcolonialism, nationalism, capitalism, and socialism shaped Muslim actions (and inaction) of giving and doing good to people regardless of faith, gender, class, ethnicity and political orientations. One can focus on the relation between religious and secular vocabularies, institutions, and practices of humanitarianism in both theory and everyday practice.

Religious and Secular

Islamic ethics has often been framed in terms of religion and secularity. Muslim studies of ethics combine *din*, religion and *dunya,* the worldly. In theory, to be a Muslim is to seek for the hereafter but to never forget the part in this world and to do good as God has done good to him (Q. 28:77). In practice, one needs to locate the religious and the secular dimensions of a Muslim idea or act. One can examine if, how, and why the religious was meant for the worldly and how the worldly was interpreted and acted upon for the sake of the religious. For many Muslim intellectuals, politics is the secular domain that Islam provides only a universal guidance, but for other Islamic political thinkers and politicians, Islam is a political symbol and system in the struggle for Islamizing the society if not the state.

Hence, political ethics and culture is one of the most plural and polarized in the Muslim world. In the postcolonial era, even though most Muslim countries have conformed and lived in the nation-states, all being members of the United Nations, and mostly members of the OIC, they are more concerned with their domestic political and economic problems, and only occasionally and ineffectively have shown a global Muslim solidarity as in the cases of the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflicts and the Muslim Uyghur-Chinese regime problems. Scholars have argued for Muslim political exceptionalism (religion and politics being always integral), but others have studied more dynamic and diverse ideas and practices. The progressive and the Islamist, broadly categorized, have shared the political ethics of justice, peace, and prosperity, but they interpret these differently and apply and do not apply it in real politics. The old ethics of war, peace, and diplomacy has been reinterpreted in relation to the international laws and regulations, but local politics has always involved the majority vs minorities problem, abuse of power and corruption vs good and clean government, political and legal justice vs discriminations and persecution, as well as global faith communalism versus nationalism and citizenship. Scholars study how religious orientations do not have a systematic relationship with their political preferences, as in Indonesia (Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani, 2018), whereas others have tended to single out religious identity (although not necessarily religious ethics) in making political choices.

An alternative to or alongside the state players, many Islamic organizations are part of non-governmental or civil society, where Muslims are the only or joint members. In their various visions and missions, many have promoted what is called a global ethics. Some invoke the idea "the common word," taken from the Qur'anic *kalima sawa*, a common word particularly between Christians (and other peoples of the book) and Muslim believers. Others use the terms "Abrahamic sacred ground," "interfaith harmony," "a dialogue of civilizations," "friendship," and "common humanity." The Fathulleh Gülen movement from Turkey, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama from Indonesia, the Ahmadiyya from India, the

Muslim brotherhood from Egypt, Hizbut Tahrir from Palestine, the Tablighi Jama'ati, the Salafi movements with countless figures and networks, as well as the Al-Qaida, the Jama'ah Islamiyyah, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), regarded as radical and terrorist by the mainstream Muslims, are movements and networks which present diverse and contradicting ideals and practices of justice and goodness. Transnational, global, regional, and home-grown terror and violent acts in many parts of the world, have led Muslim leaders, scholars, activists, and ordinary people, to respond, albeit in the various different ways. Reinterpretation of the Islamic texts containing the notions of leadership and consultation, re-exploration of classical and medieval concepts, have flourished in the schools, universities, and the Internet. Some scholars have emphasized the ethics of peace, tolerance, pluralism, and more recently moderation, in response to the challenges from Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Kamali 2015). Other Muslim scholars feel the need to react to anything related to an act committed by a Muslim regardless of the intention and condition. In response to the lack of studies of Islamic peace ethics, authors have formulated a distinctly Islamic ethics of nonviolence and peace building from the texts and traditions, either the Sunnī, the Shi'a, or beyond (Mahallati 2016).

One of the few studies of Islamic principles of nonviolence and peace building explores Qur'anic verses pertaining to the pursuit of the ideal of justice, social empowerment by doing good, the universality and dignity of humanity, equality, the sacredness of human life, the quest for peace, knowledge and reason, creativity and innovation, forgiveness, patience, collaboration and inclusivity and participation. Others elaborate a political ethics as informed by Islamic texts in the context of domestic politics and international relations, elaborating such concepts as justice, democracy, diversity, and human rights. Still others present the practical ways Muslim groups have used Islamic texts and tradition for justifying either good or evil in the globalized world (Hashmi 2002; Abu-Nimer 2003; Kelsay 2007). Some of these studies show that the question is not whether Islam is for or against violence as such, but when and why particular Muslims justify violence as either legitimate or illegitimate. The fact that Islamic texts allow multiple interpretations, the absence of a unified global power and authority, the higher degree of literacy and education, the greater access to information, and the movements of peoples and ideas, have contributed to the more diverse and more active participation of Muslim men, women, old and young, traditionally trained ulama and modern intellectuals, activists, preachers, and ordinary individuals, in expressing and debating what counts as morally acceptable political ideas and actions.

In many cases, Muslim activists considered hardliners, have taken public ethics and law into their hands, while others depend on and work with the secular state apparatus. On applying the Qur'anic command "enjoining the good and forbidding evil" Q. 3:110–114.), the modernist Muhammadiyah, emphasizes enjoying the good, by building schools, universities, hospitals, orphanages, and the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama focuses on Islamic boarding schools in the villages and accommodates medieval scholarship and Indonesian local cultures such as the uses of Hindu epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata and the shadow puppet, to convey the Islamic moral message. The contemporary hardliner group calling themselves the Front of the Defenders of Islam, have stressed the act of forbidding of evil, often by sweeping locals and foreigners from consuming alcohol and other Muslims not fasting in the month of Ramadan. Studying a contemporary case of Muslim practice will enrich the theoretical study of commanding right and forbidding wrong in Islam (Cook 2003). Another study has argued that in contemporary Indonesia, Muslims show more tolerance toward Christians and Hindus than other Muslims such as the Shi'as and the Ahmadis (Menchik 2016). But in the former-Dutch colony, Indonesia, the mainstream organizations, Muslim and other religious communities, have endorsed the common ground

called Pancasila (a Sanskrit phrase literally meaning "five pillars"), consisting of monotheism, civilized and just humanism, nationalism, democracy, and social justice, whereas the former British colony Malaysia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan state Islam as the official religion. Many Muslims in these two countries contend that these state philosophies are influenced by Islamic principles and ethics as well as local and global histories and cultures.

Beyond politics, to many Muslims, Muhammad and his wife Khadija were also a model for business conduct because they were merchants themselves. To be morally authentic and outwardly up-to-date, Muslim individuals and communities in the urbanized areas have participated in business and economic activities deemed more in compliance with Islamic legal and business ethics, not only with the universally shared norms of hard work and discipline, but also with the text and tradition-based interpretations of profit and loss sharing, usury-free banking system, although most Muslim individuals and foundations continue to benefit from conventional economic transactions based on interests, set nationally and globally. Muslim foundations established interest-free banks first in Egypt and the OIC set up an international Islamic bank in 1974, and more Islamic banks have been established in Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia as well in other countries. Many of the same Muslim individuals and groups, however, have both interest-free bank accounts as well as conventional bank accounts, and most still engage in interest-bank transactions contending that interest and usury are two different practices. Other Muslims, including those regarded as the conservative Salafi refrain from engaging in both systems altogether, using instead their autonomous economic activities. They feel the need to balance religious considerations regarding usury and harms, and the demands of a modern economy for profit and accumulation of wealth. Still other Muslims have engaged both traditions and modernities, such as the local and global phenomenon of halal food markets. The notion of *halal* food has crossed the religious, political, ethnic, national, class, and time boundaries, but has also blurred religious conservatism and economic and political liberalism (Bergeaud-Blackler, Fischer, and Lever 2016). Global capitalism, international trade and regulations, state policies, and religious networks have contributed to the different ways in which Muslims think and act locally and globally in the economic domain.

The family, politics, and the economy, are some of the important domains of Muslims' moral conduct described in Arabic and Islamic studies as *akhlaq*. There is another related, yet also pervasive concept called *adab*. This Arabic pre-Islamic norm has become Islamic and globalized, and has become increasingly a cosmopolitan ethical practice shared by non-Muslims and the secular as well. In South Asian and Southeast Asian Muslim societies, with their Hindu mainstream histories and cultures, Islamic imperial past, and British legacies on their political, educational, legal cultures, the proper moral conduct or *adab* has become a pervasive and comprehensive ideal norm. The concept *adab* reveals the relation of the inner self and outer expressions, and the relation between knowing, doing, and being, which becomes the central mode in the diverse domains of life or becomes challenged in other contexts. In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, moral behavior is often framed and discussed in terms of morality and etiquette, using Arabic and other foreign (including English and Dutch) terms as well as Sanskrit, Javanese, and other local vocabularies and cultures found in the literature, in the everyday interaction, schools, organizations, political parties, and social media (Metcalf 1984; Rozehnal 2019). Islamic texts, including the legal and the Sufi, European colonial organizations, and postcolonial and global transformations, play a changing and dynamic role in shaping the process and identities of being morally Muslim in this region, other parts of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Western countries where Muslims are in a minority. The fact that there is no centralized global authority and no one

center of learning in contemporary Islam, contributes to Muslims' multiplicity of moral voices, ideas, aspirations, and practices. Revelation has become textualized, but textual and contextual modes of reasoning and theoretical and practical, and religious and secular factors have shaped individual and collective Muslims' approaches to the revelation in guiding them in how to live in this world and prepare for the world to come.

Future Directions in Research

In Muslim schools and colleges, ethics remain persistently understood as an integral part of Islam, and its study takes place either as a topic in an Islamic theology, philosophy, mysticism, jurisprudence, and education, or as a science of ethics (*akhlaq*) and of the related concepts of virtues and manners, such as *adab*. The rich classical, medieval, and modern ethical intellectual traditions continue to be studied to explore the rich Muslim ethical thought (Oh 2007; Ayubi 2019). The tension between reason and revelation, the ideal of perfect man, and human obligations toward God, and human beings, are typical subject matter. Muslim thought is primarily taught as carrying a moral authority, not merely as a starting point or a primary source for an intellectual history or comparative studies. In modern educational institutions, scholars have focused on practical or living Islam, touching the modern questions of women's rights, terrorism, ethnic and religious conflicts, ecological disasters, and many more. Such studies present Islam either as an independent or a dependent variable, using the historical, anthropological, sociological, and other approaches in humanities and social sciences. Some scholars seek to incorporate both normative and practical, both prescriptive and descriptive methods as a way to understand diversity but also to promote particular interpretations over others. These are mostly case studies, and sometimes interdisciplinary and cross-cultural.

Contemporary religious ethics scholars have rightly pointed out that the study of Islamic ethics has focused on cases and concrete actions rather than on general principles, and on communalistic rather than individualistic, in contrast to Western deductive and individualistic ethics (Reinhart 2003). In a recent study, Bucar and Stalnaker (2012) have suggested that comparative ethics has benefited from new methodologies, such as textual studies, ethnography, and case studies, and from new frameworks of power relations and social context, descriptive and constructive inquiry, adjudication between diverse religious claims, belief and ritual in context, moral relativism versus universalism, and a fusion of diverse horizons. The recent study of Muslim women's dressing describes modesty as the salient ethic, drawn from Islamic texts and traditions, in the context of Tehran, Yogyakarta, and Istanbul, analyzing it in relation to aesthetics, selfhood, and community (Bucar 2017). We can add to the list the tension between a Muslim's inner intention in ritual and social interaction and publicity of his or her pious prayer, pilgrimage, and almsgiving; the act of spreading false and true information in social media, and commodifying Sufi spiritual discipline by marketing it to the public.

The future of scholarship in religious ethics depends on the pursuit of normative and empirical studies, with monodisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and comparative studies, with collaborations of Muslims from diverse schools of thought and traditions and non-Muslim scholars and activists. The normative studies may be well advanced by considering the old and new production of an ethical thought and theory with now more accessible Muslim and non-Muslim, Arabic and non-Arabic references, thus contributing to the

advancement of Muslim ethical theories, its multicultural origins, its rich intellectual tradition, its varied dimensions touching the diverse domains of life, and its diverse impacts on the Muslims and beyond. A comparative study of the notion of God's command in classical and medieval Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions (Hare 2015) is a welcome contribution to a comparative religious ethics, but the global and contemporary studies will be no less important. No less crucial are edited volumes of religious ethics which include an Islamic perspective, are welcome contributions to Islamic studies and comparative religious ethics. In a recent influential work on the importance of being Islamic (Ahmed 2016), Islam needs to be conceptualized as "the theoretical object and analytical category that maps meaningfully onto Islam as a human and historical phenomenon" (p. 542). For Ahmed, "all acts and statements of meaning-making for the self by Muslims and non-Muslims that are carried out in terms of Islam . . . should properly be understood as Islamic" (p. 544). This reconceptualization paves the way to even more diverse and dynamic understandings and practices of Muslim ethics in the past and the present, in the local and global context.

One of the important challenges for the scholars, students, and practitioners is how to avoid an Islamic exceptionalism on the one hand and a humanistic universalism yet approached in hegemonically and particularly Western ways. Muslim and non-Muslim apologetics and critics alike have often situated Islam essentially in its communalistic and practical forms, while other scholars have treated Islamic ethics as essentially individualist and abstract. Bringing Islamic studies into a comparative religious ethics should also mean bringing comparative religious ethics into Islamic studies as both ways can be equally enriching if concepts are comparable and made meaningful to a broader scholarly audience, Muslims and non-Muslims, with some humble awareness of one's moral biases and their questions, theories, methods, and even objectives. We need to recognize the fact that although ethics is about the good and the bad, it is in most cases not an either/or domain of life. Human beings, including Muslims, have faced moral dilemmas, ambiguities, and contradictions in their individual and social circumstances, despite their continued search for moral certainties and predictabilities drawing from the texts and their traditions. The most important challenge may not be simply to formulate a continuity and engagement with our own intellectual moral underpinning but to remain open-minded to the new possibilities of new theories, approaches, methods, and even objectives of doing a study of Islam and comparative religious ethics.

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CHAPTER 104

Buddhism: Global Interactions

Francisca Cho

Globalization in the Buddhist Mode

An accurate assessment of Buddhism's global presence needs to look beyond temples and monasteries and focus on the way Buddhist ethical principles are fanning out into contemporary civil societies. The Buddhist concepts of mindfulness, compassion, and interdependence are commonly invoked in discourses about social justice, environmentalism, and the treatment of anxiety and stress. These social issues are now Asian as much as they are Western, and the language of mindfulness, compassion, and interdependence are also present in Western contexts that are not explicitly Buddhist or religious. The concepts are disseminated by well-known Asian monastics such as Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam and the current Dalai Lama of Tibet, Tenzin Gyato, but their conversation partners and audiences are Western intellectuals, scientists, doctors, activists, and philosophers who are not necessarily tethered to formal communities of Buddhist practice.

Secular appropriations of Buddhist words and principles can be distinguished from Buddhist religion, properly speaking. For example, mindfulness meditation has been turned into a clinical therapy known as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) that is used in hospitals and schools, and it is different from traditional Buddhist meditation practices aimed at the goal of nirvana (Kabat-Zinn 1994). Different institutional contexts suggest different levels and objectives of practice, but it is not fruitful to distinguish between more or less genuine forms of Buddhism. Buddhist thought and practice have always stratified between clerical and lay versions, but even more importantly, as Buddhism spread around the world it introduced new seminal ideas into the general population. The transmission of the karma principle into East Asia is a case in point. Karma has been understood both mythologically as rebirth in human, animal, and fantastical realms, and morally as the principle of individual responsibility. But karma is not a "doctrine" in the sense of a creed necessary for religious membership, but rather a cultural mechanism for creating ethical meaning that gives basic shape to Asian life-worlds. To this day, Asians who do not even identify as Buddhist make sense of their moral world in the language of karma.

In a similar manner, secular adaptations of Buddhism such as MBSR can be seen as a significant measure of Buddhist presence. The dissemination of Buddhist thought into general worldviews – to the point where the explicit Buddhist affiliation is eclipsed or forgotten – is a sign of its impact rather than its subversion. Starting from ancient contemplative practices and moving through modern MBSR, the idea of practicing non-judgmental mindfulness of one's thoughts and impulses is now a

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

cross-cultural meme – even if it is simply for the purpose of reducing stress and the symptoms of particular pathologies. The word "global" can be taken to mean a movement beyond overtly religious spaces to broadly cultural ones, in addition to the movement into new geographical regions.

Presently it is the concept of interdependence – with its emphasis on connecting individuals and environments on a worldwide scale – that is emerging as the global Buddhist ethic. The term "interdependence" is rooted in the Theravāda Buddhist concept of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which is often described as the Buddhist theory of cause and effect. But it also draws on Mahāyāna Buddhist concepts of emptiness (*śunyatā*), which favor images of a synchronic and all-encompassing web of mutual relationality. The language of interdependence emphasizes that the well-being of all peoples is connected, and it encourages an ecumenism that affirms a fundamental unity underlying religious and cultural differences. Hence the idiom of interdependence downplays even explicit Buddhist identity to address moral issues in a non-denominational manner. This is not only a trait of Western Buddhism; it is evident in Asian contexts as well, and it is consistent with the fact that being Buddhist in the past has rarely been a matter of exclusive religious adherence and identity.

For Western denizens, the appeal to mutual reliance rather than religious identities reverberates with the growing ranks of those who call themselves "spiritual but not religious." The elective affinity between Buddhism and this kind of spirituality goes back to the nineteenth century when Buddhism was initially introduced to the West. Americans describe Buddhism as "a way of life" rather than a religion, which correctly apprehends that the presence of Buddhism cannot be limited to the number of temples, monks, or those professing confessional allegiance. Buddhism now embodies a global ethical discourse that is both traditional and new, reflecting its continuity and expanded reach in the contemporary era.

Asian Buddhist Movements and their "Secular" Tone

Lay Buddhist movements have grown in Asian nations, particularly those that have undergone economic liberalization and political democratization. Even in Communist China, where the party confines religions to restricted spaces outside of the public sphere, Buddhism is propagating in the form of "traditional culture." This entails intellectualized forms of Zen, kung fu movies, martial arts literature, and *qigong* practice that are infused with positive images and symbols of Buddhism. The term "lay movement" encompasses diverse social phenomena, from formal organizations like NGOs, on the one hand, to popular cultural trends measured by box office receipts and tourism revenue, on the other. While these movements display the full spectrum of organized to unorganized phenomena, they are united in their penchant to deemphasize explicit Buddhist identity and allegiance in favor of the secularizing rhetoric of "culture" and "humanism."

Comparing the situations in contemporary Taiwan and China illustrates this unity despite the disparity of their political systems, which directly affect the formal structure of their respective Buddhist communities. Taiwan has emerged as a fertile ground for "humanistic Buddhism" (*renjian fojiao*), a phrase identified with the Chinese monk Yinshun (1906–2005) and the reformist vision of his teacher Master Taixu (1890–1947). Yinshun spent the last fifty years of his life in Taiwan where the impact of his teachings went far beyond its national borders. The Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh read Yinshun's work in the 1960s and translated *renjian fojiao* into Vietnamese (*nhap gian phat giao*), which has in turn been rendered into English as "socially engaged Buddhism." This nomenclature is now used to describe Buddhist movements across Asia that share common characteristics: (1) critiquing institutions perceived

to cause social harm, (2) assimilating the ideals of science, liberty, and democracy, (3) de-emphasizing supernaturalism, (4) promoting lay participation, and (5) embracing ecumenism across the world's religions. This modern Buddhism also includes reforming the sangha (the monastic order) by eliminating centuries-old rituals concerned with death, rebirth, and devotion to otherworldly Pure Lands. Instead, the present world is said to be the Pure Land that can be brought about by mobilizing mass action to protect the environment and provide relief to the poor and vulnerable.

Taiwan and Buddhism under Democracy

After the Taiwanese government lifted martial law in 1987, Buddhist organizations emerged into the public sphere and rivaled the state in providing social services such as disaster and poverty relief, education, and medical care. In the context of a young democratic nation, Buddhist groups have created a civil society based on the concept of interdependence and a social structural interpretation of suffering and its alleviation. One of the most successful is the Ciji (Compassion Relief) foundation, which was established, quite unusually, by a nun rather than a monk. Zhengyan (b.1937) was ordained as a nun by Yinshun in 1963, and she instituted Ciji just three years later as a charitable rather than religious organization. It is presently the largest NGO in Taiwan and *Business Week* featured it as a model of the post-1990s Asian economic recovery that "show[s] governments better ways of delivering needed services" (July 24, 2000, 59). Although there is a monastic community at its heart with Zhengyan as its moral visionary, Ciji is a wealthy and complex organization with branches in thirty countries. Its primary movers are laypeople and professionals who oversee the operation of the foundation's schools, hospitals, and international relief activities. Lay members carry out the day-to-day work and a board manages the foundation's considerable assets and operating budget (about US $800 million in 1998).

Ciji's emphasis on social services and volunteerism renders Buddhism into a social movement that is broader than a religious denomination. Ciji board members are not necessarily Buddhists but rather successful businesspeople interested in philanthropy. This pattern of bridging the divide between the Buddhist temple and civil society is evident across Asia. In Korea, the Jungto (Pure Land) Society, founded by the monk Pŏmnyun (b. 1953) in 1988, is fully staffed by laypeople. They administer social programs like global disaster relief, and advocate for ecological awareness and human rights. The Indra's Net Community, founded by the monk Tobŏp (b. 1949) in 1999, is a farming cooperative that trains independent farmers in ecologically sustainable practices. It has spawned two NGOs (in 2001 and 2003) to restore farming villages and establish markets for their produce in the cities. In addition to mobilizing lay action, "the two movements share the same foundation of Buddhist beliefs of interconnectedness among beings, including nature" (Park 2010, 43).

Sarvodaya Shramadāna in Sri Lanka is a grassroots movement begun in 1958 by A. T. Ariyaratne (b. 1931) that fosters economic development in rural villages. Ariyaratne is a science teacher rather than a monk who looked to Gandhi for his inspiration, but as a practicing Buddhist he describes Sarodaya Shramadāna as "Buddhist economics in practice" (Ariyaratne 1999). Santi Asoke in Thailand emerged in the 1970s when its founder Samana Bodhirak (b. 1934) broke with the monastic establishment and created an alternative community. Departing from traditional practices, the movement rejects the worship of Buddha images, and emphasizes strict morality and everyday work as a form of meditation (Essen 2004). The group's values reflect the philosophy of the influential Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa (1906–1993) of

Thailand who, like Yinshun in Taiwan, criticized the traditional sangha and translated abstract Buddhist principles into action in the world.

Most of these lay-centered movements were founded by monastics, and therefore it is no surprise that contemporary Buddhist temples also sponsor activities that blur religious and civic functions. Foguangshan in Taiwan, founded by Xingyun (b. 1927), began as a monastic order in 1967 and added a lay foundation (Buddha Light International Association) in 1991. Xingyun was also inspired by Taixu's idea that the present world is the Pure Land, and Foguangshan runs hospitals, medical clinics, organ drives, an orphanage, and a home for the elderly. Foguangshan is most noted, however, for its highly theatrical religious ceremonies that are open to the public. Although some feature traditional liturgical elements such as chanting, votive candles, and the beating of the wooden fish, others veer into mass spectacles with fireworks, dry ice, and laser shows. There are critics who accuse Foguangshan of vulgarizing Buddhism, but Xingyun states that his aim is to bring Buddhism out of the religious cloisters and into the public sphere. As a Foguangshan nun states, "This isn't a religion, it is our cultural tradition" (Madsen 2007, 58). Large-scale ceremonies are a way of performing a social service in the wake of significant national events, such as the September 1999 earthquake, which create social unity.

Korean Buddhist temples have also flourished in tandem with the nation's democratization and economic growth beginning in the mid-1980s. Urban mega-temples, or sŏnwŏn (meditation centers), provide social services such as daycare, medical clinics, banking, and organic markets. Mountain monasteries offer meditation retreats and religious festivals that appeal to urbanites seeking vacation getaways as well as spiritual training. Japanese Buddhist temples, on the other hand, have suffered declining memberships, and 70 percent of the population report no religious affiliation (Nelson 2012). But the Japanese exhibit religious behaviors nonetheless, such as belief in rebirth and participation in religious festivals. In Kyoto, caring for local shrines to the Bodhisattva Jizo is undertaken by neighborhood associations, which define the task as a civil duty for the benefit of the community. The Gion festival in Kyoto, which venerates ancestors and protective deities, is a large-scale tourist and commercial event as well as a religious one (Porcu 2012). Surveys about religious affiliation count only formal membership and overlook the ways in which religious thought and action saturate society. Soka Gakkai, which is the largest Buddhist new religious movement in postwar Japan (founded in 1975), formed its own political party (the Kōmeito) for the purpose of shaping public life according to its modern Buddhist ideals of peace and interfaith dialogue. Similar to mainline Protestant churches in America, the diffusion of Buddhist values into broader society can result in declining membership rolls, but this should not be mistaken for the diminution of the religion.

Buddhism in Communist China

Mao Zedong's radical policies of the late 1950s culminated with the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), which was catastrophic for religions. Virtually every place of worship was closed down and holy orders were abolished. But after Mao's death (in 1976), the party issued "Document 19" (March 31, 1982), which admitted past errors and reformulated official policy on religion. It proclaimed the protection of religious belief and reinstated the system of the early 1950s when five recognized religions (Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam) were established and made to organize via central associations that report to the government. Presently, the growth of religions in China is accelerating and prompts

comparisons with the Great Awakening in the United States in the nineteenth century (Johnson 2017, 17–18). But again, this growth cannot be measured by institutional membership alone.

Religious organizations still operate in a restrictive environment where public proselytizing is forbidden. Faith is limited to officially sanctioned temples, churches, and mosques that are state-patrolled "islands of religiosity" (Fisher 2014). The 1999 suppression of the Falungong movement – an amalgam of Buddhism, Daoism, and physical cultivation practice – displays the party's determination to neutralize mass movements that might challenge the state's monopoly on public discourse. Falungong was a part of the broader *qigong* movement, which is a "body technology" that arose in the 1980s. Attracting enthusiastic practitioners even among party cadres, *qigong* was classified as a secular therapy and became the subject of scientific conferences about its ability to cure diseases and confer supra-normal abilities. *Qigong* averted the restrictions that came with the "religion" label, even though it gave rise to charismatic "grand masters" who claimed mystical experiences and supernatural powers. Although *qigong* has been effectively suppressed in the aftermath of Falungong, the impulses that fueled it remain. The first is the need for a value system that Marxist ideology and even the more recent cult of economic prosperity cannot provide. The second is the party's strategy of turning traditional religions into the ingredients of a "cultural renewal," which allows religions to fulfill their functions under a new label.

During the 2012 National People's Congress that transferred power from Party Secretary Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping, the ceremonies included a call for cultural renewal in order to create a more stable and moral society. The 1990s already had birthed the *guoxue* ("national studies") movement, in which Confucian classics were reprinted and popularized in the media. Universities offered weekend workshops on Confucian philosophy, and the government gifted Western universities with "Confucius Institutes" to promote Chinese studies around the world. *Guoxue* has been criticized by Chinese and Western observers as an arm of party propaganda, but it follows the pattern of re-appropriating religions as a secular heritage. If *qigong* was categorized as science-backed medicine and therapy, Confucianism is now China's great cultural tradition rather than a vestige of backwards feudalism. Even folk religious rituals and music are now designated as "intangible cultural heritages" rather than the "superstition" they were denounced as beginning in the Republican era (1912–1949).

Although Buddhism is an officially licensed religion that is subject to state control, it too bleeds into the gray zone of a cultural heritage that is allowed a broader public presence. Parallel to the *guoxue* movement and the renaissance of Confucian studies, *foxue* ("Buddhist studies") signifies the rebirth of Buddhist studies in a secular guise that is attractive to the intellectual class. The roots of *foxue* go back to the late nineteenth century when Chinese literati responded to Western learning by turning to the philosophical, historical, and logical aspects of Buddhism. Its revival in the 1990s served an additional function, however: secular studies of Buddhism produced by lay authors could be disseminated in bookstores and public libraries where monastic publications are forbidden. The "academicization" of Buddhism is the result of state directives to renounce superstition and serve socialism, but this has strengthened Buddhism's public presence in China.

It is striking that the demands of Communist party ideology have created a secularized Buddhism parallel to the humanistic Buddhism flourishing within Taiwan's democratic regime. Both versions entail a greater social structural presence than Buddhism exhibited in the premodern era. To be sure, the Buddhist Association of China (BAC) must report to the party, and it is not allowed to exercise public moral discourse or shape social action like Ciji in Taiwan. But BAC is the first unified national Buddhist organization in Chinese history, and although it was formed as a tool of political control, it has become

a strong church-like apparatus and a national representative of the Buddhist community that can negotiate with the state on its own terms (Ji 2011, 253). In the classic American model of secularism, religion is confined to the private sector of society, but the Asian Buddhist version tends towards greater institutionalization (whether an NGO or a central state apparatus). In an interesting contrast, American religiosity is beginning to look more like Buddhism's highly privitized and unorganized past in East Asia, with church membership declining in favor of individual and pluralistic forms of spirituality.

Buddhism on the Global Stage

The history of Buddhism in the West begins in the mid-nineteenth century when the studies and translations of Orientalist scholars drew the attention of broader audiences and impacted cultural movements. American Transcendentalism is associated with literary figures such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, and social reformers such as Bronson Alcott (1799–1888) and Margaret Fuller (1810–1850). Transcendentalists revolted against institutional Christianity, embraced intuitive and authentic religious experience, and explicitly invoked Asian religious inspirations. Their embrace of spirituality through aesthetic expression – both Asian and their own – connects Transcendentalists to German Romantics as their immediate predecessors and the American Beat generation as their subsequent legacy. Despite the attraction felt by Western literati and philosophers, the cultural foreignness of Buddhism limited the feasibility of actual religious conversion. Buddhism's attractiveness has been more broadly intellectual and spiritual rather than institutional, but this has engendered new thought-worlds that have in turn impacted large cultural discourses.

One prospect Buddhism presents is that of reconciling romanticism and rationalism – two significant movements that are in tension in modern Western culture. If romantics see Buddhism as fostering a deep personal experience of unity with nature and the cosmos, rationalists are also drawn to Buddhism for its nontheistic ethics and "science-friendliness." But it is the possibility of marrying rational science with romantic sentiments that is novel. In current conversations about Buddhism and science, concepts from quantum mechanics, epigenetics, and the cognitive sciences are indexed to the language of interdependence and compassion to underscore the importance of human consciousness and agency in the world (Cho 2017). Additionally, the widespread embrace of MBSR in secular contexts normalizes the idea of the mind-body connection (which makes headlines), and science can now embrace talk of morality and spirituality. In a recent book, a University of California (UC) Berkeley economics professor describes how the Buddhist teaching of interdependence can move this "dismal science" away "from the free market zero-sum approach, where additional resources to one person must come from another person, to a collective approach, where everyone's well-being is connected" (Brown 2017, 24–25). The dialogue with Buddhism reinforces movements away from mechanistic and reductive worldviews in the sciences and lends the explicit vocabulary of compassion and inter-relationality.

The way Buddhist thought supports the rethinking of scientific paradigms is an example of how its presence in the West is best measured by its impact on civil discourses. A 2012 *New York Times* article claims that Buddhism is now the fourth largest religion in the United States (June 16, "Buddhists' Delight"), but as in Asia, counting Buddhists is a tricky business. For one thing, its greatest sympathizers are mistrustful of organized religions and unlikely to become formal adherents. Thomas Tweed observes that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "Buddhism managed to attract so much attention

but, finally, failed to build enduring institutions or inspire even more seekers to embrace the religion exclusively and fully" (1992, xxiv). It is still the case that more Americans think with Buddhist concepts and even meditate than formally convert. This cultural diffusion, however, is in line with traditional Buddhist religiosity. The Dalai Lama does not encourage his large Western audiences to convert to Buddhism, telling them instead to do their best as Christians, Jews, and so forth. Different religions are affirmed as culture-specific paths leading to the same spiritual and ethical goals. The sentiments of the Chan Master Shengyan (1930–2009) of Taiwan's Dharma Drum Mountain (Fagushan) are typical:

> We believe that the religious faiths of all the world's peoples each have their own historical and geographical background. Therefore, we must accept the fact of religious pluralization and believe each religion is taking up the task of purifying the spirit and society for the sake of humanity.
> (2008, 13)

This kind of ecumenism and emphasis on personal cultivation ("purifying the spirit") rather than institutional affiliation appeals to Americans turned off by religious exclusivism and intolerance. A 2008 Pew Research Center survey shows a significant rise in the religiously unaffiliated, who poll at 16 to 20 percent of the overall population (equal to the percentage of mainline Protestants), and 25 to 30 percent of young adults. This does not mean that religion has declined in America; instead, it is structurally altering towards the "spiritual," a term that signifies disenchantment with institutional religion and a longing for personal experiences of connection to larger forces and principles. The history of religious revivals in America demonstrates that anti-institutionalism and personal spirituality is nothing new. But the Great Awakenings also signify periods of successive cultural transformation: each constitutes a "fundamental social and intellectual reorientation of the American belief-value system, behavior patterns, and institutional structure" (McLoughlin 1978, 8). Increasing religious pluralism has been one significant marker of such cultural change, and the current period evinces a transition to a new kind of pluralism in the form of multiple religious belonging.

Since the 1960s, the rise of new and pseudo-religious movements (occultism, Scientology, Marxism, Hare Krishna, native American spirituality, etc.) has been diluting the nation's Judeo-Christian identity, but even more distinctively, a "cafeteria spirituality" has emerged in which people construct private practices cobbled from various religions. A famous example of this do-it-yourself spirituality is the National Basket Ball Association (NBA) coach Phil Jackson, who combined Zen meditation, Christian ethics, and Lakota Sioux mythology to produce champion teams in the 1990s and 2000s. It is a challenge for clergy and scholars alike to take this kind of eclecticism seriously as real religion, seeing it instead as a vacuous religious consumerism that lacks discipline and commitment to any tradition. But the pursuit of personal religious experience over and against fidelity to established theologies began with the first Great Awakening in the eighteenth century, when evangelicals proclaimed that the experience of being "born again" was necessary to faith. In the current era, Buddhist leaders broadcast the message of underlying religious unity, which encourages a trans-denominational openness similar to the way in which the Chinese have participated in Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, and folk religious rituals according to their individual preferences.

Modern Buddhism is often described as being influenced by Western rationalism and social activism, which is accurate, but a fuller view suggests a global, back-and-forth dynamic of mutual influences. The secularization of Buddhism in Communist China, for example, is the result of political necessity but also broader global forces as well. In the mid-1980s, Chinese translations of D. T. Suzuki (1905–1971), the Japanese intellectual who wrote in English to spread Zen to the West, sparked a "Chan fever" among

young intellectuals who reconceptualized Chan as a culture and lifestyle in tune with modernity. In 2010, a Chinese translation of *South of the Clouds*, a book about Chinese Buddhist and Daoist pilgrims by the American author Red Pine (b. 1943 as Bill Porter), catapulted him to fame in China. In South Korea, Western Zen masters have sparked renewed interest in Buddhism, particularly meditation and the clinical practice of MBSR that was developed in America (Joo 2011). But the roots of MBSR in turn go back to Buddhist reforms in Burma, particularly the monk Ledi Sayadaw (1846–1923), who is credited with instigating the modern lay meditation movement. Ledi's efforts were driven by anti-colonialism and nationalism, but the mechanism of lay meditation has become a global phenomenon. These Asian-Western transcontinental crossings are pervasive, and they fuel a global Buddhism that appeals to modern citizens across national boundaries.

Contemporary Asian Buddhism has certainly been shaped by encounters with Western knowledge forms, particularly science and Christianity, but globalization works on multiple levels. Modern Asian Buddhists go back to their scriptures to find what they describe as an original, essential Buddhism that has been eclipsed over the centuries. The fundamental concepts of dependent origination, non-self, and emptiness are enjoying a renaissance among Buddhist intellectuals because of an intra-Buddhist dialogue that has become possible only in the modern period. The Chinese Yinshun drew from the Indian Āgamas and the philosophy of Nāgārjuna, and the Theravadin Buddhadāsa drew from Zen. These cross-cultural moves promote the ability to rise above regional differences and distill the common points of Buddhism. In Buddhadāsa's case, "this emphasis on the broader principles of Buddhist teachings rather than on scriptural details ... has allowed him to reinvigorate the theoretically stagnant Theravāda tradition by introducing views and concepts from other Buddhist traditions" (Jackson 2003, 178). In the same vein, Taiwanese Buddhist movements shaped by Yinshun claim to recover the original meaning of Buddhism in the "affirmation of the fundamental interdependence of all things and a call to cultivate one's moral life so as to be in accord with that interdependence" (Madsen 2007, 150). The features of this reconceived Buddhism allow it to transcend Asian regionalism and it also transports easily to Western cultures.

Modern Buddhism occupies numerous modern social containers that integrate the religious with the secular. This is consistent with traditional Asian forms of religiosity, which offered little in the way of systematic theology and ecclesiastical structure. Instead, religion was "spread over every aspect of life like a fine membrane that held society together" (Johnson 2017, 19). Buddhist devotion, belief, and ritual now happen in academic institutes, museums, the cinema, and even Buddhist-themed amusements parks. If these modern containers sustain traditional ways of being Buddhist, the contemporary West is also embracing culturally diffuse religiosities in a way that subverts its entrenched distinction between the sacred and the secular. These trends challenge traditional ways of thinking about religion, but the manner in which global religious realities are evolving on the ground suggests that the study of religion needs to expand its own definition of and approaches to its subject matter.

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CHAPTER 105

The Prophetic, Priestly, and Servant Roles of Religion in Public Life in South Africa

Nico Koopman

Introduction

This contribution focuses upon the role of religion in African contexts. The focus is on South Africa as an African country. Some inferences can be made for other African countries. The focus is upon the Christian religion, but inferences can be made for the public role of other religions as well.

The confession of the threefold office of Christ provides a good structure for discussing the public role of religion in public life.[1] From the threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and royal servant, we can infer the threefold task of religious faith in public life, namely the prophetic, priestly, and royal-servant tasks.[2]

The Prophetic Role of Religion in Society

Drawing upon, adjusting, appropriating, and extending the work of American ethicist James Gustafson[3] five modes of prophetic discourses in contemporary public life can be identified, namely prophetic envisioning, prophetic criticism, prophetic storytelling, prophetic analysis, and prophetic policymaking.

A Prophetic Vision that Undermines the Old

Dutch theologian Harry Kuitert[4] who is normally very reserved about the public role of religion, makes space for the visionary and inspiring role that religions can fulfill in public life. James Gustafson, argues that the prophet has the twofold task of envisioning and criticizing.

1 For a discussion of the threefold office of Christ, see Koopman (2015). My work on the threefold office is strongly influenced and informed by the work of American theologian, Geoffrey Wainwright (1997).
2 This author has written extensively on this theme in the past. This entry therefore relies heavily upon earlier works, and strives to re-organize, systematize, extend and freshly utilize these earlier works.
3 The most important works of Gustafson in this regard are: Gustafson (1988a). For an article in which Gustafson also discusses these discourses, see Gustafson (1988b). For an article in which Gustafson applies these discourses to medical questions, see Gustafson (1990).
4 Kuitert (2008).

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Prophets as visionaries, according to Gustafson,[5] portray an alluring vision of the future. They see a new world in which the strife and suffering that we currently experience is overcome. This vision may indict the contemporary broken reality, but its main function is to allure and attract people to act concretely and to attempt to approximate the vision. The prophet as visionary uses utopian language, symbols, analogies, similes, and metaphors that move us. Their speeches are not technical moral arguments or policy statements. Hearers are moved by aspects like passion of the speaker's voice, the cadences and figures of speech, many drawn from the Bible, that are employed, and also the moral authenticity of the speaker. Such visionary language moves us from indignation with the present to aspiration for the future.

South African theologian John de Gruchy[6] argues that democracy cannot flourish without a vision of a new society.

> What occurred in ancient Athens was only the first step into an unknown future in pursuit of a vision of a transformed society in which all people are equal and their differences respected; free and responsible as citizens, but also liberated from oppression and poverty and therefore living in a society where justice prevails. This vision ... derives as much, if not far more, from the prophets of ancient Israel than it does from Athens, the Enlightenment, or the French Revolution.

The vision of a new society should be spelled out as long as that society is not fully actualized for all people and all of creation. The vision of the new requires no justification there where people suffer, and may I add, there where there is solidarity with those who suffer. Envisioning does not imply a flight from the world, but rather a commitment to be empathically involved in the affairs of the world. Vision mobilizes people, nurtures hope, and prompts action.

Prophetic Criticism that Calls the New into Being

According to Gustafson the second dimension of prophetic speaking is that of courageous criticism. Besides annunciation, prophets have the task of denunciation. Besides the task of announcing the vision of a new society, prophets perform the task of denouncing the reality that is in conflict with the vision of a new society. The prophet as critic, according to Gustafson,[7] addresses what is perceived as the root of the problem. The problem is not merely viewed as a matter of policies that are inadequate and wrong, but it is a matter of religious, moral, and social waywardness. The critic names the devil, which presumably underlies the various wrongs in society. Prophetic criticism gets to the roots of problems that pervade institutions and cultures, or that pervade the actions and behavior of individual persons. On the basis of statistical indicators and social analysis they expose the causes and roots of social and personal wrongs. Prophets as critics do not engage in detailed policy recommendations, and matters of strategy and tactics. The indictments of the prophet as critic construe the human condition in deep and broad proportions. And these prophetic indictments lead to conviction of guilt, and constitute a call to a fundamental repentance and a radical turn from unfaithfulness to faithfulness.

5 Gustafson (1988a, 13–14).
6 de Gruchy (1995, 38–39).
7 Gustafson (1988a, 7–11).

During apartheid the notion of apartheid as a heresy was employed to expose the theological causes and roots of what went wrong in our society. The notion of empire is currently employed to express what is going wrong in contemporary societies in local, regional, and global contexts.

The globalization research initiative of the *Evangelisch Reformierte Kirche* in Germany and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa offers a helpful definition of empire. This research collaboration, which is hosted by the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology, is one attempt among many to advance the reception of the Accra Declaration on global justice by so-called northern and southern churches.

> We speak of empire, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today, that constitutes a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by human kind yet enslaving simultaneously; an all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while imperiously excluding, even sacrificing humanity and exploiting creation; a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed – the worship of money, goods and possessions; the gospel of consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed; the colonization of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit lacking compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gifts of creation and the household of life.[8]

The definition of these churches focuses on empire not only as specific nations, corporations, or institutions. This definition is deeper, wider, and more inclusive than attempts to attribute the notion of empire only to such clearly definable institutions. It implies these institutions, but also unmasks the spirit, gospel, and ethos that it is constituted and nurtured by, and that it in turn reinforces.

This definition of empire helps to unmask the spirit of empire in the practices, policies, and institutions in all walks of life, at the local, regional, and global levels. Moreover, it helps to unmask the spirit of empire in the hearts of humans and in the life of churches as well. Notions like empire are not famous. One often feels that it might be better to avoid such controversial and potentially divisive concepts. On the other hand, concepts like these enable us to pay attention and to become conscientized about what is going on around us and in us. These concepts shock in order to restore. And prophets are called upon to, among others, shock in order to restore.

Prophetic discourse as prophetic criticism also entails self-criticism. For various reasons churches and other religious institutions should engage in constructive self-criticism. We should, however, guard against a form of self-criticism that does have pacifying effects, a self-criticism that serves as an excuse to terminate public involvement, because we are ourselves so very imperfect. What is required is a self-criticism which shows that we are aware of our sinfulness and fallibility as human beings. Because we are imperfect, sinful beings even our best efforts as churches and other religious bodies might be contaminated. Without constructive self-criticism we cannot speak legitimately in the world.

Besides the self-criticism with regard to justice in racial and class matters, churches need to practice prophetic self-criticism with regard to various other justice matters, among others sexism, misogyny, heterosexism, patriarchalism, homophobia, nationalism, handicappism, ageism, ecocide, exclusion, and exploitation.

8 Boesak et al. (2011).

This brief discussion makes it hopefully clear that the practice of prophetic criticism is not destructive and negative. On the contrary, it is informed and inspired by the vision of a new reality. Exactly this focus upon the vision of the new prompts a stance of courageous and constructive criticism and self-criticism that opposes negativity and self-withdrawal, and that seeks the new in individuals and institutions, in churches, and in broader society, including the natural environment.

Civilizing Prophetic Narratives From The Margin

Gustafson identifies three functions of stories in communities, especially Christian communities. Stories form the ethos and identity of a community and its members. They inform and guide the moral choices of people. Stories, thirdly, perform a prophetic function.

Stories form moral identity by rehearsing the community's history and traditional meanings as it is portrayed in Scripture and other sources. The living tradition and truth transmitted through narratives, liturgies, rites, and other concrete terms and symbols, shape the ethos, vision, virtue and character, the values and outlooks as well as the moral interests and determining moral convictions of the moral and religious community.[9]

By referring to the ethical methods of Jesus and the rabbis, Gustafson[10] argues that narratives can illuminate casuistic moral argumentation. They do not provide single, clear, and argued answers to specific moral cases, but they do provide nuanced and subtle illumination of the challenges that are faced and of possible outcomes. They show us features of life that are somehow excluded from technical abstract casuistry. Narratives do not offer distinctions and arguments, but they evoke imagination and stimulate our moral sensibilities and affections. And although they do not give clear and decisive conclusions, they do enlarge one's vision of what is going on. Where casuistic moral arguments call us to act in conformity with them, narratives invite us to act in the light of the vision they convey.

Stories do not only use biblical or theological material. They do not offer theories of justice or injustice. But they do have a moving prophetic effect.[11] African theologian John Mbiti uses African prayers, poems, idioms, and sayings to tell in a narrative way how African people deal prophetically, hopefully, and with resilience with the various plights that they face, especially the plight of poverty.[12] These narratives are also conveyed through songs. That great son of Africa who recently passed on, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu,[13] perfected the use of narrative, song, metaphors, images and humour in addressing public concerns and challenges. In his classic work on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South South Africa, he employs this approach throughout. He, for instance, explains the process of forgiveness and confessing with this rich image.

> The victim may be ready to forgive and make the gift of her forgiveness available, but it is up to the wrongdoer to appropriate the gift – to open the window and draw the curtains aside. He does this by acknowledging the wrong he has done, so letting the light and fresh air of forgiveness enter his

9 Gustafson (1988a, 19–20, 22–24).
10 Gustafson (1988a, 20–22).
11 Gustafson (1988a, 20).
12 See amongst others Mbiti (1975).
13 Tutu (1999, 220).

> being. In the act of forgiveness we are declaring our faith in the future of relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to make a new beginning on a course that will be different from the one that caused us the wrong.
>
> (Tutu 1999, 220)

Stories specifically reveal the plight of people living at the margins of our societies. The level of civility and dignity of a society is measured by how we care for the poor and vulnerable, the marginalized and vulnerable. The narratives of vulnerable people are determinative for the type of society we strive to be. Their stories provide the epistemologies and knowledges without which civilizing democracies cannot flourish.

The focus upon these stories from the margin does not take place in an exclusive manner. South African theologian John De Gruchy[14] argues that the conviction of God's special identification with the poor and the marginalized is a Reformed notion, which sadly became neglected. Liberation theologies helped us to re-value the importance of this conviction for faithful living. This notion was prominent at the birth of the Reformed tradition. This was the case because many of the earliest Reformed theologians and pastors, as well as congregations, were persecuted, and much Reformed theology was conceived in exile, in poverty, amidst adversity, and in the struggle against social and ecclesiastical tyranny. He cites the famous address of John Calvin to King Francis I of France in which he describes his fellow refugees as the "off scouring and refuse of the world."

The wellbeing of the marginalized constitutes the acid test for the level of dignity and civility of our societies.

Prophetic Analysis

Gustafson[15] describes the analytical, ethical, technical, or philosophical moral discourse as follows:

> Ethical discourse provides the concepts, the modes of appropriate argumentation, and important distinctions which lead to greater precision and stronger backing for what Christians and other religious communities think is the right thing to do, the good thing to do.

Gustafson[16] admires the constant attention to the ethical moral discourse in the Roman Catholic tradition. He argues that since the second part of the twentieth century Protestant ethicists started to give attention to the ethical, technical, or philosophical moral discourse. He mentions that the ethical writings of his teachers and of his pupils differ significantly in this regard. Ethical discourse, under the influence of especially Anglo-American moral philosophy, encourages a more precise use of concepts like justice, virtue, rights, and duties. It offers more careful distinctions between concepts and classes of moral issues. It requires stronger logical arguments in support of moral prescriptions or moral condemnations.

Also drawing upon the work of James Gustafson, US theologian B. V. Brady[17] mentions that the ethical discourse is drier and less exciting than the narrative and prophetic discourses. Ethics can be tedious.

14 De Gruchy (1991, 1998, 71–93).
15 Gustafson (1988a, 42).
16 Gustafson (1988a, 31–32).
17 Brady (1998, 146–147).

Wording must be painstakingly accurate. Concepts need to be defined in a clear, comprehensive and concise manner. Clear thinking, precise use of words, and compelling reasoning facilitate the engagement of theology with public life. The ethical discourse helps to make narratives public and to translate the passionate pleas of the prophet into rationally defensible public positions. And by assisting these discourses to be more vocal and public in credible and constructive ways, an impact is made on the formation of public opinion, public ethos, public *Zeitgeist*/thinking and eventually on public policy.

Accompanied by such thorough technical analysis of various public challenges the prophetic task can be accomplished with intellectual sophistication, authority, and credibility.

Prophetic Policymaking

To impact on public life and to affect the course of events, churches need to participate in policy discourse.[18] The policy mode distinguishes itself from the other discourses in two ways, according to Gustafson. People who have the responsibility to make choices and to carry out the actions that are required by those choices conduct this discourse. Visionaries, critics, storytellers, technical analysts can all function with the external perspective of an observer, but policymakers function with the internal perspective of persons and agents who are responsible to make choices in quite complex and specific circumstances that constrain their possible actions.[19]

Gustafson refers to a second distinguishing characteristic of policy discourse. Policy is to be developed in particular conditions that both limit and enable the possibilities of action.

> The first question of the policymaker is likely to be "What is going on?" and not "What ought we to do?" Or, at least, both of these questions have to be kept in mind in a tandem and finally integrated way. The policymaker has to know what is possible, as well as what is the right thing to do, or what the most desirable outcomes are. What is desirable is always related to what is possible; it is always under the constraints of the possible. And a critical factor of judgment is precisely *what is possible*.[20]

The ethical should give direction to policy, but more is required for final decisions and policies: estimates and assessments of what is possible with the help of sociological, economic, and other concepts; information on how to move the institution with efficiency from where they currently are to where they could be and ought to be within a specific time frame. For the policymaker the ethical is not the only consideration, but it is just a dimension of the economic, social, personal, and historical.[21]

Within the framework of limited space, time, information, and possibilities policymakers are challenged to make compromises, and even decisions that might seem morally wrong or morally inadequate to the storytellers, critics, and visionaries.[22] Brady's elaboration on and application of the work of

18 Gustafson (1988a, 52).
19 Gustafson (1988a, 43, 46).
20 Gustafson (1988a, 47).
21 Gustafson (1988a, 49–51). For a discussion of the potential of Christian realism and middle axioms for policy discourses, see Koopman (2010, 41–56).
22 Gustafson (1988a, 51).

Gustafson is helpful. He argues that in policymaking the variety of vulnerable people need to be given priority, among others children, women, oppressed racial groups, poor people, and exploited workers. This notion of the priority of the most vulnerable will help that the unavoidable compromises will not impact negatively on them. This notion of the option of the most vulnerable serves as a benchmark with regard to policymaking and especially the adoption of compromises.[23]

The enabling dimension of policy discourse resides in the fact that policymakers do have sufficient power to implement decisions and policies.[24]

A few years ago the church leaders' forum in the Western Cape and the provincial government of the Western Cape had adopted a document that will serve as the basis for the collaboration of churches with regard to policymaking, policy-implementation, and policy-monitoring processes. This document reveals the commitment of churches to partnership, collaboration, and to practice a policy discourse that is informed by the vision of a civilizing democracy, on the one hand, and that is open to making compromises without betraying the aim of the vision of a new society, especially the aim of civil and dignified living for the marginalized.[25]

The Priestly Role of Religion in Society

In his contemporary hermeneutic for the priestly office Wainwright[26] argues that Christ the Priest replaces our pain and suffering, which are expressed in alienations, with reconciliation, and He replaces our sin and guilt, which are expressed in estrangement, with atonement. Christ restores us to divine communion and to communion with each other. Wainwright[27] spells out the concrete and public forms that cry out for this reconciliation, atonement, and restored communion:

> ... oppression is political alienation, for the disenfranchised are deprived of the privileges and responsibilities that go with the human vocation to live in society; poverty is economic alienation, for the impoverished are cut off from their share in the fruit of the earth that humankind is charged by God to cultivate; sickness is physical alienation, and a troubled mind is psychological alienation, and both remove the sufferers from the flourishing existence which God envisioned for his human creatures; slavery is alienation of identity, the profoundest infraction of the dignity of every child of God; bereavement displays death as the alienation of humankind from the life of communion for which it was made.

Jesus Christ, the Public Priest, entered into this human condition of alienation and estrangement. This estranged humanity is the humanity that Christ consumed, and in the words of the famous theologian Hans Us von Balthasar[28] "what had not been assumed would not have been healed."

23 Brady (1998, 48–153).
24 Gustafson (1988a, 51).
25 For a reflection on this collaboration see Koopman (2011).
26 Wainwright (1997, 150–153).
27 Wainwright (1997, 150).
28 Quoted by Wainwright (1997, 151).

The priestly role of religion challenges, invites, and inspires churches and other religious institutions to overcome this variety of alienation.

Works needs to be done to overcome political alienation. The young South African democracy has a good democratic vision and policy documents in place. We, however, need to work for social solidarity, social cohesion, and the joint building of social capital. Works needs to be done to overcome socioeconomic alienation, especially as expressed in the big gap between rich and poor. We have sound macroeconomic policies and practices in place, but the benefits did not reach the poor, and South Africa still is one of the countries with the biggest gap between rich and poor in the world. Besides our noble human rights principles of access to basic necessities millions still are excluded from physical and mental health care. We still hurt each other on the basis of racial, national, tribal, gender, and socioeconomic identities, and on the basis of identity of sexual orientation, age and disability. We even hurt nature.

The priestly office calls us to work for overcoming these alienations, hurts, and violations of dignity, and to work, therefore, for the actualization of dignity, health, healing, and for restitutive reconciliation and reconciling justice.

The Royal-Servant Role of Religion in Society

Wainwright[29] argues that the royal servant office teaches contemporary societies about authority, freedom, power, and hope. In a world that seeks autonomy and, in the process, aims to become deistic and eliminate any idea of divine action and rule, the plea is not to burn down the house of authority, and not to bring down the Scriptures, creeds, liturgies, and institutions of the admittedly imperfect historic church.

In societies hungry for cultural freedom and an absolute right of self-expression, this office calls for recognition that my neighbor is, negatively put, the limit of my freedom, and, positively put, a personal call to service. He lastly mentions that this office assures us of ultimate hope in the exalted Lord and King.

In the South African context, this office might be employed to decontaminate imperialistic notions of power that seem to threaten the idea of the servant power that is characteristic of power in the democratic vision with its central words like *minister*, which literally means servant, and the word *president* which means the one that presides, that one serves as an example among the servants, the servant *per excellence*. More than that, the *Christocracy* tells of a Lord, a King who is Shepherd and the most humble of servants. Simultaneously this office calls disciples to fulfill their calling as citizens to a public life of respecting authority, and living responsibly, in the church and in all walks of life.

The royal-servant calling also entails that the life of freedom be defined as a life of freedom from bondage and freedom for a life of service. This view of freedom provides appropriate guidelines and parameters for developing a human rights culture, specifically to advance freedom and justice rights, and also to obey the call to freedom and justice responsibilities.

The royal-servant office also prompts a life of hope. Hope can be described in a threefold manner. Hope is realistic hope because it is founded in the biggest reality of all, namely the cross and resurrection, ascension, and *parousia* of Jesus Christ, which is the fulfillment of the promises of God. Against this

29 Wainwright (1997, 169–171).

background hope is responsive hope. Hope therefore pays attention, functions pro-actively, and is expressed in concrete involvement in the matters of life. Hope is resilient hope. Despite the most difficult circumstances Christian hope perseveres with patience and fortitude.

And based on this calling, authority, and hope churches are moral communities for the formation of disciples and citizens of character and virtue. According to American theologians, Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen,[30] an etymological study of the word character indicates that character has to do with the engraving of particular principles into a person. They refer to the Greek roots of the word which means engraving tool, and by extension the marks made by an engraving tool. Character, hence, has the notion of values which are engraved into a person, over time, so that it becomes assimilated, incarnated, and embodied in the person. Character, like the virtues, therefore, develops over time in communion with God and other human beings.

The North American ethicist J. Philip Wogaman[31] offers a valuable description of virtue. He describes virtue as "a disposition of the will toward a good end, as a tendency to think or behave in accordance with goodness, as a habit of the will to overcome a threat to our ultimate good." A virtue is a predisposition, a tendency, an intuition to be and to act in a specific way without prior reflection. It almost happens instinctively. It to some extent has an element of unavoidability. The Greek word for virtue, *areté*, refers to the divine power that we do have to be and to act in accordance with goodness. Virtue also has the dimension of *habitus*. This implies that virtue is acquired in a process of consistent and collective habitual behavior.

Greek philosopher Aristotle has identified four so-called cardinal virtues. Cardinal is derived from the Latin word *cardo*, which refers to the hinge of a door. The four cardinal virtues are, therefore, the hinge on which all virtues turn. These virtues are justice, moderation/self-control, discernment/wisdom, and courage/fortitude. Centuries later Thomas Aquinas added three theological virtues to these four, namely faith, hope, and love.

Social and political scientists in various parts of the world argue that democracies with human rights cultures that serve the common good cannot become a reality without leaders and citizens of civic virtue and character. Societies hunger for people of public and civic virtue: public wisdom in contexts of complexity, ambiguity, tragedy, and *aporia* (dead-end streets); public justice in context of inequalities and injustices on local and global levels; public temperance in context of greed and consumerism amidst poverty and alienation; public fortitude amidst situations of powerlessness and inertia; public faith amidst feelings of disorientation and rootlessness in contemporary societies; public hope amidst situations of despair and melancholy; public love in societies where public solidarity and compassion are absent.

Islam and African Traditional Religions

Although this contribution that is written by a Christian scholar focuses on the Christian tradition, acknowledgment and high appreciation for the role of other religious traditions in transforming public

30 Birch and Rasmussen (1989, 124).
31 Wogaman (1989, 29).

spheres in Africa, is expressed. Other major religions on African soil indeed make significant contributions to the transformation of public life on the continent.

A recent publication of a Muslim sociologist of education and public intellectual, Aslam Fataar, serves as an example of a work in the field of Public Theology and Ethics, from an Islamic perspective.[32] In this publication he illustrates the transformative potential of Islamic faith for different challenges and concerns of public life. Fataar discusses Islamic perspectives on themes like the Reconstruction and Development Program that Nelson Mandela launched in 1994 as a framework for socioeconomic liberation, poverty, education in schools in South Africa, building of democracy, globalization, city life, fasting in the context of poverty and inadequate electricity supply, environmental challenges, plurality and complexity, decolonization, sociological and religious sectarianism. He consistently suggests practices that can be launched on the grassroots level to transform the desperate situations of the poor and unemployed. In the Afterword of this book appreciation was expressed for the contribution of Fataar's work to religious beliefs and practices that pass the acid test for healthy religion, namely advancement of dignity, openness to intellectual scrutiny from within and from outside the tradition, and the advancement of an ethos of tolerance and embrace amidst a diversity of even conflicting points of view – and the consequent opposition and rejection of both radical relativism and nihilism, on the one hand, and absolutism, populism, demonization, and annihilation of the other, on the other hand.[33]

The role of African Traditional Religions on the continent also needs to be acknowledged. Jacob K. Olupona[34] explains that despite opposition and accusations from other religions that they are pseudo-religions that practice superstition, magic, and fetishism, and although some members of the African social, cultural, economic and political elite, view these religions as a major hindrance to social and economic development, and also to modernization, the ATRs keep their status on the continent and have also obtained transnational and global reaches. In the context of globalization and the increased use of social media, ATRs are booming in Africa and globally in the twenty-first century.

Although the ATRs reflect, like all religious traditions, ambivalence, which is witnessed to in some questionable practices, it is nevertheless a positive force for the transformation, dignifying, and healing of a continent with high levels of dehumanization, violence, discrimination of all sorts, and other major concerns. These religions, with their emphasis on rituals and ceremonies and even playfulness, dance, music, and decorative arts are for their adherents, sources of cultural memory, for example for people who were taken from Africa to be slaves. They are sources of strength, healing, political legitimacy, and economic liberation. They also serve as parallel communities in societies and provide communion, social cohesion, cultural cohesion, and care. This happens also in countries outside Africa. In that situation, however, some differences in the practices of ATRs do develop. Women, for instance, enjoy a stronger leadership role than their counterparts in Africa.

32 Fataar (2019).

33 This work of Fataar reflects the spirit and ethic of dialogue and cooperation amongst different religions in South Africa, and elsewhere on the continent. For a discussion on the cooperation of different secular and religious traditions on building ethical citizenship and ethical leadership, see Dames (2008).

34 Olupona (2014, 105–121).

Conclusion

South Africa and the rest of the continent experience high levels of religiosity. Religion can be good news to society if it fulfills a prophetic, priestly, and royal-servant role as this entry attempts to describe. Without engaging in religion for ulterior motives and without instrumentalizing religion, one can state that this continent with all its immense challenges needs all its rich economic, human, cultural, and religious resources to advance a life of dignity for all. Africa and the world need religion that prophetically envisions, that is critical, that tells stories of pain and hope, that embraces intellectual analyses, that engages constructively in policymaking, that priestly reconciles and heals, that in royal-servant fashion serves society, nurtures hope, and builds ethical citizenship and leadership.

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CHAPTER 106

Indian Religions: Global Interactions

Gardner Harris

A discussion about the effect of global interactions on Indian religious ethics can go a number of different directions. Given the impact of British colonialism, this entry focuses on how economic, political, and social power structures of the colonial administration mediated British and Indian, specifically Hindu, interpretations of religion during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The British produced a body of knowledge on India's past as a means to control the present. This metanarrative ultimately influenced the way Indians perceived themselves. Central to this dialogical process was the question of religious ethics. British colonialists publicly derided their Indian subjects as devoid of morality and touted Protestant Christian ethics as the code one should aspire to follow. This elicited a number of strong rebukes from Indian religious and social reformers who advocated for a Hindu religious ethos based in a singular divinity that shared many elements with Christian ethics. It is the friction between these opposing positions that is of interest here. In focusing on one aspect of a much broader and complex topic, many voices, events, and historical contexts also worthy of consideration are missing from the following comments.

Colonialism and the Production of Knowledge

The British East India Company, established to trade in the Indian Ocean, received a royal charter in 1600 and began trading operations with Mughal India. Initially, the company was not concerned with empire building; however, by the late 1750s it dominated European powers (Dutch, Portuguese, French) at sea and captured Bengal, an economically and culturally rich region of eastern India. Once Bengal was under administrative and military rule, the company began to expand its control over other regions in India. By the mid-nineteenth century, it either directly or indirectly ruled most of the subcontinent. In 1857, an uprising of Indian soldiers in the company's army – which the British refer to as the "Sepoy Mutiny" but Indians refer to as the "First War of Independence" – forced the British Crown to take control of India in 1858, which it ruled until partition of the subcontinent in 1947. The British East India Company lost its charter after the insurrection and was completely dissolved by the early 1870s.

A basic mission of British colonialism was the extraction of India's natural resources and the creation of additional revenue streams through taxation, trade, the opening of new markets, indentured labor, military plunder, and so on. A second goal was the moral and religious uplift of what was deemed a corrupt and backward civilization. As it turned out, the two went hand-in-hand. Many believed that the way

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

to fend off social disorder and make economic and political progress was to instill an ethical code to civilize the Indian population. In 1790, Charles Grant (1746–1823), an Anglican missionary and director of the company, submitted a proposal to a member of parliament to establish Christian missions in Bengal and Bihar. Grant wrote, "In fact, the People are universally and wholly corrupt, they are as depraved as they are blind, and as wretched as they are depraved, and to govern them and render them obedient and orderly upon right principles, is no easy Work ...for they are lamentably destitute of those Principles of Honesty, Truth, and Justice which are necessary to the Well-being of Society."[1] Such a remark embodied the prevailing sentiment of the time, namely that India needed to be saved. As Grant indicated, such a task would be no easy work. One means to accomplish this goal was to create a body of knowledge about India's past to understand the most expedient means to govern and uplift their new subjects.

It was also no easy work to reach consensus on what this body of knowledge should contain or what methods should be used. Two opposing positions emerged in the late eighteenth century as the company rose to power. The term "Orientalist" was used to refer to a group of officials and scholars who learned Indian languages, studied ancient texts in Sanskrit – India's sacerdotal language – made comparative religio-cultural analyses, believed the subcontinent should be governed, not by English law but by local law and custom, and advocated for the inclusion of Indian languages in local education. A founder of the Orientalist position was Sir William Jones (1746–1794), a supreme court justice in Kolkata (Calcutta) and brilliant polyglot, who "discovered" the Indo-European language family. Many Orientalists, and Jones in particular here, saw that India had much to offer Britain, even if it was an inferior civilization. "[A]lthough we must be conscious of our superior advancement in all kinds of useful knowledge, yet we ought not therefore to contemn [*sic*] the people of Asia, from whose researches into nature, works of art, and inventions of fancy, many valuable hints may be derived for our own improvement and advantage."[2]

The Orientalist appreciation for India was not shared by the group referred to as "Anglicans" or "Utilitarians." Members of this group believed, in the name of progress and modernization, that English law should rule India. They also sought to spread Christianity, believed education should be conducted in English only, and were far less enthusiastic about Indian languages, traditions, and customs. This view is thoroughly articulated in the three-volume *History of British India* that James Mill (1773–1836), a Scottish philosopher, historian, Presbyterian minister, and father of John Stuart Mill, published in 1817. Mill's *History* was popular reading for neophytes embarking on a career in the colonial administration. It was the first attempt at a comprehensive "historical" analysis of the subcontinent and a critique of the colonial administration's policies. Despite its popularity at the time, by today's standards it is a troubling read. To begin, Mill argued that learning Indian languages or being in situ for ethnography were wholly unnecessary. "[T]he mental habits which are acquired in mere observing," Mill opined, "and in the acquisition of languages, are almost as different as any mental habits can be, from the powers of combination, discrimination, classification, judgment, comparison, weighing, inferring, inducting, philosophizing in short..." (xii). Overconfidence in his intellectual prowess led him to conclude that one could learn more in "one year in his closet in England, than he could obtain during the course of the longest life, by the use of his eyes and his ears in India" (xii). Despite the obvious absurdity in Mill's declaration, there is a simple reason for it: India was barbaric, unlettered, and irrational compared to civilized, erudite, and enlightened Britain. Reason and scientific positivism were all that one needed to

1 Henry Morris (1904, 111–112).
2 Sir William Jones (1807a, 12).

arrive at objective truth. While Mill's position echoes the sentiment of Grant's comment above, one might question whether analysis of translations and observational reports was actually necessary before passing judgment. Mill was certainly privy to invectives about the moral depravity of Hindus that Christian emissaries had unleashed before the House of Commons and in church congregations over the many decades leading up to the publication of *History*.

Regardless of the sentiment, Orientalists and Anglican-Utilitarians agreed on several issues. As a starting premise, India was fundamentally Hindu, and specifically the Hinduism found in ancient religious texts; other religious traditions (Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs) were offshoots of Hinduism or foreign traditions (Islam). Furthermore, in regard to a religious ethos, there was none; or rather, what constituted an ethical system in the distant past – in a "golden age" – had eroded due to misinterpretation or disuse of ancient religious texts and influence from foreign invaders, notably Muslims. As Jones remarked, "nor can we reasonably doubt, how degenerate and abased so ever the *Hindus* may now appear, that in some early age they were splendid in arts and arms, happy in government, wise in legislation, and eminent in various knowledge."[3] Some colonial scholars, such as Mill, however, denied the "golden age" theory and suggested India had never been civilized. Third, the backbone of the ethically abased society was the so-called Hindu caste system that the Brahmin priests, the highest caste, maintained out of self-serving, avaricious interests. As Mill wrote, "And we have seen that by a system of priestcraft, built upon the most enormous and tormenting superstition that ever harassed and degraded any portion of mankind ...despotism and priestcraft taken together, the Hindus, in mind and body, were the most enslaved portion of the human race" (Vol II, 132). As we shall see, much of this perspective on caste was rooted in a racial theory that emerged with Jones' discovery of the Indo-European language family.

One foundational flaw in colonial knowledge was that it posited a monolithic Hinduism as found in ancient Sanskrit sources. Hinduism is not nor ever has been a unified religious tradition. In fact, the term "Hindu" as a label is a British construction that arose out of this body of knowledge. Nevertheless, colonial scholars recognized an early monotheism in the monism of ancient Sanskrit texts, specifically in the *Upaniṣads* (ca. 700–100 BCE), also referred to as Vedānta (Conclusion of Knowledge or Vedas) – philosophical interpretations of the four *Veda-Saṃhitās* and intricate ritual program of Vedic fire sacrifice. While there is no theological unity in the *Upaniṣads*, as they were composed over some 600 years, the general interpretive scheme that Śaṅkara, the eighth-century Hindu theologian, made popular was that they articulate a single reality – Brahman – that was impersonal and from which all creation arose. The individual soul (*ātman*) was identified as Brahman, and the matter that constitutes human forms and the phenomenal world was regarded as illusion and unreal. The soteriological goal was to identify with Brahman, the inward divinity, and eschew attachments to sensual pleasures and the material world. It was this interpretative scheme that pointed colonial scholars toward seeing an early form of monotheism.

Reconciling this with polytheistic tendencies and idolatry that colonial officials observed in ritual practice was no easy work. Such belief and worship was regarded as profligate and a devolution from a once superior tradition. One cause for the slide into immorality, it was argued, was reliance on a genre of secondary religious literature known as *Purāṇa* ("Ancient"; ca. third century–eighteenth century CE), a collection of eighteen encyclopedic texts that address, among other things, the mythological exploits of the gods. Colonial officials believed that the esoteric nature of early monotheistic teachings forced religious specialists to use *Purāṇas* as an alternative way to communicate with the wider population. It was

3 Sir William Jones (1807b, 25).

agreed that over time Brahmins became lazy and led followers astray for monetary gain with the polytheistic tendencies in *Purāṇas*. As Mill opined, *Purāṇas* are a "set of legends, more absurd and extravagant, more transcending the bounds of nature and of reason, less grateful to the imagination and taste of a cultivated and rational people, than those which the fabulous history of any other nation presents to us. The Brahmens [*sic*] are the most audacious, and perhaps the most unskilful [*sic*] fabricators, with whom the annals of fable have yet made us acquainted" (Vol. 1, 99).

Through academic and popular publications, translations of Sanskrit texts, administrative reports, photographs, and so on this body of knowledge became an authoritative metanarrative on India's past and present. In hindsight, it is clear that much knowledge produced in the nineteenth century was flawed. In addition to navigating dissimilar cosmologies and religio-cultural taxonomies, which many did not fully understand, often colonialists could not escape their own sensibilities and worldview. The historical record reveals that what passed for objectivity was agreement first in the superiority of all things British – literature, language, religion, customs, morality, science, architecture, and so forth – it was the standard by which everything was measured. One need only consider the perspective of Thomas Biggs (1822–1905), a military officer assigned to photograph temple architecture. Biggs was disgusted with the perceived immorality of sensuous bodily forms of temple sculpture, claiming that they were evidence for "the early date at which the morals of India assume such a headlong and downward decay."[4] He was wholly uninformed about the form and function of temple sculpture and used British artistic and moral standards to evaluate and judge it. While this is just one example, it points to the fact that colonial knowledge reflected British biases and opinions more than an "objective" knowledge of India.

It was these sorts of assumptions that influenced the colonial administration. In many cases, their policies disrupted social and economic orders and implemented rigid social hierarchies that did not reflect lived reality. Eugene Irschick (1989), for instance, traced how in south India in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a caste of agriculturalist landlords (*vellala*), playing into the British belief of a "golden age" and timeless village existence, convinced local officials and tax collectors that they were the traditional landlords with rights to the land in Tondaimandala, an area near Chennai (Madras) in Tamilnadu. The British, wishing to preserve the traditional social order – despite empirical evidence to the contrary – implemented policy that favored their claim and prevented non-*vellalas*, many of whom were underprivileged, from owning land and thus impeding their chances of upward economic mobility.

It is not the case that all of the knowledge produced during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was erroneous; however, many of the foundational assumptions were. The belief in an ethical "golden age" and a timeless, sedentary India girded by the caste system forced scholars and administrators to make inaccurate judgments and disruptive policies. One leading culprit for these assumptions was the formation of a theory on race that grew out of Sir William Jones' discovery of the Indo-European language family.

Racial Theory of Caste

The British regarded the Hindu caste system as the defining feature of Indian society. Not only was caste central to their critiques of Indian ethics – as it was religiously ordained exploitation at the hands of despotic Brahmin priests – it was also an institution used in comparison to champion the moral superiority

4 Cited in Vidya Dehejia (2009, 11).

and enlightenment of British society. As Mill remarked, "the division of the people into castes, and the prejudices which the detestable views of the Brahmans raised to separate them, a degrading and pernicious system of subordination was established among the Hindus, and the vices of such a system were there carried to a more destructive height than among any other people" (Vol II, 131–132). As Ronald Inden (1990) has detailed, while the Orientalists and Anglican-Utilitarians agreed that caste stripped individuals of agency, they did not perceive caste in the same way. The distinction was between *varṇa* ("class") and *jāti* ("birth"). The Orientalists argued that society was ordered according to *varṇa*, the four-fold system outlined in Sanskrit literature, namely Brahmin (priests), Kṣatriya (nobility/warriors), Vaiśya (populace), and Śudra (servants). Based on empirical evidence, such as racial features or division of labor, the Anglican-Utilitarians, on the other hand, argued that society was organized according to *jātis*, a complex system of social classes that has numerous sub-divisions. Inden (1990, 74) writes that "[t]he hard-headed empiricist has seen caste as an obstacle to progress, while the dreamy idealists (i.e. Orientalist) has considered it the embodiment of a holistic, organic vision of human community" Either way, both camps agreed that it was "anti-individualist and ...opposite of the West's civil society."

The caste system that colonial administrators and scholars perceived, however, was a product of what they wanted to perceive; they wanted an ordered, compartmentalized world that was easy to govern, and the belief in an unchanging, timeless India galvanized caste as the central institution. The position should not be overstated here. Caste existed prior to the British but it was not as rigid or uniform as what they posited. Gita Dharampal-Frick (1995) has shown that observations of Indian society from European travel writers from 1500 to 1800 did not conform to the caste system colonialists described. She argues that for early observers caste was not the foundation of society and nor were Brahmins necessarily the pinnacle of the social hierarchy – some mercantile and low-caste groups carried more influence than Brahmins. Both Anglicans and Orientalists largely dismissed these accounts.

The crux of their position was not merely about inadequate methodology (i.e. the lack of scientific positivism) but rather about British theories on race. In 1786, Jones delivered "The Third Anniversary Discourse, On The Hindus" to the Asiatic Society he co-founded in which he drew attention to the similarities between Sanskrit and European languages. "The *Sanscrit* [*sic*] language," Jones remarked, "whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident" (Jones, 34). This monumental discovery not only ushered in recognition of the Indo-European language family and the discipline of linguistics, it also suggested that the British and Indians were of similar ancestral stock in some distant past, a proposition both celebrated and criticized.

Language, then, became equated with race. The descendants of the Āryans ("nobles") who entered India early in the second millennium BCE and brought with them the Sanskrit language, then, were perceived as upper castes. The speakers of Dravidian languages in south India were as seen as descendants of the conquered indigenous people and were low-caste. As Thomas Trautmann has pointed out this racial theory reflected then current ideas of race in Britain rather than ancient India. The result was that the British used notions of race to interpret ancient texts and order the society they governed. Trautmann has shown that the evidence scholars used to construct this theory was flimsy at best. What it did do, he argues, was provide moral support for civilizing people who were regarded as ancestral kin (Trautmann 1997, 215).

The body of knowledge that the British produced to understand how to govern India largely reflected their own religio-cultural categories, not those of India or Hinduism. One important outcome of this was

that it caused Hindu leaders to reflect on their own tradition and respond to colonial critiques. In this dialogical process, India and Hinduism underwent many substantial changes.

Hindu Religious and Social Reformers

Modern Hinduism is largely a product of the colonial encounter. By the early nineteenth century, Hindu leaders were responding to the colonial master narrative that deciphered India's past to understand how to rule in the present. While Hindu leaders remained staunchly pro-Indian, they weaved aspects of the narrative into their counter-narrative. They too sought to uplift the Indian population but not to create, in the words of Thomas Macauley, an historian and council member of the company, "...a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but British in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."[5] Hindu leaders pursued a path to instill pride in the population by revitalizing the ethical spirituality of Vedic and Vedāntin monism and condemning polytheism and idolatry. One way of imparting this was to expose what they believed was the ethical inferiority of Christianity. While there were many religious and political leaders who participated in this broader struggle, two figures of note are Rammohan Roy (1772–1833) and Swami Dayananda Sarasvati (1824–1883), both of whom are widely regarded as the progenitors of modern Hinduism and India.

Rammohan Roy was born to a Brahmin family in Bengal and received an excellent education. He knew Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and English; he also studied Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. For more than a decade, he worked for the company and developed a belief that some Western influence, such as education, could benefit India. Roy's interest in religious and social reform led him to a comparative study of monotheistic traditions. He was influenced by Islamic mysticism and Christian Unitarian interpretations of the Bible; however, he remained faithful to his rationalist understanding of Vedānta. Roy published translations and interpretations of key *Upaniṣads* in English and Bengali to counter the emphasis on the *Purāṇas*, combat abuses of the Brahmin priests and the practice of idolatry, and instill an ethical spirituality that centered on an ineffable and incomprehensible God. He also attacked such religiously ordained practices as *satī* – the immolation of a widow on the deceased husband's funeral pyre – the caste system, child marriage, and advocated for women's rights. In 1828, Roy established the Brahmo Samaj ("Society of Brahman") in Kolkata (Calcutta), a society that sought to transform Hinduism and India through a return to Vedic religion. He placed a high premium on reason. Through reason a universal ethics could be actualized, he argued, because all religions, when stripped of irrational dogma, such as miracles, articulate the same message. This belief instilled in Roy a tolerance that Sarasvati did not share.

Swami Dayananda Sarasvati was born to a Brahmin family in Gujarat. At a young age, he questioned the practice of idolatry after witnessing mice eating the food made as an offering to an icon of Lord Śiva. He embarked on a religious life that began as a wandering holy man searching for truth and, after visiting the Brahmo Samaj in 1872, ended as a religious and social reformer. Like Roy, Sarasvati sought to return Hinduism to its Vedic roots and criticized polytheism and idolatry. He also criticized treatment of women and widows, arranged and child marriages, and reinterpreted the caste system not as structure one is born into but rather as dependent on one's character. In 1875, Sarasvati founded Ārya Samaj ("Society of Āryans/Nobles"), first in Mumbai (Bombay) and later in the Punjab region, a society to uplift Hindus through Vedic knowledge. Unlike Roy, he was openly anti-British, opposed English-style education, critical of sectarian

5 Thomas Macaulay (1835) 1919.

religions, specifically Christianity and Islam, that did not center on the immutable and impersonal deity of the *Veda-saṃhitās*, and wanted to weaponize Hinduism against the unjust rule of the British.

Like the British, Roy and Sarasvati believed India was experiencing an ethical crisis and sought to return to the morality of a "golden age" when religion was monistic, as laid out in the *Veda-saṃhitās* and *Upaniṣads*. They too saw Brahmin priests as the source for ethical decay. For these leaders the singularity of the divine was truth, not the polytheism and idolatry that priests encouraged as a result of focusing on *Purāṇas*. Roy, for instance, was not shy about his disdain. In the introduction to English translations of the *Upaniṣads* in 1816, he advanced the notion that Brahmins should not be the sole arbiter of one's religiosity, a precept reminiscent of the Protestant reformation. He scolded them for claiming to be the only ones capable of interpreting scripture and for hiding the singular divinity behind the complexity of the Sanskrit language, the cloak of polytheism, and encouragement of idolatry. The latter, he argued, originally emerged as an "allegorical adoration of the True Deity" but became official doctrine to the degree that discussion of a singular deity became heretical. [6] In addition to attacking popular Hinduism, Roy and Sarasvati also turned the tables on colonials by interpreting the Bible and Christian beliefs. They utilized similar methodologies to reveal that British were guilty of the same affront to reason that they accused Hindus of being.

The Ethical Superiority of Rational Hinduism

As colonials raged about the moral devolution of Hinduism, Roy and Sarasvati pointed to a similar trend in Christianity. They argued that Christian morality was overshadowed with belief in miracles, faith in Jesus Christ's divinity, and anthropomorphic conceptions of that which is incomprehensible. Roy and Sarasvati accused the British of failing to understand their own scripture and not holding themselves to the same rational standard to which they held others.

In the preface to *The Precepts of Jesus, the guide to peace and happiness, extracted from the books of the New Testament ascribed to the four evangelists* (1823), which he also translated into Sanskrit and Bengali, Roy adopted the colonial strategy of interpreting religious scripture and explaining the ethical content to his reading audience. He advanced the idea of belief in one God, disputed the divinity of Christ, and rejected accounts of "fabricated tales" or miracles (both in Christianity and the religions of "Asia") as contra to the natural order of the world (xviii–xix). For Roy, once the belief of Christ's divinity was abandoned (as this amounted to polytheism), the ethical doctrine in the New Testament would create harmony among humanity writ large and obviate the recalcitrant from prejudice and partiality (against those who denied the divinity of Christ) so they may understand "what is most consistent with the laws of nature, and conformable to the dictates of human reason and divine revelation" (xviii). True to the title, Roy extracted moral lessons in the four Gospels and compiled them into a narrative. He highlighted ethical qualities such as good works in praise of the unity of God, honoring one's mother and father, abstaining from adultery and murder, honesty, and temperance, to name a few. These precepts, Roy believed, struck at the core of Christian soteriology – not the belief in Christ's divinity – and were common among all monotheistic traditions.

It should come as no surprise that Roy was defamed in a newspaper as a heathen for his interpretative tract. Roy published two rejoinders. In *An Appeal to the Christian Public, in defence of the "Precepts of*

6 Rammohan Roy (1901, 5).

Jesus," Roy accused his critics of violating Christian ethos. "I say unchristianlike [*sic*] manner because the Editor, by making use of the term heathen, has, I presume, violated truth, charity, and liberality, which are essential to Christianity in every sense of the word" (1825b, 101). What followed was a point-by-point repudiation of the published critique and a renewed defense for extracting moral doctrine over theological mysteries and dogma and of his belief of the unity of God. He defended the *Upaniṣads* from accusations of promoting atheism because the morality accorded to God in Christian scripture was absent in these ancient texts. Roy, in turn, criticized Christian anthropomorphic depictions of God, which he deemed irrational. At the close of *An Appeal*, he writes, "No one capable of sound reasoning can for a moment imagine that these or any other descriptions of God are intended to convey literal notions of the unsearchable incomprehensible Being" (1825b, 130). Without anthropomorphic qualities, the deity of the *Upaniṣads*, he asserted, and that of the Bible were represented in the same manner (125b, 130). This was apparently insufficient, as Roy composed the *Second Final Appeal to the Christian Public, in defence of the "Precepts of Jesus*" in the same year. Much of the argument in the first appeal is found in the second, but the latter delves into greater specificity. He argued that the Christian God's anthropomorphic qualities were similar to the depictions of gods in the Hindu *Purāṇas*, which had been roundly criticized as responsible for India's ethical decline. Roy revealed the duplicity of the colonials for engaging in the very same belief and practice for which they derided Hindus.

Sarasvati also critiqued Abrahamic scripture but he was much more hostile than Roy. He too emphasized reason over faith and the truth of monism over the falsity of monotheism. Although Sarasvati claimed objectivity, his commentary on the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Qur'an was far less tolerant than Roy's project of positing a universal ethics. In *Exposition of Truth's Meaning* (1875), he used a rational Vedic interpretive lens to reveal the fallacy and superstition of all Abrahamic scripture and to prove the superiority of the Vedas as the primeval religion. For example, in discussing the episode in *Exodus* in which Moses kills an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew laborer, Sarasvati characterized him as a slave to his passions and a murderer who wanted to hide his crime as any common thief would do. He concluded by stating, "Hence all the chief prophets of the Christians from Moses downwards were all uncivilized ...and devoid of culture" (608). In a commentary on the Gospel of Matthew when Christ claims that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven one must convert and become like children, Sarasvati argued the claim was irrational. He stated, this "shows that most of the teachings of Christ were opposed to the dictum of knowledge and contrary to the laws of nature, and he also wished that people should accept them like children without questioning their validity ...Plenty of Christians have blind faith like children, otherwise why should they believe in such thing as are opposed to reason and science. It is also clear that had not Christ himself been destitute of knowledge and understanding like children, he would not have taught others to become as children, since a man always wants to make others like himself" (625).

These are only two of the numerous examples of Sarasvati's fiery rhetoric in *Exposition of Truth's Meaning*. He expressed surprise that Europeans claim to be cultured and enlightened and yet had not adopted the religion of the Vedas. Many of the Christian stories, he claimed, were "more absurd" than those found in the *Purāṇas* and those that believe them as truth are the "very embodiment of ignorance" (638). Sarasvati also directed his criticism toward Islam and the Qur'an, basically labeling Muhammed a con artist. This did not sit well with India's large Muslim population and sowed seeds for the discontent witnessed between Hindu and Muslim communities during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In different ways, Roy and Sarasvati rescued Hinduism from the colonial narrative and gave Hinduism back, as it were, to Hindus. They accepted aspects of the criticism, particularly regarding the degenerate

nature of Brahmin priests and idolatry; however, through the use of similar exegetical strategies that colonials used to create their body of knowledge, Roy and Sarasvati countered the relentless attacks through highlighting the hypocrisy of the colonial critique. In order to transform and uplift Hinduism, they seized on the notion of a golden age and highlighted the ethical spirituality of ancient Hinduism. In this process, they transformed Hinduism. Roy and Sarasvati replaced allegiance to the uncritical orthodoxy of Brahmin priests with rational and ethical inquiry that instilled patriotism and pride in the Hindu population.

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Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics

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Editor-in-Chief: William Schweiker

Volume Three: Moral Issues

Volume Editor: Elizabeth Bucar

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2022

Registered Offices
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Office
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data applied for
Hardback ISBN: 9781118471982

Cover Design: Wiley
Cover Image: © Shelby McQuilkin

Set in 9.5/12.5pt STIXTwoText by Straive, Pondicherry, India

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Preface to Volume III – Moral Issues

Elizabeth Bucar

The *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics* introduces readers to basic issues in moral inquiry, a selection of moral traditions, and surveys a range of moral issues. Each of the three volumes covers one of these three elements of religious ethics, with Volume III focusing on moral issues.

What distinguishes "religious" ethics from other approaches to ethics is, first and foremost, its connection to the religions. While there is much debate in modern scholarship about the precise meaning of the term "religion" there is at least a widely shared conviction that there are such things as religions, by which is meant social groups and traditions of thought and practice that are in one way or another about the deepest human questions and the ultimate goal(s) of human life, including but not limited to reverence for a divine being or beings. Thought about or practice in relation to what is ultimately important and real seems to be a longstanding feature of human life across historical periods, geography, and cultural traditions.

Volume III addresses a range of moral issues in the study of religious ethics in order to clarify how the discipline of religious ethics helps us think through the concrete effect of religion on the moral life. The entries contained in this volume provide conceptual resources for understanding the structures, conditions, and/or challenges of specific moral issues across a wide range of human life. Accordingly, the volume is divided into three parts: (1) Persons, (2) Systems, and (3) Communities. Each of these parts is further divided into two sub-categories, Structures and Conditions, or Challenges, in order to indicate if the entries address the religious and ethical context of a specific moral issue, or the specific challenges that issue poses for human life.

Taken together, the entries in this volume are intended not only to provide an accessible overview the wide range of moral issues that religious ethicists have engaged, but also to reflect specific scholar's distinctive contribution to the field of study. No attempt has been made to impose on the contributors any particular view of the topics on which they were invited to contribute. Rather, the diversity of topics and approaches contained in this volume reflects the vitality of religious ethics as a field of study. We encourage readers to make use of Volume III not only to seek information on the particular topics contained herein, but also to gain a broader understanding of the shape of religious ethical reflection as a complex and dynamic enterprise that takes place within and among persons, through systems, and within communities over time and space.

In his entry "On Religious Ethics" that introduces each volume of the *Encyclopedia*, William Schweiker speaks of religious ethics as a field of study that undertakes three interrelated *tasks* – critical, comparative,

and constructive – from what he describes as a hermeneutical *standpoint* and with respect to interlocking *dimensions* of reflection: descriptive, normative, practical, fundamental, and metaethical. These dimensions of inquiry arise from the persistent questions that surround human existence – questions, Schweiker notes, that "demarcate a space of human existence determined by the problem of how one ought to live religiously." The *Encyclopedia* as a whole enacts this multi-dimensional approach insofar as the three volumes present for scholarly reflection "the space or network of questions within which human life transpires and the answers a community gives to those questions in order to shape character and guide conduct."

While the editors of the three volumes of the *Encyclopedia* support, to varying degrees, a hermeneutical approach to religious ethics, to view the field of religious ethics as presented in these volumes as proceeding from a hermeneutical standpoint is less a prescriptive than a descriptive statement – and even an invitation. Readers are invited to engage in the critical, constructive and comparative tasks themselves as they consider the entries in each volume of the *Encyclopedia*. The entries in the present volume introduce readers to the constructive reflection on practical moral problems in ways that engage religious belief and practice. These entries draw on the major concepts, categories, and theoretical approaches in the study of moral issues explored in Volume I and intersect with topics of comparison of moral traditions in Volume II.

INTRODUCTION

On Religious Ethics

William Schweiker

The publication of the *Blackwell Companion of Religious Ethics* in 2005 represented a defining moment for religious ethics. Happily, this new *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*, incorporating and updating the entirety of the *Companion* and published fifteen years later, continues the work of defining the meaning, task, and forms of religious ethics. Ethicists, historians of religion, theologians, philosophers, political theorists, and other experts have explored the moral outlooks and practices of the world's religions. Drawing on and revising religious resources, basic themes in Moral Theory as well as a host of contemporary moral and political problems are treated. The *Encyclopedia*'s three volumes mirror the structure of the Companion but now greatly expanded: Volume I on issues in Moral Theory; Volume II on Moral Traditions; Volume III on Moral Problems. Throughout the volumes, topics will be explored in depth and in most cases comparatively even as the individual authors express their reasons and judgments on the topics.

Given the comprehensive nature of this work, the purpose of the present entry is not to provide a detailed "introduction" to the volumes. Such an introduction is not possible given the sheer size of these volumes and insofar as this is a collective work rather than a single line of argument. This entry is meant to provide orientation to the range of questions and kinds of thinking found in the various parts of *The Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*.

Religious Ethics?

Anyone who works in religious ethics confronts an immediate and obvious problem. "Ethics" or "moral philosophy" is not indigenous to the world's religions. Inspired by Socrates and other sages, Greek and Roman thinkers engaged in the rational analysis and justification of norms, practices, forms of character, and ways of life believed to secure human happiness or well-being (*eudaimonia*). The inspiration of Socrates, and the memory of his conviction and execution on the charge of impiety, meant that ethics was also a challenge to the authority of religious and traditional moral beliefs. What is more, the conception of a good human life advocated by Hellenistic philosophers is foreign to the religions. Religious traditions obviously sustain reflection on human well-being, happiness. However, these accounts are set within an order defined by beings, realms, ideals, purposes, and practices not limited to human life and flourishing.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

The scope of concern found in the world's religions is thereby wider than the discourse of ethics and Hellenistic ideas about human well-being. It is quite unremarkable, then, that the world's religions have generally not used the idea of ethics to specify the character of their outlooks on what defines a good life, right conduct, noble character, and proper social relations. For scholarly purposes, *ethics*, as used in this *Encyclopedia*, is the term for a discipline of thought that interprets, critically assesses, and, often, applies the *morality* of a religious community or tradition. *Morality*, accordingly, is the actual rules, duties, goods, rituals, practices, and values of a community used to orient life.

Similar problems surround the idea of "religion." None of the historical legacies explored in this *Encyclopedia* initially defined themselves as a religion. The term seems to have arisen from the Latin *religare*, meaning to tie or to bind. Religion specified how one was bound to the origins of the city of Rome as itself a sacred reality. Other ideas of religion developed, especially during the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, in order to facilitate the study of the beliefs, practices, values, and histories of human communities. As explored in the following volumes, definitions range from religion as belief in gods or one God, claims about sacred power, ultimate concern, to the charge that religion is about concealed mechanisms of domination.

Most contemporary scholars agree that a religion includes several features: convictions about what is most important in life (experiences like birth and death, sex and sorrow) in relation to what is believed to be ultimate, sacred, holy, or divine, ritual actions, beliefs about the whence and whither of existence, codes of conduct, communal life and its structures, and also experiences of transcendence (e.g. enlightenment, redemption, mystical insight), religious leaders. However, these features of religion are disputed and bear different meanings in diverse cultures and traditions. Again, for scholarly purposes, this *Encyclopedia* holds that the distinctive feature of *religions* from other human sociocultural forms is that they are about what is ultimately important and real for some community of people. That is to say, the referent or object of religious devotion and/or practice is not just what is important or valuable to people, but it must also, in some way, be real, defined in many ways. Likewise, what is real (however defined) is not the referent or object of religion if it is not ultimately important to some human community. While variously conceived, some social and cultural form or practice is not *religious* if it does not bind together importance with something, someone, or some condition that is held to be real.

The idea of "religion," just like "ethics," is a scholarly invention. As rightly noted in the various parts of this *Encyclopedia*, these ideas are not native to traditions, much less necessary categories of the human mind. They are tools for inquiry and reflection. What is more, one must keep distinct, if sometimes related, the morality or ethics of a religion (the actual ways of life, beliefs, values, norms, and outlooks of a people) from the intellectual labor of scholars and thinkers called "ethics" and/or "religious ethics." What is sought in these volumes and this entry is an account of the intellectual enterprise of religious ethics ever mindful of complex connections to ways of religious and moral living.

Given the conceptual problems surrounding religion and ethics, it is not surprising that one finds different options in the intellectual pursuit of religious ethics. Some distinct approaches have typified the field, although there are manifold subtypes and variations (see Schweiker 1998; Twiss and Grelle 1998, 11–33). First, some religious ethicists have sought to specify a unique concept, phenomenon, rational structure, or set of practices called religion more or less manifest in what are conventionally seen as the "religions." Often called the *formalist* approach to religious ethics, the task is to show the place and import of religion for the moral life (see Green 1978; Gamwell 1990). Others adopt, second, a *sociolinguistic* approach. These thinkers explore specific action guides recommended by communities and/or

how communities specify through ritual, myth, discourse, and belief often incommensurable ways of life (see Little and Twiss 1978; Stout 1988). Third, there are scholars who develop versions of *ethical naturalism*. This approach is concerned with the particularity of moral outlooks, but also "treats a system of beliefs as a whole and refuses to isolate moral propositions for analysis from propositions about how things are in the world and how they come to be that way" (Lovin and Reynolds 1985, 3). More recently, a group of scholars, headed by Elizabeth Bucar and Aaron Stalnaker, have written about a third wave of work in Comparative Ethics focused especially on cultural and moral diversity (Bucar and Stalnaker 2012). This has opened the field to cultural and ethnographic studies without loss of a normative purpose. Each of these approaches in religious ethics, as well as various permutations on them, can be found in this book. No attempt, thankfully, has been made to demand agreement among them.

Another way of conceiving religious ethics is now in view and it finds expression throughout this *Encyclopedia* and other works (see Schweiker and Clairmont 2020). The remainder of this entry gives an account of this *hermeneutical* and *multidimensional* option alongside other approaches to the field. Like formalists, a multidimensional approach specifies a structure for ethical thinking necessary to examine specific traditions, but is not reducible to their distinctive languages and practices. Yet, as shown below, it moves beyond most formalist proposals in terms of how knowledge and disciplines are conceived. With the sociolinguistic and naturalistic options, a hermeneutical approach to religious ethics examines the distinctive outlooks of traditions. However, precisely as hermeneutical in character, religious ethics labors between and among traditions rather than focuses on the incommensurability of language-games, distinct action guides, or even moral worldviews. And with more recent accounts of Comparative Ethics, a hermeneutical approach insists on understanding the cultural and social location of the religions even as it seeks to draw on them as resources for constructive ethical and religious ethics. "Religious ethics," on this account, is defined in terms of critical, comparative, and constructive *tasks* of moral inquiry into religious resources undertaken from a hermeneutical *standpoint* and with respect to interlocking *dimensions* of reflection. My contention is that this account captures something of the scope and spirit of this *Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*.

Of course, it must be stressed that what follows is a proposal for religious ethics, developed in view of this work. There is no assumption that every author or editor will agree or even ought to agree with this depiction or, for that matter, any other depiction of religious ethics. As a field of inquiry, part of the vitality of religious ethics is precisely that it must constantly engage in appraisals of its purposes, methods, and criteria of adequacy. In fact, this *Encyclopedia* must partly be seen as engaged in that kind of appraisal.

We turn next to the question of how to characterize the *tasks* and *dimensions* of religious ethics in order that the full import of these volumes can be grasped.

Tasks and Multidimensional Inquiry

There are many ways to define ethics and also many ways to carry out ethical reflection. Contemporary scholarship in *religious ethics* undertakes to a greater or lesser extent several related *tasks*.

Religious ethics entails the *critical* inquiry into complex ways of religious and moral life, but often also indicates the *constructive* use of religious sources in meeting current problems. Each of those tasks, the critical and constructive, is often bound to the work of *comparison*. As found in Volume II, a scholar

critically explores a tradition by comparing its expressions through time and/or seeing it in relation to other cultural and social dynamics, including other religions. Constructive work, like that undertaken in Volume III, compares accounts of how to live with other proposals in order to assess duties and values binding on people. The question – explored in Volume I of this *Encyclopedia* – becomes: how ought we to define religious ethics as a discipline, an intellectual practice?

With the rise of the modern Western world there were extensive debates about what constituted a discipline of thought. There emerged the conviction that any genuine discipline must have a distinct, or unique, subject matter, even as there was the need to define a "system of the sciences" around a fundamental principle or scientific method in order to ensure the coherence of knowledge. The core of the modern project was to understand the world and free human beings from ignorance and illusion. One did so by specifying the method, purpose, and criteria of various disciplines in such a way that each was *autonomous* and yet consistent with all others because they shared a *rational* structure. As Stephen Toulmin has noted: "In the underlying European worldview, then, the value of a single all-embracing system of theories, into which phenomena of all kinds could eventually be fitted, was taken for granted right up until the twentieth century" (Toulmin 2001, 87). Ethics, for instance, had to be about a distinctive domain of human conduct, say, about obligation or utility, which was different than other sciences, and yet founded rationally or empirically in the same way as other sciences. This led to the radical distinction between ethics as a *normative* discipline and other *descriptive* approaches to human behavior even if they shared similar cognitive commitments. One finds, interestingly enough, residues of this modern outlook in formalistic approaches to religious ethics. Even those who reject the modern enterprise, from the Romantics to some sociolinguistic thinkers and ethical naturalists and the cultural turn in ethics, assume that definition of a discipline only to deny it. They often contest the modern account through ad hoc or unsystematic approaches to inquiry.

This *Encyclopedia* aptly shows that the aspiration to isolate one formal structure of reason built on a single principle or to specify one scientific method as alone adequate for research is insufficient given genuine moral, religious, and cognitive diversity. Still, as formalists have long seen, there is also the need to define and characterize the discipline of religious ethics as an intellectual pursuit. Further, the modernist desire to establish the autonomy of ethics around some *sui generis* dimension at action (e.g. the moral "ought" or obligation or virtue) fails to indicate how moral reflection can and must interact with other intellectual practices in order to address exceedingly complex problems and phenomena. A crucial aspiration of much contemporary discourse is to move beyond the formal rationalism of the modern project as well as its denial by Romantics and others. It is to grasp a more humane, practical form of reasonableness. Yet in order to be apt for religious ethics, this construal of ethics must also, as naturalists, sociolinguistic, and cultural/ethnographic approaches show, explore the connections among "moral" beliefs and actions and other convictions and practices of actual living communities.

There is an important turn of late in providing an account of knowledge that bears promise for religious ethics. This is what can be called *multidimensional* thinking. What is rejected by a range of thinkers in various fields is a depiction of knowledge gained and justified through autonomous disciplines tenuously held together by *one* formal rational structure or method of inquiry. As the moral philosopher Mary Midgley has astutely noted:

> We exist, in fact, as interdependent parts of a complex network, not as isolated items that must be supported in a void. As for our knowledge, it too is a network

> involving all kinds of lateral links, a system in which the most varied kinds of connection may be relevant for helping us to meet various kinds of questions.
>
> (Midgley 2003, 25)

In this light, the burden placed on any intellectual practice aimed at knowledge is to specify those points at which it is linked to other disciplines given shared interests, norms and even values. Knowledge is a complex, reflexive network; it is a space of warranted intelligibility or reasonability.

This depiction of knowledge is important not just for addressing shared interests. It is basic to the determination of the cogency, scope, and integrity of a discipline. Rather than focusing on the *autonomy* of a "discipline," one will be interested in the *lateral links* wherein reflection and information move in and out of an intellectual practice (see Gustafson 2004). *Scope*, rather than *autonomy*, will be essential in deciding the validity, the truth, of claims. Accordingly, a discipline is best defined in terms of the basic questions it seeks to answer. When carefully examined these basic questions naturally pose other questions that, if answered, implicate a form of reflection in other modes of inquiry pursuing their own questions. A method must be devised not on one formal model of rationality but in order to match the problems and questions that need answering.

A multidimensional account of rational inquiry seems particularly apt for religious ethics. In very different ways, what scholars call the *religions* provide guidance for human living through rituals, myths, exemplars, doctrines, and teachings that answer a range of questions surrounding human existence. These questions demarcate a space of human existence determined by the problem of how one ought to live religiously – say, live as a Protestant Christian, a Shīʿite Muslim, or a Tibetan Buddhist. *Morality*, the religious ethicist can insist, is a term for the space or network of questions within which human life transpires and the answers a community gives to those questions in order to shape character and guide conduct. From the perspective of actual traditions, religious ethics must be conceived as examining various features of how the moral space of life, as we can call it, is conceived and enacted in life. Viewed as a whole, this *Encyclopedia* can be seen to enact just this kind of examination of religious moralities.

If one takes seriously recurring questions found in the legacies of religions and formulates them at an appropriate level of generality, it is possible to adduce the multidimensional shape of religious ethics (see Schweiker 1995; Schweiker and Clairmont 2020). At least five deeply interrelated questions ground the dimensions of inquiry used to engage in its comparative, critical, and constructive tasks. What is more, each of these dimensions of ethics probe various tensions, or *aporia*, in order to isolate analogues among religious outlooks. The questions that found the dimensions of ethics are not related in a sequential or deductive manner; they are not a check-list to be applied to thinkers, texts, or practices. They arise out of tensions in human life and constitute the interacting "dimensions" of ethics that aim to explicate a religion's account of and directions for orienting existence and conduct in the moral space of life. And insofar as religions use stories, rituals, and exemplary characters in order to guide life, these dimensions explicate and analyze the moral meaning of these phenomena. Further, the dimensions are important for the reader of this work in order to understand what specific questions a scholar is answering, even as the religious ethicist is held accountable for questions not answered but which are in the background of a religious outlook.

This account of moral inquiry articulates an approach for religious ethics that labors alongside *formalists* and those working *sociolinguistically*, *naturalistically*, and *cultural/ethnographic* approaches to reli-

gious traditions and communities. The account admits with formalists that a construal of ethics is an intellectual construct, but it denies that one dimension alone defines ethics and it specifies, like the other approaches, questions and answers of ethics from within the resources of real traditions. In this way religious ethics escapes the modernist reduction of a discipline to one rational principle or method, while also avoiding relativistic forms of postmodernism. What, then, are the multiple and interacting dimensions of ethical inquiry that represent a distinctive option for religious ethics and can provide orientation for reading these volumes? Recall, these are not ordered in any hierarchical way; they are mutually interactive and informative.

Dimensions of Ethics

The Descriptive Dimension

Human beings live and act in specific places, times, and sets of relations. How a situation is described, defined, and interpreted has implications for the possibilities and limits on actions and relations. In its widest compass, some construal is given of the moral context of the entirety of human life, often enough through myths, ideologies, or a moral worldview. Specific moral situations will be described, defined, and interpreted with reference to the wider outlook.

So when, for example, a Buddhist practitioner must decide in a situation what to do, there is the need to answer a basic question, "what is going on?" This is a difficult question not only because of the complexity of any situation, its openness to multiple interpretations, and the limitations of human perception and attention. The question is rendered all the more difficult because someone (authority figure, practitioner) must sort out what reality or perspective on reality is at issue, one marked by conventional truth or one rooted in *Dharma*. A devout Muslim too must determine "what is going on" in a specific situation. This requires not only a description of that case, but also knowledge of how Allāh is acting, the import of *Sharīʿa* on a case, and also specific reasoning skills. Behind these religious teachings is a basic human perplexity: how is genuine insight into a situation related to and blocked by human "blindness" to what is the case? Importantly enough, the religious often explore the dialectic of blindness and insight.

While each tradition provides answers to the question "what is going on?" they do so in wildly complex and different ways. Ethics has a *descriptive* dimension that is linked to other interpretive or hermeneutical disciplines, aimed at genuine insight, ranging from studies of myth to specific analyses of events and situations that provide ways to construe and understand moral situations. Religious ethics draws on a range of resources, experiences, types of discernment, and even beliefs about reality. These resources provide the means to describe and analyze a situation in terms of its moral meaning.

The Normative Dimension

Deciding "what is going on" in any concrete situation is never a disinterested activity. The descriptive dimension of ethics is necessarily related to some norms and values that orient thinking and action. These norms and values allow some realities to appear within moral perception; they also can conceal realities, and hence the tension of blindness and insight. Christian ideas about neighbor love, for instance, might allow a perception of human worth and vulnerability even for those deemed enemies. This

depends, of course, on how neighbor and love are normatively understood. "What norms and values ought to guide human life?" That too seems to be a basic question asked repeatedly in the legacies of religious traditions. A religious ethics has a *normative* dimension.

A bewildering diversity is found among the religions on the normative question. In many traditions there are distinct and sometimes conflicting *sources* for defining what norms and values ought to guide life. One source is the native intelligence of human beings struggling to live together; it is reason and intelligence. Another source is the ultimate binding claims and teachings, the revelation, of the community. Consider aspects of Jewish thought. Rooted in the so-called Noahide covenant, Jewish thinkers have long insisted that every person can at some level grasp moral principles. Yet, for the Jewish community, this knowledge is rudimentary in light of the revelation of the divine will in Torah. Not surprisingly, there are debates within religious traditions about the relative authority of the various *sources* of norms and values and how these ought to relate in living religiously. The sources drawn upon in moral thinking also link to other intellectual practices, especially ones interested in human valuing, social norms and goods, and debates about moral intelligence.

Disputes about the sources of moral norms and values also turn on the *content* of and *relations* among norms and values. Generally speaking, religious traditions acknowledge and seek to sustain a range of goods, like bodily integrity, family, education, art, and, at the highest level, moral excellence and righteousness (see Finnis 1983; Nussbaum 2000). How these goods are understood differs between traditions and even within a tradition; they constitute another link to disciplines, from economics to anthropology, which explore basic goods. Classical Hindu accounts of caste show, for example, that the meaning of bodily integrity shifts between the warrior caste (Kṣatriyas) and the priestly caste (Brahmans). Nevertheless, some domain of goods or values is protected and promoted by living morally. There are also debates about the norms for deciding how to respect and enhance goods. African beliefs about what is owed ancestors as the norm for human choice are decidedly different than, say, the Ten Commandments in the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. In each case, norms protect and promote goods within religious living.

However, matters are more complex. Just as the descriptive dimension of religious ethics probed the tensions between blindness and insight in human moral thinking, normative reflection has to address the question of whether or not the divine, sacred, or ultimate is beyond our conventional distinctions or good and evil or not. In fact, most religious traditions, despite their profound differences, hold that the sacred, ultimate, or divine somehow transcends or exceeds the common sensical distinctions of good and evil. And if that is so, then, normative and descriptive dimensions of inquiry are reflexively related at the level of perception and decision-making. They link ethics to other ways of articulating, describing, and valuing human actions and relations. Adducing these dimensions from widespread questions in no way shields us from the stark differences between and within traditions. Attention to these dimensions facilitates critical, comparative, and constructive work.

The Practical Dimension

When people ask about what is going on and what are the norms and values that ought to orient their living, they do so for practical rather than merely theoretical reasons. Whatever else we want and must say about the religions, they are first and foremost ways of orienting human life. They are ways of addressing the tensions, the *aproia*, of perplexity and wisdom in human life, fighting perplexity in the

name of wisdom. While the ethicist or religious thinker will develop complex epistemological theories or debate the nature of value and the validity of some conception of a norm, this is not the concern of most people. For example, as the Bhagavad Gītā opens, Arjuna, standing beside Kṛṣṇa, watches a bloody battle unfold between members of his family. Should he join the battle? In the struggle of decision, a host of forces might be active, the advice of a god (Kṛṣṇa), duties bound to class or social role, bonds of love. Here too is a basic question: "what ought I or we to do?" Where is wisdom to be found?

Religious ethics has a decidedly *practical* dimension, no matter how theoretical and speculative moral inquiry becomes. It is related to other disciplines that focus on decision-making and judgment. Little wonder that so many religions link their ethics to law as well as the demand to imitate moral saints or to participate in practices of divination or study and commentary. Traditions develop complex and subtle patterns of moral reasoning in order to answer the practical questions of life. Confucian teachings about how to live the scholarly life are decidedly different than Jewish patterns of *Halakhic* reasoning. Each is, nevertheless, a response to the practical question "what ought I or we to do?" Of course, it might be illuminating to explore how *Halakhah* throws light on Confucian practices of moral reasoning and vice versa. Comparison is always possible in religious ethics.

It is also clear that this "I" or "we" is never some kind of isolated and ghostly being, but someone in relation to others. What I ought to do is related to what we ought to do. Who we are is related to other communities, who speak of "we." While certain traditions have emphasized a radical individualism in moral action, by and large there is profound awareness that moral quandaries find people amid others. Therewith develop patterns of communal reasoning and judgment; that is, the formation of a political ethics. The point is that some form of practical reasoning and judgment will be found. The work of scholars in other fields (law, social analysis, rhetoric) can aid the religious ethicist. Noting the practical dimension of ethics facilitates, rather than delimits, critical, comparative, and constructive thinking.

The Fundamental Dimension

Insofar as individuals and communities confront questions about how to orient life, something is asserted about the moral structure of reality and human beings as creatures with the power to act and choose in concert with others and thereby influence reality, themselves, and others. That is, ethics is about the proper conduct of agents, human and otherwise. Human beings can be and ought to be aware of themselves in relation to others, the context of life, and with respect to norms and values about how rightly to live. But, ironically, human beings confront here too a tension, the one between freedom and bondage. We are – to some extent – freely acting beings but in a world and universe that constrains our freedom even as we can be (and usually are) in bondage to powers beyond ourselves, say, addictions, or political forces, genetic makeup, family structures, or economic necessity. Any ethics aims, thereby, to answer a question seemingly presupposed in other moral questions: "what does it mean to be a moral agent within the wider compass of reality?" From philosophy to neuroscience, religious ethics is linked with other fields of inquiry into human being and doing and the nature of reality itself.

Religions present fantastically complex accounts of agency and the moral context of life. This is what is meant by the subject matter of the *fundamental* dimension of ethics. A good deal of modern Western ethics defined an "agent" as a being with reason and will, who can act intentionally, bring about changes in reality, others, and the agent's self, and have accountability for actions imputed and/or ascribed to him or her (see Gewirth 1978). The scope of the moral world is determined by the interactions, cooperatively

or not, among these agents. Each of the defining attributes of agency has of course been hotly debated. What do we mean by reason or will or intentionality or accountability or moral ascription? How do we best understand the formation of moral character, say through the virtues? There has been reflection on the limitations of agency, the nature of corporate agency, and questions about moral self-understanding.

Work in religious ethics is challenging and amending modern Western conceptions of agency by attending to non-human agencies and also the wider realms of reality. Human beings can be – and often are – in bondage to powers beyond themselves even as they also retain a measure of freedom. In the Christian tradition, what it means to be an agent is defined not only in terms of the power to act and to be held accountable. It is also defined by patterns of relation in which the self exists in God and in others through faith and love before God's kingdom. Further, faith and love are understood with reference to the divine activity, and this means, paradoxically, that at least two agents, the human and the divine, act in any genuinely good action. Sin, or a broken relation to God and others, is marked not just by wrong acts, but, more profoundly, by an estrangement in which one must act alone and for one's own purposes and good. God's judgment on sin is really the withdrawal of the divine presence such that the agent is left to his or her own devices. In traditional African ethics what it means to be an agent is rendered complex by the fact that the ancestors are operative agencies in the world. This is also why, as noted above, practical and normative issues in Buddhism hinge in part on the distinction between conventional and Dharmic truth and so on a distinction between "self " and "person." Insofar as the root problem is craving that gives rise to suffering, one can only speak of an agent or person through conventional terms. In the light of the teachings of the Buddha, ultimately, there is no-self.

In the religions, forces other than self, insofar as we can speak of a self, are at work in the world and in the individual. Each of the religious traditions, furthermore, examines complex psychological and sociological mechanisms that lead to moral failure, delusion, and conflict – mechanisms like inordinate craving (Buddhism), distorted loves (Christianity), ritual impurity (Hinduism), violation of ancestral bonds (African and Native-American ethics), and systemic, social distortion. An agent is set amid forces that must be considered in attaining valid understanding. Inquiry into what it means to be an agent within these rich accounts of moral reality is the fundamental dimension of religious ethics simply because these ideas are presupposed, and so *fundamental*, in all other moral questions.

The Metaethical Dimension

If one looks at the legacies of religion, there seems to be one further general question that helps to constitute the shape of religious ethics. It arises from the tensions between truth and illusion in human experience. The Buddha insisted that anyone could test the truth of his teaching in actual life. Jesus is reported to have said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Hindu ways of life claim to accord with the truth about the cosmos and also the specific tenor and form of individual life. Muslims believe that the Qur'an gives the final and ultimate revelation of the will of God. Every religion, despite what modern critics hold, purports to be truth seeking and truth teaching. Communities and traditions implicitly pose the question and provide some account of the truth of their morality and their picture of how to orient existence in the moral space of life. Of course, claims to truth differ and so too the means for showing their validity (experience, teaching, revelation, etc.). To enter into this kind of reflection is to engage in what is often called by scholars, somewhat unhappily, "metaethics." Reflection centers on clarifying moral concepts, strategies of validating claims, and forming judgments about the relative weight the

evidence and interpretations from other fields of inquiry can and ought to have in guiding life. This is meant to sort out truth from illusions the confusion of which too often befalls human life. The question of validity or truth is posed from within the religions. This too is a dimension of religious ethics, both about a religious morality and about the discipline of religious ethics itself.

The question of the truth of a moral outlook is without doubt one of the most vexing issues for religious ethics. While the ethicist might explore dimensions of a tradition's morality, how does one judge the truth of an entire religion? How does one show that a constructive religious ethics is true? On one level, the religious ethicist can address this question comparatively and critically. In Volume II of this *Encyclopedia*, readers will see scholars examine the ways in which one or several traditions go about showing the truth of their moral beliefs and practices. Further, if the religious ethicist is working within a specific tradition, say, Shīʿite Islam or Zen Buddhism, then, presumably, its strategies of validation will be in play, a matter also explored in parts of this *Encyclopedia*. Finally, when a thinker attempts to offer a constructive religious ethics, comparatively or not, then some account of how the position is validated must be given.

When the ethical task is to speak critically, comparatively, and constructively across traditions about shared human problems, matters become pressing. It poses a question implied in the very undertaking of religious ethics: from what *standpoint* is inquiry carried out and what criteria of adequacy or truth pertain to its work?

Hermeneutical Standpoint

The *dimensions* of inquiry gleaned from persistent questions and perplexities of human life aim to provide a coherent way to undertake, singularly or collectively, the comparative, critical, and constructive *tasks* of religious ethics. They also signal the kinds of questions engaged by scholars represented in every part of this work. Moral knowledge is thereby depicted as a network of intelligibility, a space of reasons, about how rightly to orient life that is held and enacted by some tradition or community and examined by scholars and religious leaders through multidimensional reflection. The religious ethicist might also make constructive claims about how rightly to live. This is, a proposal for the orientation of conduct and life that is responsive to the complexity of the "religions" and also shifts in the way knowledge and disciplines are conceived. The account of the scholarly labor of religious ethics in this *Encyclopedia* does not prejudice one set of moral beliefs over another, say African over Confucian; nor does it specify only one kind of ethics, say virtue ethics or deontology, as best for a normative understanding of the religions and meeting present-day challenges. It is an inductively developed *method* for, or *approach* to, religious ethics. Working alongside other options in the field, this proposal is, hopefully, subtle enough to facilitate the examination of the moral outlooks and practices of the world's religions. Through its dimensions, religious ethics interacts with many fields of inquiry.

However, we have been led to the thorny question of the standpoint and criteria of religious ethics. For those who take a *formalist* approach, the contention is that despite empirical differences among religions one can discern or articulate philosophically a basic structure shared by the religions that facilitates critical, comparative, and constructive work. One seeks to develop an ethics outside of substantive connections to any tradition or the surrounding life-world (see Benhabib 1992). The criterion of adequacy must be determined with respect to moral rationality itself and/or through a metaphysical vision. Those who

pursue a *sociolinguistic* approach in the discipline insist that the sheer diversity among religions and cultures means that material differences rather than formal similarities must be basic to method in religious ethics. Moral rationality, on this account, is tradition-constituted rationality (see MacIntyre 1990). The means to validate a position are internal to a tradition or they emerge at the intersection of competing traditions. *Ethical naturalists*, for their part, insist that norms and values must be grasped and evaluated in terms of their place in a whole outlook on life. And those who adopt a *cultural/ethnographic* approach grant the sheer differences in moral outlooks. The standpoint of the religious ethicist, thereby, is to engage in the examination of a community's moral worldview even while acknowledging the substantive outlook that backs her or his inquiry.

Shifts in how to describe moral knowledge enable one to conceptualize religious ethics in a new way. Similarly, there are developments afoot that demand a standpoint in religious ethics somewhat different than the other approaches in the field. While the method of religious ethics is aptly described as *multidimensional*, its standpoint can also be conceived as fully *hermeneutical* in character conjoined to specific criteria of adequacy. The importance of this standpoint is found in the moral significance of recent global developments that parallel shifts in the construal of human knowledge.

Recent Developments

Developments that characterize the present age warrant a hermeneutical standpoint in religious ethics. These recent developments, and others too, are charted throughout these volumes. A prominent one is the growing awareness around the world of the diversity of religious and moral beliefs, practices, and convictions. A good deal of modern Moral Theory seemed to efface the particularity of outlooks out of a concern to isolate general features of human existence deemed of universal ethical relevance. The need nowadays is to understand and to explain the moral vision of communities and cultures on their own terms without an initial judgment of truth or goodness. This requires interpretive engagement with the forms of thought, types of texts, practices, rituals, and organization of religions and societies.

The present awareness of global diversity has spawned the critical and comparative tasks of religious ethics, both in formulating more adequate categories of thought (Volume I), by exploring the legacies of traditions (Volume II), and in order to address shared moral problems (Volume III). However, understanding beliefs and practices, no matter how critical that might be, is not the same as justifying them, determining their truth. In a world in which the religions too often and too readily sanction violence and hatred of others, neglect or denigration of the environment, and also back excessive preoccupation with one's religious condition, judgments about what counts as a valid policy for living are required. Present worries about moral diversity provoke inquiry into how one is to establish norms that transcend particular systems of authority in order to address shared human concerns. This seems to require that the standpoint of religious ethics be neither so formal as to efface differences nor so historically particularistic that normative judgment across moralities becomes impossible.

The awareness of moral and religious diversity is just one development in the current situation that challenges how one conceives of the standpoint of religious ethics. The age of "globality," as it is called, is marked by multiple forms of reflexivity, ranging from economic processes to cultural and informational flows (see Schweiker 2004). Reflexivity is the ability of an acting entity to respond to information coming from elsewhere and to adjust its self-understanding and actions in this light. Human persons can

respond to recommendations and judgments on their actions, say, from others, a sage, moral saint, or a god, and then seek to live and act better. Reflexivity is then a kind of self-examination. Increasingly, one is aware of the ways in which social systems, cultures, and religious traditions are, analogically, reflexive or learning and self-testing beings. Global reflexivity works through economic, cultural, imaginary, and legal mechanisms shaping human and non-human life.

The reflexive dynamic of global flows has brought with it new and unexpected developments. During the twentieth century, many scholars of religion defined their work in terms of secularism. The modern world was supposedly a time in which ideas and experiences of religion or transcendence or the sacred were being effaced by the pressure of differentiated social structures and the march of science to demystify the world. Similarly, the legacies of colonialism demanded that peoples around the world adjust their lives and cultures to the secular order (see Appadurai 1996). Throughout this *Encyclopedia*, and especially Volume II, one can trace the ways religious traditions have responded to secularism, colonialism, and modernism.

The noonday of the secular world never really came, or it only appeared in faint glimmers. The present age is characterized by nothing so much as the force and movement of the religions on the global scene. Global reflexivity, the ways in which communities appear in the "gaze of the other," is of great moral import. One can witness the transformation of traditions in and through interactions with and resistance to other global forces, including other religious traditions, rather than the pressure of secularization. This also seems to require a hermeneutical standpoint in religious ethics insofar as hermeneutics examines the dynamics of human understanding through encounters with divergent claims to meaning, encounters in which transformation of life as well as conflict are possible.

The awareness and worries about moral diversity and global reflexivity arising out of the contours of the emerging age are deeply intertwined with shifts in moral sensibilities. These shifts in sensibility are other developments that impinge on the standpoint of religious ethics. The modern world from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries saw the apotheosis of human power in technology, political organization, the media, and economic systems, and with these developments an exclusive concentration on human flourishing. Ironically, modern anthropocentrism turned against itself. Holocausts, genocides, terrorism, grinding poverty, and horrific wars scarred the twentieth century and now too the twenty-first century. Massive suffering and violence have sparked deeper sensitivity to the vulnerability and preciousness of persons (see Gaita 2000; Glover 2000). Conjointly, there is growing awareness of the interdependence of every form of life on this planet. People around the world are imaging the scope of moral value to include but also to exceed human well-being. This ecological sensibility has challenged longstanding beliefs about moral value and standing. In various ways, moral sensibilities for the worth of all realms of life are spreading around the world. This is sorely needed insofar as the religions continue to take violent expression and to foster ignorance and the neglect of finite, planetary resources. Emerging sensibilities can and must aid in the transformation of the traditions that spawn but also thwart moral aspirations.

The realities of moral diversity, global reflexivity, and emerging moral sensibilities are obviously interrelated developments. Taken together, these demarcate some of the contours of the current moral space of life. In order to understand and respond to them, religious ethics must carry out critical, comparative, and constructive work. Because of the deeply interrelated nature of current dynamics, religious ethics obviously needs to be defined beyond modern conceptions of what constitutes a discipline or an intellectual practice. Furthermore, something important is at stake in an account of an ethical standpoint once

the reflexive dynamics of cultural interactions amid human diversity in global times is seriously considered. The religious ethicist does not simply exist within or outside actual traditions. She or he is always thinking at the *lateral connections* among communities, traditions, and intellectual practices. What does this fact mean for the standpoint of religious ethics?

Standpoint and Criteria

In order to specify the standpoint of religious ethics in the light of current global developments, one can reclaim terminology from the Hellenistic world that arose within its religious and cultural imagination prior to the development of "ethics." The standpoint of religious ethics is *hermeneutical*. Derived from the Greek god Hermes, hermeneutics is reflection on the possibilities and limits of understanding ambiguous meanings won through the act of interpretation and thereby how meanings are conveyed from one realm to another. In the Homeric texts, the virtual sacred literature of that culture, Hermes conveyed meanings from the gods to mortals. Other religions, as found in this volume, explore the conveyance of meanings across boundaries in revelations, divinizations, rituals, exegetical strategies, and mystical insights.

The point is certainly not to reclaim Greek ideas in order to define the standpoint of religious ethics! The insight is that religious ethics conceived as a hermeneutical enterprise moves between traditions or among expressions of one tradition, seeking understanding and the orientation of conduct and life. No doubt that movement will always be marked by the ethicist's "home tradition," religious or secular. One remains a Chinese or Japanese Buddhist religious ethicist or an African Christian or a postmodern European Aristotelian. No one (thankfully) must necessarily sacrifice their identity for the sake of undertaking religious ethics. Yet the standpoint, the posture of thinking, takes place at the reflexive connections of traditions and other forces working in the world. The religious ethicist on this picture enacts the lateral links among the dimensions of ethics and other forms of inquiry into the moral beliefs and practices of the religions. In the process some degree of knowledge and understanding is attained, a shared world of meaning is partly disclosed, even as identities can be confirmed or tentatively transformed. The religious ethicist participates in the enacting of a complex network of moral knowledge, never complete yet nonetheless attained. This hermeneutic action is achieved by undertaking the adventure of thought signified through the various dimensions of religious ethics.

How then are we to judge the validity or truth of the work of a religious ethicist? This is a question hotly debated in the pages of this *Encyclopedia,* particularly in Volume I. Generally stated, two *criteria* bear on a hermeneutical standpoint in ethics. First, any adequate ethical claim, whether about the beliefs and practices of a specific tradition or a proposal for meeting a current moral problem, must prove its great adequacy to relevant material in argumentative exchange with other accounts. A position is truer than some other insofar as it answers more comprehensively and coherently the range of questions specified in the dimensions of ethics. It must, accordingly, meet demands entailed in the act of multidimensional inquiry, as well as be error reducing with respect to rival positions or interpretations (see Taylor 1990). Again, scope rather than autonomy is basic to the adequacy of an ethics. This is a *procedural* criterion. It means that a religious ethics is never justified prior to lively engagement with other positions. Additionally, a position must afford some advance in thinking by provoking or providing deeper insight into a moral problem or way of life. This second *heuristic* criterion is more illusive than

the procedural one. What counts as insight, let alone "deeper" insight? Nevertheless, a moral position can claim greater adequacy, greater truth, if it enables one to apprehend, understand, and respond to factors really pressing on human lives but missed by other moral positions. *Heuristic* and *procedural* criteria are applicable to the scholarly labor of criticism and comparison as well as to constructive ethics. These criteria can, of course, be elaborated in much greater detail, a task not needed in this Introduction but one explored throughout the *Encyclopedia* as a whole (see Schweiker and Clairmont 2020).

There are good reasons within the religions as well as those found in global dynamics to adopt a hermeneutic standpoint in moral inquiry. The religious ethicist can isolate and articulate these various reasons as backing for her or his work. Abiding by the criteria of a hermeneutical standpoint within multidimensional inquiry, religious ethics can, but need not, aid in the reconstruction of religious identities around criteria of ethical truth, rather than subjecting the question of truth to communal identity. In this way, a thinker critically and comparatively releases the resources of traditions and communities for constructive thought about how rightly to orient human life.

Conclusion

This entry has sought to address terminological, methodological, and also criteriological issues within the ongoing work of religious ethics. It has sketched an approach to the discipline working alongside others in terms of *tasks*, *dimensions*, and *standpoint*. This proposal is meant to aid the reader in exploring the richness of the thought represented in this *Encyclopedia*, as well as to outline a new possibility for religious ethics itself. One should not expect all scholars represented here to use this proposal, nor is that needed. As noted before, part of the vitality of the field is to keep constantly in play the appraisal of its work and adequacy. Yet by enlisting a vast range of renowned scholars from various disciplines, traditions, and cultures, the labor of religious ethics now crosses disciplinary boundaries that have for too long inhibited its development. *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics* presents an exciting vision of moral inquiry engaged with the fantastic resources of the world's religions, open to other fields of reflection on the human adventure, and dedicated to understanding and addressing moral challenges and possibilities emergent in our global times.

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Part I

Persons

1 Structures and Conditions

CHAPTER 107

Health

Katherine K. Young

Sickness destabilizes routines and undermines common assumptions. This view from the edge of experience makes people radically question life's meaning and purpose, bringing the spiritual dimension into clear focus. Something has been broken or disrupted – relationships with deities, ancestors, ghosts, demons, or just ordinary people – and must be fixed so that health and harmony are restored. The world is now scarred by massive human suffering: violence and war, widespread poverty and hunger, and also the spread of diseases such as AIDS and SARS on a global scale. Can religious resources help us to deal ethically with these medical challenges today?

Religion, Health, and Ethics in the Premodern World

The religions of small-scale societies (hunters and gatherers, horticulturalists, and pastoralists), now called "primal," were often characterized by the perception of a shared life force, or power, which was common to people, ancestors, spiritual beings, and even objects of nature, thereby integrating society with both the natural and supernatural. This harmony was based on the kind of behavior (duties, services, and gifts) required for social order and for respecting the environment. If social harmony were not maintained, or if natural disaster were to strike, the result would have been disharmony. Although behavior was guided by sanctions based on collective experience, these sanctions were not formalized as "morality" in terms of commandments, decisions, or principles. When disease struck, people pondered broken taboos and tried to reestablish normal relations with the offended or disturbed powers. Sometimes, the cause of disease or death remained inscrutable. It was attributed to people, ancestors, or spiritual beings who were jealous, capricious, malicious, or aggressive.

Large-scale societies developed more complex views of space and time (many realms and cycles of time). Some deities became supreme creators, providing the energy for cosmic renewal and prosperity, although they could be jealous and cause harm (such as disease and death), especially if they received no offerings. People believed in their need to sustain the deities by sacrifices (which recycled the power of death to provide health and life) and other rituals.

Gradually, religions developed soteriologies (the idea that ultimate destiny lies in a realm beyond ordinary space and time). Ethics was now related to the welfare of individuals beyond this life and not only to that of the group in this life. People believed that they would be rewarded for their good deeds

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or punished for their bad ones in another realm. In addition, these societies were more stable than earlier ones; people no longer worried that the sky would fall down if rituals were ignored or covenants broken. They produced more material resources than did earlier societies. This led to specialization, which led in turn to an explosion in knowledge based on observation, classification, and experimentation. The development of empirical medicine was part of this explosion. The ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia were characterized by empirical interest in the physical body and its diseases (see the Egyptian "Smith" papyrus, the "Ebers" papyrus, and the Mesopotamian tablets). By the fourth century BCE dramatic advances were made in empirical medicine by the Greeks (the Hippocratic corpus), by the Indians (described in the Hindu Ayurvedic corpus and the Buddhist Pali Canon), and by the Chinese (the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine). These texts classify diseases in ways akin to modern ones (internal medicine; diseases of the eye, nose, ear, and throat; surgery; toxicology; psychology; pediatrics; infectious diseases; surgery; and so forth). Somewhat later, Islamic scholars made major contributions. Ibn Sina (Avicenna, d. 1037), for instance, wrote a monumental encyclopedia on medicine.

Religious communities recognized the effectiveness and power of empirical medicine. They trained physicians and nurses, became custodians of medicines and medical libraries, and eagerly sought out the expertise of other traditions. Greeks borrowed from Egyptian and Mesopotamian medicine, Romans from Greeks, and Hindus and Buddhists from each other. So did Christians, Muslims, and Jews. In the early Middle Ages, for instance, Jewish and Muslim physicians were trained in Alexandria, Constantinople, and some surviving Roman cities of Italy and southern France. Abu Ya'qub Ishak ibn Sulaiman al-Israeli (ca. 855–955) wrote on medicine. His works were then translated from Arabic into both Hebrew and Latin. Other Jews translated and wrote commentaries on Ibn Sina's Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb. Maimonides (1135–1204) was not only a philosopher and legal authority but also the personal physician of Sultan Saladin, his family, his harem, and his officials in Egypt.

The development of empirical medicine challenged religious explanations of disease and religious treatments and cures. Religious explanations, for example, often said that illness was divine punishment for sin and health the reward for observance of religious rites and moral precepts (although the latter was sometimes internalized as in the Hindu law of karma, which stated "as you sow, so you reap" or the biblical phrase "those who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind"). By contrast, empirical medicine generally focused on the body and gave material explanations for disease, such as improper diet. There were other conflicts between medicine and religion. In medieval Christianity, for instance, the church considered confession a potential means of cure, so physicians were obliged to call priests. But what could physicians do if patients refused to see priests? And what were patients to think if they realized that their physicians could offer them no hope?

People tried to avoid clashes and to gain the benefits of both approaches, because everyone recognized that medicine had its benefits and its limits. One approach was *metaphoric and practical appropriation*. The practical interest in empirical medicine in Buddhist monasteries, for example, was closely linked with basic Buddhist teachings. The Four Noble Truths were the four principles of medicine: cause, symptom, cure, and non-recurrence. The five basic medicines were the Buddhist concepts of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. And enlightenment was the permanent cure for life itself. The spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism into East and Southeast Asia in the first several centuries of the common era was related to its knowledge of empirical medicine. Despite its early emphasis on spiritual healing, Christianity had by the fourth century integrated rudimentary hospitals under the

supervision of local bishops. Healing shrines were like hospitals; attending priests had medical skills ranging from rudimentary to expert.

There was also *compartmentalization* – placing a specific medical procedure in a larger religious context of incantations, prayers, rituals, astrology, and so forth. Supreme deities were the ultimate power that defined life and death; the ultimate cause of health and sickness, and the ultimate source of therapies and cures; physicians were agents or servants of the deity. That said, medicine was allowed to operate semi-autonomously.

Yet another approach was *complementary functionalism*. This was used in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, Greece, India, and elsewhere. It was based on a functional division between two types of medicine. Empirical medicine dealt with visible, proximate, or natural causes, whereas religious medicine dealt with invisible or supernatural ones. The two were complementary.

Closely related to this approach was *pragmatism*: recognizing all healers and types of medicine as potentially useful. There are many accounts of people seeking both empirical and religious cures.

Finally, there was always *hermeneutical adjustment*: interpreting religious passages by allegory (as Maimonides and Falaquera did in the thirteenth century), simile, levels of meaning, and so forth. In religiously controlled societies, nonetheless, religious approaches trumped empirical ones. During the medieval period, for instance, Christianity – through its clergy, sacraments, and saints – created a chain of dependence for spiritual/miraculous healing. Sacraments became the means by which God's superabundant grace and power were channeled to protect and heal patients. Baptism and exorcism repelled evil spirits that caused sickness. Confession and communion purified people and thus protected them against disease. In medieval India as well, empirical medicine receded to the background as religion came to the foreground.

Attempts to prevent serious conflict between empirical medicine and religion were successful, by and large, in the premodern period. Although both medicine and religion had tried to marginalize magic, it did not disappear completely. Many Christians, Jews, Muslims, and other Near Eastern groups continued to believe in demons or demonesses as causes of illness. Therefore, they continued to use incantations, amulets, magical mirrors, dream interpretations, or astrological, palm, or magic bowl "readings" for cures. Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, Confucians, and others maintained similar beliefs and practices. These became especially important during individual, familial, or social crises, when all else failed.

It is striking that most of these civilizations considered harmony a key concept of health and well-being. The Greeks, Hindus, and Buddhists, for instance, all believed that good health required a balance of fluids in the body, which in turn had to be balanced with the mind and the environment. The Chinese version was a system of correspondences, harmony requiring the health not only of the body but also that of the state.

Closely related to the topic of health and religion is that of medical ethics. As early as Egypt's Old Kingdom (3400–2474 BCE), problems were debated in the Memphite Drama and the Proverbs of Ptahhotep. Physicians from this time had to deal with both the power and the precariousness of medicine. This involved four basic problems.

First, should physicians offer treatment or not? The common answer was yes, but only for cases that could probably be alleviated or cured; involvement in hopeless cases would make medicine appear ineffective, after all, and thus a form of quackery, or even dangerous. Epidemics were particularly troublesome in this respect: Should physicians flee or stay and care for the sick?

Second, how could physicians distinguish themselves from quacks (of which there were many)? The common solution, both Western and Eastern, was the development of semi-religious professional guilds.

These established and monitored standards of education (a good knowledge base, critical approach, precise memory, and perseverance); personal behavior (virtues such as truth, peace, charity, spirituality, and control over anger, envy, and pride); practice (decorum to protect the reputations of women or the privacy of the household); and visible symbols of dress. Finally, they instituted rites of initiation and oaths such as those of Hippocrates (Greek), Asaph (Jewish), Caraka (Hindu), Ahwazi (Islamic), and Enjuin (Japanese Buddhist). One important function of the oath was to check violence (by condemning assisted death, including abortion) and to uphold the foundational principle of the sanctity of life and non-injury (*ahīṃsā*, for instance, in Hinduism and Buddhism) aside from the few permitted exceptions.

Third, what could be done about the arrogance and greed of physicians? They were warned directly against these vices and taught virtues such as restraint and humility in texts such as the Egyptian Proverbs of Ptahhotep, the Greek Precepts (which advised physicians not to begin consultations by discussing fees, because that would hurt their reputation), and the Buddhist Pali Canon (which eventually prevented the public practice of medicine by monks and nuns because of charges of greed).

Fourth, how could patients be assured of access to medicine? Quite apart from the unwillingness of physicians to treat the dying in order to protect their professional reputations, there were other reasons for denying people access to medical care. Sometimes this was for religious reasons, such as notions of impurity. And sometimes this was for secular reasons, such as punishment of social deviants and political enemies or indifference to the poor. Many states tried to overcome the latter. According to the Mesopotamian Code of Hammurabi, for instance, physicians should charge patients according to type of procedure, economic class, and likelihood of success or failure. The Hippocratic Precepts advised physicians to consider the ability of patients to pay them and extend care to strangers and paupers even if they could pay nothing. And the Hindu Susruta exempted fees from groups such as elders, ascetics, and teachers; moreover, it encouraged care of the indigent out of compassion. Religions encouraged or mandated charity, requesting physicians to treat the poor for minimal costs or without charge, and to look for eternal rewards rather than merely material ones. Religions structured by universalism (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam) sometimes advocated universal medical care (the bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna Buddhism, for instance, were examples of compassion *par excellence*, in the disguise of physicians extending medical care to all or kings building hospitals to help the poor). Though promoted, universal access to medical care was hard to accomplish. By the twelfth century in the West, for instance, despite the admonitions by both ecclesiastical authorities and guilds to treat all patients, many physicians still did not do so. Universal religions increased access also by offering medicine to potential converts, including those of low status.

Any discussion of medical ethics requires some account of gender. Women were usually barred from the profession of empirical medicine (as physicians or nurses) and often had less access to medical treatment as well. This was probably due to at least four factors.

First, because elite women in traditional societies were often sequestered, they lacked opportunities for education in empirical medicine. Some women had expertise in folk medicine, and some women became midwives, but they are not mentioned in medical works, although we have a few works by men on the medical problems of women. But there were some exceptions to the exclusion of women. Buddhist and Christian nuns were often educated women and interested in medicine; sometimes, they carried the practice of medicine into the secular realm. When Christian women came to India during the colonial period, for instance, many practiced nursing and trained their Indian female converts to do the same, because Hindu women had been restricted by purity and seclusion regulations.

Second, because elite women were often sequestered, in their homes, they could not practice empirical medicine if that involved moving about in public. As a result, male physicians and nurses treated women – but only in the presence of their guardians, to avoid charges of impropriety (which might have made them reluctant to attend to women at all).

Third, because women seldom controlled finances, they lacked the means to obtain medical help for themselves (and their female children). Even when concepts of charity existed, elite women could not access it because of their status.

Fourth, in some societies, women probably received less medical care than boys and men because of "son preference," an idea with religious authority, which might have originated as a way to compensate for the greater loss of male life in pregnancy and early childhood. This still occurs in the rural areas of countries such as India and can have a profound effect on the health (and lives) of girls and women.

Hence, we see both the problem of "access" and the question of the "good physician" found throughout the history of religion and health. Although these premodern civilizations were strikingly similar in some ways when it came to the interaction between religion and health, they were strikingly different in other ways. Two patterns stand out. One is that of "ethnic religions" such as ancient Judaism, Shinto, and elite Hinduism – especially their priestly traditions. These defined identity by birth and by degree of purity. As a result, insiders (those who followed the norms or laws) were separated from outsiders (those who did not). In the context of medicine, this meant that ritual sites or temples were defined as pure, and so the sick or deformed were prevented from defiling them. Priests were carefully distinguished from physicians. In Hinduism, "priestly physicians" who catered to the elite were of ambiguous status because of their contact with the impurity of disease. All this has had profound impact on access to medical care, although most of these religions have either changed to become more accommodating (rabbinic Judaism and bhakti Hinduism) or have developed complementary relations with other religions (as Shinto has with Buddhism, which focuses on "impure" death and dying).

Another general pattern in premodern civilizations is that of "universalistic religions" such as Hellenistic religion, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism (especially Mahāyāna), and Taoism. These emphasized virtues such as charity, love, mercy, or compassion. They often proselytized among marginal groups, including women and the sick, offering access to medical care as a perk of conversion. Consequently, their holy places were sites of healing that provide access to empirical and/or religious cures and therapies. Their religious leaders were often healers.

But these distinctions often blurred in these premodern, complex traditions, because most developed both ethnic and universal traits. In general, we see that as human beings develop more control over life, they worry less about the capriciousness of deities or demons and rely less on magic, although that often changes in periods of warfare, societal breakdown, or natural disasters. Some archaic ideas remain (such as the idea of harmony as health, disharmony as disease), but others gradually decline (viewing sacrifice as a way to tap the power of death to provide health and life).

Religion and Health in the Modern Period

Many themes and challenges found in the premodern world – suffering and human meaning, the relation between empirical medicine and religion, and medical ethics – have continued and intensified in the modern period. This is certainly the case with empirical medicine. The scientific revolution of the

seventeenth century emphasized knowledge based on observation, description, classification (which led to new disciplines), reason, experimentation (with verifiable results through repetition), and prediction. But it resulted also in a new worldview, because facts, theories, and truth became separated from ethics, philosophy, and teleology (ultimate human meaning and purpose). The body became only a natural system or, thanks to the Industrial Revolution, a "machine". Good health was indicated by a well-functioning body, in other words, and disease or pathology by a malfunctioning one; medicine was now strictly a science and technology, not the functional complement of religion. All this contributed to the view that nature, religion, and society were distinct spheres. Only in nature, however, was truth to be discovered.

Once again, religions tried to come to terms with the conflicts between medicine and religion, even though the conflict was now so extreme that the very value of religion itself was challenged. Many Protestants accepted the virtual autonomy of modern medicine by supporting medical advances and the professionalism of physicians apart from the church, practicing medicine with a general sense of "calling" but without much ecclesiastical control. They understood this new scientific medicine as a way to express the healing ministry of Christ. (Other Protestants, especially those called Charismatics, rejected many claims of modern science and revived the idea of spiritual healings and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which had its basis in the healing ministry of Jesus.) Roman Catholicism accepted a multi-level conceptualization (the reality of scientific explanations but also the idea that God permeates all biochemical and biophysical processes). Religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism faced even more problems with modernity in general and the scientific revolution in particular, because these were foreign developments introduced into their countries by colonial powers and their missionaries, who criticized their cultures as scientifically backward, socially unjust, and religiously too other-worldly.

The initial response of most Asian religions was to compartmentalize the two domains under the dictum "Western science, Eastern religion." Hindus – who had already learned about Western medicine under Islamic rule (Muslims, remember, had preserved and refined Western medicine through several centuries) – took other approaches as well. One was syncretism, long a Hindu strategy of dealing with cultural contact and challenge. Another was reconciliation, arguing that Hindu religion and philosophy had prefigured modern science. Still another was that Ayurveda, the traditional medicine, should be kept pure and isolated from foreign influences. As a result, Ayurveda is still practiced in the villages of India and learned in traditional schools. It is professionalizing and modernizing with government support, however, integrating aspects of Western medicine (called allopathy) such as antibiotics, and growing in popularity because of its traditional fluidity between empirical medicine and religion, mind and body, psychology and physiology, physicians and religious healers. Even those Westernized urban and educated Indians who have access to the more expensive allopathy sometimes turn to Ayurveda for chronic and terminal illnesses and culturally specific problems – a modern version of complementary functionalism. The Indian system today is best characterized as pluralistic (Ayurveda and allopathy along with homeopathy and naturopathy).

Contemporary Buddhists, too, have also responded to criticisms. Socially engaged Buddhism has emerged along with a renewed interest in empirical medicine. Some Buddhist countries have developed pluralistic approaches like that of India, whereas others (such as Sri Lanka) have officially chosen Western medicine after independence. As for China, in 1929 the Guomindang government restricted traditional Chinese medicine. But during the Long March of 1934–1935, Mao Zedong, the leader of the

new communist movement, and his army had to rely on traditional medicine in the countryside. Impressed with its effects, Mao later championed native medicine, which led to research. China operates today with several medical systems (some of which maintain religious explanations for diseases, such as sin, demonic attacks, deviation from norms, or malevolence from the living or the dead).

Religions and Contemporary Challenges in the Period of Globalization

Although it seemed for a while in the West that religion was being marginalized from modern ideas of health and disease, we now find growing interest in religious views. Chronic and terminal illnesses still remain beyond the capacities of modern medicine to "fix," reminding people that life is still finite and therefore raising again perennial questions about its purpose and meaning. Additionally, many secular people want orientations that are personal, holistic, and spiritual, rather than institutional. They see this in some traditional religio-medical practices. This signals a renewed appreciation of religious notions of harmony and integration with nature (often associated with primal religions) and premodern notions of "integral" paths (be they the Sharīʿa of Islam, the Halakhah of Judaism, or the many yogas of Hinduism and Buddhism) which place health and ethics within a larger context of meaning and concept of harmony. If this trend continues, then the relation between religion and medicine will be a thing not only of the past but also one of the emerging global, interdependent world.

The ethical question that remains is how to mobilize religious resources to ensure universal access to healthcare. In this context, it is important to remember that, even in societies that were hierarchical in the past (such as Hinduism), there are resources for concepts of reciprocity and human rights (the law of karma, for instance, recognizes capacity for self-determination, agency, and impartial justice); there is a general rule of equal distribution (*sarvam syadasrutitvat*) in the absence of express provision to the contrary; there is a limit to autonomy in the need to prevent harm to others (*ahīṃsā*); and there is a recognition that rights and duties are correlative (although Hinduism, like most premodern religions, prefers to focus on duties and a middle path between radical autonomy and extreme collectivism).

Because suffering and death pose the ultimate questions, which must be given meaning, there will likely always be an attraction to religions and ways will continue to be found for some kind of mutual respect and functional complementarity between religion and empirical medicine, especially in the area of palliative care. Because ethics will always be at the interface of religion and medicine, moreover, the need for creative cooperation between the two will continue. And because most of the world's population still have religious identities and the continuity of identity is important in a postcolonial age of globalization, we can predict that the connection of religion, health, and ethics will remain for this reason too.

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CHAPTER 108

Body Culture

Regina Ammicht Quinn

Life Imprisonment

"Plotinus, the philosopher of our day, was a man who was ashamed of being in the body" (Weischedel 1974, 82–106). The founder of the Neoplatonic school of philosophy, Plotinus, we are told, never mentioned his origins, parents, or birthday, the day when the soul entered the body, so that nobody would be tempted to celebrate this unfortunate day. As far as possible he tried to ignore his body and his bodily needs. In consequence, at the end of his life his students left him because his body, putrid and festering, nauseated them.

In the history of philosophy, Plotinus embodies a third-century renaissance and to some degree a simplification of Platonic ideas. True reality and real truth cannot be found in the material world but only in the realm of the spirit. Plotinus, for his part, was a highly respected teacher; even the emperor and his spouse attended his lectures. He must have put a finger on the pulse of his time. And his time was the crucial constituting time for the Christian church. At about the same time, the Christian thinker Origen states: "God created the present world and he chained the soul to the body for punishment." Origen formulates an early Christian version of what is later called *anthropological dualism*. Anthropological dualism teaches not only the gap between body and soul, matter and immateriality, but also an active state of war between those two, with frequent surprise attacks: ascetic attacks on the body by the soul, ecstatic attacks on the soul by the body. The victory is an uncertain one, not finally decided until after death. For the soul is imprisoned in the body.

Contempt of the body can lead to the dissolution of human community. This dissolution is only part – and the lesser part – of a whole conception of life that views bodily life as life imprisonment. The soul only lives behind the body's bars, doomed without domicile. The other, material part of existence is part burden and part threat, sometimes only strange, but normally hostile territory.

Body Project

From the point of view of the Western industrialized world, Plotinus appears strange. It is not only our obsession with hygiene which makes us mentally step back from him. Our time's *zeitgeist* seems to require the opposite to what the third century's *zeitgeist* suggested. In a historically unique way, today the

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body has shifted to the center of a person's and a society's life plan. In contemporary Western urban culture, churches and museums have been superseded by fitness studios. They are now the privileged places of a self-improvement doctrine which one dutifully visits even if those visits are bound up with troubles and inconveniences (Shusterman 1995, 242).

One of the main features of a contemporary lifestyle is being occupied with the body. This occupation not only generates a whole (media, beauty, and health) industry, but is also inclined to serve needs that traditional religious or secular institutions (churches and museums) increasingly fail to satisfy: needs for wholeness, beauty, salvation. All bodies, not only female bodies, are status symbols. To be young, to be beautiful, and to be fit are the goals for "good," "successful" embodiment. This represents an essentially new step towards an interpretation of the body. Bodies no longer just exist: they are good or bad, successful or unsuccessful. The body is no longer simply fate, better here, worse there; the body is a result of what I have done or what I have not done but could or should have done, a result of action. In this way the body as a whole becomes an essential moral issue. The body demands not just attention but also action. It is this action which leads to a body culture, the body culture generates a body cult, and the body cult establishes the body as a project.

This body project has one goal: perfection – specifically, a perfect design. Like every design project, the body design project is concerned with two issues: function and aesthetics. These two basic questions which determine the body design project have a clear gender component: (1) the aesthetic design problem refers, not exclusively but predominantly, to the female body; (2) the functional design problem refers, also not exclusively but predominantly, to the "neutral" body, which is in perception the "normal" and thus the male body.

The Functional Design Project: Bodies Presented as Neutral/Male

In 1956 Günther Anders talked about the "Antiquiertheit des Menschen" (antiquity of mankind) (Anders 1956). More than a half-century later he seems to be totally up to date. The human, living, fallible and mortal body proves to be highly inadequate, in need of improvement and with the chance to be improved. The biotechnological goal to diminish human suffering often is suffused with a not-so-explicit goal: human perfection, primarily seen as a body's perfection.

In transportation and communication, the body has been marginalized; in leisure culture the body is centralized: in sports, fitness, wellness, body-based therapies. When the task is important, prostheses as artificial replacements of body parts take over the body functions (Virilio 1994). These are the well-known prostheses of muscular strength, machines and vehicles; these are the prostheses of our sense organs, say microscopes or seismographs; and these are the prostheses of the brain. This prosthetics of the brain occurs when we delegate our ability to calculate and to remember to the computer. It occurs more radically when organic and artificial nerve systems are neurologically combined, in DNA-based computers or silicon brain implants.

In this extensive prosthetic effort the difference between subject and object, between those who act and their auxiliary means, is becoming more and more vague. The body, dependent upon prostheses, can imperceptibly change into a part of the prostheses.

One of the pioneers of theoretical cybernetics, Norbert Wiener, used the formula "one man – one message" (Wiener 1958). This formula is an expression of the idea that there is an "essence" of persons which is based not in the body but in independent bodiless information, stored in genetic material or simply in the brain. This equation of man and unembodied message takes on a new form in cyberspace. "There is

no matter here. Our identities have no bodies," wrote John Perry Barlow in his *Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace* (1996). The independence of cyberspace refers especially to one fact: an independence from the unreliable and inadequate meatware. The next and highly desirable evolutionary step will be "to download the brain into the computer and thus liberate it from the weakness of human flesh" (Jastro, cited in Meier-Seethaler 2001).

Sixty years after Wiener, more than 20 years after Barlow's declaration, the everyday handling of digital technologies enhances and replaces memory, sense of orientation, language abilities and more. With machine learning and AI technologies pervading our lives, the bodies are seen as dividable into medical data and vanish behind bloodworks, brainscans, and blood pressure values. The quantifiable proportions of human life and body are constantly reinforced. The non-quantifiable proportions lose their significance.

The distant Plotinus seems to be near. The immortal soul has changed into the spirit floating in the web, accompanied by the numbers for AI diagnostics, liberated from the inadequate, embarrassing body.

The Aesthetic Design Project: Bodies Presented as Female

The question of aesthetics has become relevant for male bodies, too. The focus, however, remains with female bodies. Beauty as an (exchange) value on the market, traditionally on the marriage market but today also on the employment market, is a historically new development in the West, dating back to the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Before the Industrial Revolution, beauty was not simply neglectable, but had a different function in a society's communication. Beauty was an adornment, a pleasant and enchanting ornament that was added to the usual criteria for judging women, such as the ability to reproduce, the ability to work, and place in the social hierarchy which indicates the extent of the dowry. Beauty is added to these criteria but does not replace them. Such replacement always has been the fabric that novels and fairy tales are made of.

The more the public and the private sphere are divided since the eighteenth century, the more a new culture of homemaking develops with a cult of beauty. This beauty cult is supported and enforced by the new possibilities of reproducing ideal female images on daguerreotypes, ferrotypes, and photographs – and by the fact that at the end of the nineteenth century middle-class homes were equipped with mirrors. The beauty cult is based on the presupposition that there is such a thing as a universal and objective quality named beauty. For women, striving after this quality named beauty is equally a public task and a natural inclination. Beauty as currency functions when women strive to possess beauty and other people or institutions strive to possess women who possess beauty.

In consequence, the function of what Naomi Wolf (1991) calls the "beauty myth" is neither exclusively nor primarily aesthetic. The beauty myth developed together with the new achievements of middle-class women of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, like education, leisure, and relative freedom from material needs. The myth acts as counterpart against those potentially dangerous achievements. The endless Sisyphus-like activity of earning a living and working in the house is replaced or complemented by the endless Sisyphus-like activity of maintaining one's beauty. Thus the energies of educated women who cannot at all or only incompletely participate in public life are successfully absorbed.

During the 1920s a new image of the female body emerged in European and Anglo-American cultures: the body became thin. At the same time, in most Western countries women were granted the right to vote. A new part of the world opened up for them. And yet a new and highly individualized prison was established: their bodies. One's own body is not able to achieve the normative standards that become ever more strict.

The numbers during puberty are alarming: at age 13, 53 percent of the girls are unhappy with their body; at age 17, 78 percent. A 1984 survey of 33,000 women says that 45 percent of the women between 18 and 35 who were underweight thought of themselves as too fat. A majority of the women said they would prefer to loose 10 or 15 pounds rather than have success at work or satisfaction in love (Wolf 1991, 185–186). These numbers have not declined. On the contrary. A 2011 survey of women undergraduates in Great Britain found that 16 percent of young women queried said they'd trade a year of life for their ideal body weight and shape. Ten percent were willing to trade two to five years, and 2 percent were willing to trade up to 10 years of life away. One percent said they would give up 21 years or more (Pappas 2011).

What does "aesthetic" mean in the current body project? Female fat, for a good part of human history a sign and symbol of female eroticism and female sexuality, has become in the industrialized countries a question of morality. Female fat is associated with dirt. The struggle for purity used to take place in the home and in the soul; now it takes place in the body. The body becomes a privileged place for feelings of guilt. As the quest for genital chastity has become weaker, this quest has shifted in a regressive way from the genitals to the oral area. "I'm a girl who just can't say no," says a model in a commercial for a low calorie dessert. Salvation is asked for – and salvation is promised by two of the large women-oriented growing businesses: dietary products and cosmetics. To achieve salvation, quasi-religious rites have to be performed with and on the body. A diet cycle imitates the Christian Easter cycle – or other religious rites of renunciation – with acts of critical self-reflection, self-flagellation, penance, and liberation. The cosmetic industry playfully uses associations of victories over mortality and damnation, promising rebirth and eternity. One of the presuppositions is the ritual anointment with oils whose actual ingredients cost 10 percent of the actual price (Wolf 1991, 107–121). The superfluous value that suggests a certain holiness of those products is a question of belief; overall, the products seem to be new editions of letters of indulgence because in both cases, guilt is settled with money.

Plotinus, and with him some of the early Christian theologians, could not feel more strange than in our department stores' cosmetic departments or with the rapidly growing amount of beauty videos on the Internet. And yet there seems to be a subliminal relationship. The aesthetic design project of the body claims, not unlike Plotinus, that the body itself is bad. But it doesn't help anymore to neglect it; instead, it has to be severely disciplined and tortured, with the slim hope that the results might be deemed "good." The functional design project of the body claims, not unlike Plotinus, that the body in itself is inadequate and useless. Its functions have to be enhanced – or the body, as mortal substance, has to be replaced.

In these ongoing efforts to perfect the body, however, the body cult becomes ambivalent. The body cult whose god is the body that you worship and to whom you sacrifice easily shifts into body contempt or body hate because the body will never succeed in maintaining the standards of a normative aesthetic and, being fallible and mortal, never will achieve the desired standards of functionality. Thus the body cult finally declares the body a handicap.

Uncertainties: Non-Normative Bodies

The binary and heteronormative view on the body is inadequate. People are falling outside the categories of male/female, and they are falling outside normality. This normality constructs the need for consistency: how the body and its genitals look must match the way I define myself and match the person I desire: this person needs to have sex organs that are different from mine. Body, identity and desire are seen as stable throughout a lifespan.

This simple form of imagining and dictating the "right" body, the "right" identity, the "right" sexual orientation and their lifelong stability produces similar metaphors as Origen used. Origen saw the body as prison of the soul. Rikie Wilchins, transgender theorist and activist, talks about cages: "(1) there are only two cages; (2) everyone must be in a cage; (3) there is no mid-ground; (4) no one can change; (5) no one chooses their cage" (Wilchins 1997, 56). The gendered body needs to fit into these cages. And this proves to be destructive.

The widespread Christian view of the divine creation thus can be described like this: *If men won't be men and women won't be women, it would mean that God has made mistakes. As God does not make mistakes, all this does not exist*.

Non-normative bodies thus become blasphemic in themselves. In this view, they are not only a handicap, but a sin.

The Christian Body: Despised and Healed

Visible behind all the worship and all the sacrifices which shape the actual body cult is a profound contempt of the body that allows comparisons to religious traditions and their disciplinary practices. Here we will explore strands in Western Christianity. Emerging in late antiquity, there was a primal fear of the human drives; in those human drives sin itself is incorporated. The visible, touchable, and understandable locus of this struggle with sin is the body. The means and possibilities to act against that sin are based in the body.

Fasting, self-flagellation, practices of mortification, all with a history, are aimed against the individual body and its willful desires. The struggle, however, is not only a struggle *against* something but also a struggle *for* something; namely, the life of the soul. Thus, one level of Christian tradition produces a decided contempt and repression of the body. In order to achieve a higher good, the victory over the body has to be won, in every case a moral sort of victory.

Most post-religious societies know body practices that show a strange similarity to Western practices in Christian tradition, frequently repressing and despising the body. Fasting has become part of an industry and a way of living; certain forms of self-torture are called "exercise" or "fitness." In modern secular societies this structure leads to a circular argumentation. The battle against the body in order to achieve some sort of a higher good is no longer a battle in favor of the soul, but a battle in favor of the body – in favor of the new and perfect body. This new and perfect body bears expectations for salvation that formerly belonged to the soul. The postmodern secular body cult seemingly views the fallible, aging, and coveting body as an object of loathing and rejection, as enemy. The body must be controlled, tamed, toned, and upgraded in order to become a new, quasi-reincarnated body. The struggle against the body in favor of the body is a never ending one, a never ending story of remorse, penance, and new beginnings based on a far away utopia of a better and finally good life.

This Christian tradition that perceives the body as a soul's dungeon is not the only Christian tradition we have, nor is every form of asceticism to be perceived as repressing or despising the body. It is time to reconsider the strong connection between asceticism and pleasure. The question is why the structure of a body-repressing tradition has emerged in the postmodern culture – and not other, equally or more important structures.

Living in a culture that has established a body cult and within that body cult a view of the body as handicap, we might be able to read biblical texts in a new way. Only on a second reading do we discover

how deeply concerned the biblical texts are with the integrity and the well-being of bodies. For instance, 31 percent of the text of the gospel of Matthew (209 out of 660 verses) speaks of miracles and those miracle stories are mostly healing stories. Our modern Western difficulties with healing stories as miracles often overshadow the picture that seems to be central for the texts themselves: Jesus healing people.

Jesus' healings take place amid a culture where such healings and such healers are common. The healings achieve their specific meaning as they combine apocalyptic thinking and miracle charisma, the apocalyptic expectation of future salvation and this salvation's episodic realization (Theißen 1974, 276). "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God [Lk.: with the finger of God], then the Kingdom of God is come unto you" (Mt. 12:8; Lk. 11:20). This logion is in historical critical research widely considered as authentic (Bultmann 1964, 174). More interesting, however, are its rhetorical implications: the logion provides the reader with an interpretation of the act by the actor. Deciphering this hermeneutical "code," it becomes obvious that the connection between healing and the Kingdom of God, healing and salvation, is a direct and a necessary one. Healings are the manifestations of God's kingdom which has begun now and which is revealed in who Jesus is and in what he does.

The *context* which makes the *text* of Jesus' healings understandable is an eschatological context. And inversely this eschatological *context* is specified, stamped, and concretized by the *text* of the healings. Healings and the salutariness which they provide are the concrete and body-based aspect of the promised salvation. That there is a concrete and body-based aspect of salvation at all might be no surprise for those whose faith is rooted in an Exodus tradition; for a Christian tradition colored in large part by an anthropological dualism, it is surprising news until today, immediately evident maybe only for those who are – then and today – blind and bent, lame and leprous, deaf, sick, bleeding, and possessed with demons.

This shows a characteristic feature of the healings' text: healings are not forced or violent acts, but a specific answer to a specific question. They do not create faith, but they presuppose faith. Already in the New Testament we discover a tendency to split *text* and *context*, healing and teaching and therefore healing and salvation. If we look at the healings no longer as the apocalyptic restoration of the creation in and for persons, but primarily as miracles, the hermeneutical point and the possible understanding are changing. The Kingdom of God, as the *context* for the teaching, loses its body-based aspect and its bodily roots and tends to present itself in an abstract way. The *texts* function as proof and legitimation and tend to be functionalized beyond men and women's bodies.

Body Ethics

On this background and in this horizon of meaning the question about body and ethics reappears in a new way. On different levels this is a central question, far beyond in Western societies there is a precarious social and cultural development. We experience the functional deficiency and the resulting marginalization of the body in many fields of everyday life, while at the same time the body cult strives for perfection. This is – in theory and practice – a fragile construction: the search for perfection can easily end in destruction. Massive somatic and psychosomatic disorders result from an almost epidemic discontent with the body. On another level compassion with another's fallible and mortal bodily life can easily – by means of politics, research or simple, social pressure – be outdated

and replaced by a despising moral reproach: You – or your parents – could have known and done better; nobody to blame but yourself.

In this situation ethical reflection is confronted with unsolved questions which ask for reflection, critique, and projection of new images of embodied human life. At the metaethical level we discover that the body always was central in moral praxis and ethical reflection. The central ethical questions are the questions of what stimulates life and what destroys life. If this central status of the body in ethical reflection is recognized we regain basic ethical categories which are bodily categories: birth – pleasure – pain – death. These coordinates of embodied human life are not only phenomenological but also ethical categories. They are ethical categories insofar as they increasingly become the focus of individual and social action with an increasingly louder question: Do we need those categories to describe human life or could it be nicer, more convenient, more promising, if humankind would succeed in severely controlling and finally abolishing them? Birth, pleasure, pain and death are ethical categories because they reveal something about us; they "talk" about the locus where humankind has to decide what is human, and they "talk" about the price human societies and human individuals would have to pay in denying them.

The urgent actual ethical questions are in a vast part connected with and related to the body. This is true not only for problems of sexuality, the beginning and ending of life, and all bioethical questions, but also beyond these, questions about work, technologies, and communication, and the question of justice and distribution.

Within a situation where the cause of insecurity and profound unhappiness is – in Western contexts – increasingly seldom moral repression and quite often moral arbitrariness or relativism – relativism that can present itself as cultural sensibility – we have the chance to preserve ethical universalism without denying the postmodern context if we take recourse to bodily ethical categories. Moral responsibility is no longer bound to the question: "Do you look how I think you should? Do you function how I assume?" And not even to the question: "Do you believe and desire what I believe and desire?" The crucial question to take regarding moral responsibility would be: "Are you suffering?" (Rorty 1989, 198).

What is the Ethical Task?

Ethical reflection on the body and bodily life is an exercise in ambivalence. One cannot outrun the ambivalence because it permeates personal experience, social analysis, moral and theological reflection, a tradition's past and present. Thus the exercise in ambivalence can't be an exercise against ambivalence; it is rather an exercise in giving meaning to ambivalence and therefore being able to live with ambivalence.

The Christian tradition provides us with a strong guiding idea. Christianity's basic truth, its essence, is incarnation. God becomes man – or, more precisely, God becomes flesh. Only when one removes the haze, the aestheticizing filter from centuries of theological and liturgical speech about this word can one rediscover that it is an offensive, even shocking word. First of all, it was said during a time when the surrounding cultures emphasized the spirit, immateriality. During Jesus' time, "salvation" would have been expected to overcome the world, the body, the material. Salvation was to be experienced in overcoming everything worldly. Secondly, the word is drastic. The center of the gospel tells us not – like some later theologians – that God puts on a body and takes it off again like some piece of useful but discardable clothing. God does not put on a bodily cover in order to temporarily meet humankind in a human way.

God becomes flesh. The occidental Christian suspicion and mistrust toward the body seem to be the huge and tragic misunderstanding in Christianity.

This is especially true for non-normative bodies and non-binary gender. Non-normative bodies and non-binary gender are presented as the crisis that destroy the God-given order of creation. We could however, recognize the colorful diversity of creation, that is breathtakingly beautiful. We could realize that there is no need to fear that non-normative bodies destroy God's creation. The adequate question would be: Why is it so unsettling for us that God does not adhere to man-made laws?

Today, the ethical task is to outline new images of gendered bodies that include non-normative bodies, images which are alive, not machine-like and not eternal, not hurt, not damaged, not disabled by aesthetic or functional myths, but healed. If we realize the actual body cult's theological background it would no longer be necessary to stylize fitness studios as new churches of self-improvement, to reactualize the questions of sin, repentance, atonement, and resurrection using diet recipes and beauty myths. In theological terms, salvation would not take place beyond our heads and not beyond our bodies. The old and new shame of being in the body could gradually give way, despite and because of our mortality, to the pleasure of being in the body.

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CHAPTER 109

Aesthetic Experience

Frank Burch Brown

Aesthetics and Experience

Aesthetic experience, while not restricted to a particular time or place, was first identified as such in the eighteenth century by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten. Coining the term "aesthetic" on the basis of the Greek adjective *aisthetikos* (meaning "perceptible"), he defined aesthetics as inquiry into knowledge that is conveyed perceptibly through the senses and feeling rather than through abstract concepts. The idea of aesthetic experience was refined and extended by Immanuel Kant and others (including, to a lesser extent, Baumgarten himself) to cover judgments of taste, experiences of the beautiful and the sublime, and matters of poetics, fine art, and imagination. Although aesthetics as a concept is modern and European in origin, it has antecedents in classical antiquity and has parallels outside the West – most notably in Indian *rasa* theory, which concerns the essential "juice" or "taste" of aesthetic experience in different modes. The question of how aesthetics relates to ethics, experientially and theoretically, can best be introduced by looking at several instances in which moral convictions and aesthetic judgments conflict or possibly converge.

Aesthetics and Ethics in Action: Case Studies of Conflict or Convergence

In 1565, the year after Michelangelo died, one of his best known paintings was altered. In the *Last Judgment* (Sistine Chapel, 1534–1541), the most controversial of the many nude figures were touched up and given what were humorously called "breeches." That flagrant "desecration" (some would say) of the art and of the artist's aims was an outgrowth of the Council of Trent's recent condemnation of nudity in religious art. Even in Michelangelo's lifetime, certain voices had been raised against what was judged to be the impropriety and immorality of exposing the saints (and Christ) in this very large and highly visible fresco, and in the very chapel of the Pope.

The painting's so-called glorious restoration between 1980 and 1994 made no attempt to undo much of that cover-up – a decision due at least in part to technical difficulties. Still, one might ask: on the one hand, what would have been gained by a full restoration of those specific details, assuming that most people today no longer have such moral squeamishness about the body? Was there some overarching moral and artistic purpose served by how much Michelangelo had chosen to reveal, originally, in that vision of the Last Judgment? On the other hand: could there be some merit to misgivings, either then or

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

possibly now, regarding how the body is displayed in certain religious art – or, indeed, in other art? Finally: In such a work, can the artistic purpose be separated from the religious and the moral? This is ultimately a painting about divine judgment and the human condition stripped of everything inessential, after all. It is a work that seems to call for religious ethics to engage in aesthetics.

In a modern context, unlike that of the Counter-Reformation, there is normally a strong tendency to shield aesthetic expression from ethical criticism, although a church setting invites special considerations. The importance of respecting the relative autonomy of art and its aesthetic appraisal plays an especially prominent role in the world of so-called high art. At a Sotheby's auction in 2018, an abstract painting by Pablo Picasso depicting his mistress wearing a beret and robe was sold for almost $70 million. Hailed by a knowledgeable art collector as "fantastic," that 1937 painting bore the title *Femme au Béret et à la Robe Quadrillée (Marie-Thérèse Walter)* [Woman in a beret and checked dress]. It happens that the woman named in the title, whose capped head and robed shoulders are represented in the painting, had been intimately involved with Picasso for the previous decade (from the time she was seventeen, though mostly in secret). In 1935, Marie-Thérèse, who remained unwed, had become the mother of the first of Picasso's two daughters, Maya. During the pregnancy, Picasso had finally left his wife Olga Khokhlova for her. Then, in 1937, the same year in which Picasso painted Marie-Thérèse with a beret, Picasso produced another visually striking painting, *The Weeping Woman* (one of a series). The model for that painting was a different woman – Dora Maar – who in the previous year had begun supplanting Marie-Thérèse as Picasso's muse and lover. Evidently the moral quandaries at work in these paintings, or behind them, did not, for the respective buyer and gallery representative, undermine either their aesthetic value or their value as investments.

Even so, tastes can change, along with factors influencing aesthetic judgement. Over the years, in the light of probing biography and critical scrutiny, the aesthetic appreciation of Picasso's art has tended to be affected negatively by heightened perceptions of elements of cruelty and misogyny not only in Picasso's personal behavior but also in many of his depictions (however abstract) of women. This shift away from formalist criteria that had been so prominent in high modern criticism reflects the increasingly prevalent contemporary view that ethics and aesthetics, while indeed separable at times and in principle, are not always – and seldom totally – separable in experience (Gaut 2013). A similar shift toward bringing ethical issues together with aesthetic or artistic ones can be seen in recent social and "ideology" critique, which strives to expose dubious biases (often patriarchal at core) in artistic and literary representations of gender, class, race, and ethnicity.

None of this is to imply that moral considerations can only be negative or can only detract from the enjoyment of art. Picasso's celebrated painting *Guernica* (likewise created in 1937, in a process documented in detail in the photography of Dora Maar) is widely regarded as among the greatest artworks of the twentieth century. And that is partly because it is also recognized, simultaneously, as a powerful moral protest against war – and, indeed, an outcry against a particular war with many innocent victims.

Such considerations, taken together, are interpreted by some theorists to mean that aesthetic experience cannot be contained by a frame neatly separating the aesthetic from everything else (Derrida 1987). Indeed, it has been argued that aesthetic experience is best understood as existing on a continuum. At one pole, aesthetic experience is appreciated simply in itself, as purely formal design. At the other pole, and to some extent in between, aesthetic experience is wed to vital considerations of morality and perhaps of religion as well. When combined, the ethical and the aesthetic potentially involve mutual transformation (Brown 1989).

With such issues and views having been identified, a sketch of historical and recent developments in both aesthetic theories and artistic practices will further explore how aesthetics and ethics, while having a considerable degree of autonomy, do often touch or even converge. It will also indicate why sorting out these issues is no simple matter. The final aspect of the discussion, examining key concepts in aesthetics, will take into consideration not only art but also nature.

Aesthetics in Relation to Ethics: Modern Themes and Developments

Aesthetic experience relates to ethics in often subtle ways. The contours of this relationship, however varied, can be seen in certain key developments in aesthetic theory and criticism in the West, and in the arts associated with those ideas.

Many of the most pertinent issues surface in the influential philosophical theories of Immanuel Kant ([1790] 1951), who argued that beauty in its purest form (free beauty as distinct from dependent beauty) is "purposive" but without any purpose outside itself. For Kant, the judgment of beauty, strictly speaking, has to do not with the object itself but with the way an object is pleasing. Since something we call beautiful is pleasing simply in being contemplated, the judgment of pure beauty is an exercise in taste that does not entail questions of what is morally good or what, conceptually, is understood to be true. The pleasure taken in beauty is "disinterested" in the sense that it is not motivated by utilitarian interests nor by sensuous gratifications – unlike the taste for food, for example, which Kant considers something "agreeable."

The creation of beauty, which requires imagination and genius, is not susceptible to rational dictates and preexisting rules. Nor, in Kant's view, is any particular judgment itself based on communal opinion or response, even though the intersubjective and (in principle) universal validity of judgments of taste promotes social communication and testifies to a *sensus communis,* or "shared sense."

It is significant that, in Kant's eyes, the beautiful, experienced in a "free play" of our cognitive faculties – yet beyond the compass of concepts and cognition as such – is nevertheless connected indirectly with morality. Ideal beauty can be regarded as a symbol of the morally good, which is an end in itself in the fullest sense. Furthermore, Kant claims that the enjoyment of "aesthetic ideas" develops habits that are good for morality even though aesthetics is morally engaged only when it is a response to the kind of beauty he calls "dependent beauty," within which Kant includes experiences of the sublime.

Extending and modifying Kant's ideas, the subsequent German aesthetic tradition, influential also in England and even in the United States, tended to ascribe genuine cognitive value to the arts – but as insight conveyed through symbols rather than in abstract ideas. The Romantic artists and poets elevated imaginative expression and artistic genius, as well as the experience of the sublime. Moreover, the Romantics favored organic or even fragmentary beauty, in contrast to classical norms of balance and symmetry and ideals of mathematical order. That love of wildness often accompanied a freer interpretation of morality as well. Even so, the Romantics generally had a high view of the importance of art to society, as when the poet Shelley declared that poets (artistic creators) are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

During the Victorian era – which drew on the legacy of Romanticism – the English poet and literary and social critic Matthew Arnold would even go so far as to look to culture and literature to save us at a time when religious dogma was becoming, in his eyes, increasingly untenable. Arnold, in looking to the "sweetness and light" of the intellect and beauty found of culture at its best, had ethical intentions

behind his aesthetics. Similarly, the art critic John Ruskin, in his most influential phase, combined ideals of morality with religious feelings in promoting the virtues of Gothic revival architecture and in expounding the seven lamps of architecture as essentially moral.

The idea that art has lofty ethical ambitions was greatly modified or even abandoned, however, by the movement known as art-for-art's sake and by other "decadent" art of the late nineteenth century. During the heyday of high modernism and of formalist theories prevalent through the middle of the twentieth century, the import of art for life was treated as, at most, oblique. Expressive form came to matter more than beauty. The expressionist, surrealist, and abstract impulses in avant-garde art movements of the twentieth century broke free of both social and artistic conventions, as did much of the more experimental music and fiction. And in their own way, the grittier realist movements in modern fiction and art challenged bourgeois taste and morality with their daringly down-to-earth styles and confrontations with the ugliness of life.

Despite occasional utopian visions, confidence in the socially redemptive powers of art was further undermined by the pressures of two devastating World Wars and by genocides on a scale historically unprecedented. Existentialism, among other trends, turned intensively toward the inner life and freedom of the individual as the source of meaning in an otherwise absurd world.

Exactly how art matters was something of a puzzle posed increasingly, if often unintentionally, by the high art of the twentieth century. Although open to a wide range of expression, high art and its institutions not only lost touch with popular culture but became increasingly disengaged, isolated, and often elitist, even in formerly popular forms such as jazz or the novel. At the same time, however, many leading artists – such as Wassily Kandinsky and, later, Mark Rothko in the visual arts, or Arnold Schoenberg in music – could still revere art, paradoxically, as a vital spiritual refuge or as revelatory of what cannot otherwise be expressed, though estranged from traditional religion.

In subsequent developments, postmodern theory and art, displaying audacious eclecticism and pluralism, gradually erased any clear distinction between high culture and popular culture while treating the very distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic as unstable and misleading. Postmodernism sees truth and aesthetic judgment in terms of social and political construction rather than in terms of revelatory imagination. When ironic and detached, it has often favored aesthetic surface over depth of meaning. Yet postmodern conscience at its most engaged has aimed to unmask oppressive ideologies such as those embedded in canonical classics of art and literature, exposing unexamined biases of class and gender, and of race and ethnicity, as well as the self-serving powers and privileges of residual colonialism. At a more popular level, an ethical dimension of artistry today is evident in the widespread use of rap music for social and political protests around the world, as well as in the proliferation of new social media employing photographic imagery and imaginative "memes" and "tweets" to target "fake news" or, indeed, fake politicians.

It can come as a surprise, in the midst of all this, that there has also been something of a turn toward "re-enchantment" (Kosky 2013; Taylor 2012). One can see the re-imagination of spirituality in contemplative modes. A virtually luminous quiet, for instance, pervades the "holy minimalism" of the music of Arvo Pärt (influenced by Eastern Orthodoxy) or visualized in the long, meditative photographic sequences in the movies of Terrence Malick – such as *The Tree of Life* (2011) – with their close attentiveness to the earth and to the creatures living in and from it. Across the globe, moreover, new-style pilgrims and tourists, sometimes restoring ancient rituals, explore sacred environments meant to attune lives to higher values, not least when those places are felt to be precarious and under threat. It could

even be said that a sense of wonder and sometimes quizzical curiosity pervades the photography and the often hushed but astonished narrative of David Attenborough in his video series for the BBC best known for the many episodes of *Planet Earth* (2006) and *The Blue Planet* (2001). Here again, aesthetics, ethics, and spirituality merge.

Such examples suggest that in the twenty-first century, aesthetic experience and creation may not only help make for new worlds of possibility, and make new worlds possible, but also may enter newly, and more widely, into the enterprise of human flourishing. That may be connected now not only to the sense of human community that Kant associated with a sense of beauty but also – if given time – to a more diverse sense of the ecology of life and world. In the process, the cultivation of ethics may be joined freshly to aesthetic creativity, allowing not only for new kinds of discernment into moral principles and responsible applications but also the release of freely responsive imaginations.

The Ethics of Aesthetics and the Aesthetics of Ethics

The preceding review of certain key moments in the development of aesthetics and arts in theory and practice should make it plain that aesthetic experience, like aesthetic theory, is multifaceted and comes in different forms. Some of those are more integrally related to ethical theory and moral practice than others.

To bring into clearer focus particular ways in which aesthetic experience can be related to ethics, this final section examines a cluster of aesthetic concepts: beauty, sublimity, expression, and imagination. Reflection on these features of aesthetic experience in art and nature will also call attention to aesthetic features of ethics itself.

Beauty

The experience of beauty has often been regarded as the epitome of aesthetic experience, if not identical to it. Traditionally, the form of beauty exhibits order, proportion, symmetry, and the integral relation of parts to the whole, the total effect of which is characterized by radiance. In what has been called the "great tradition" of aesthetics, beauty takes an important place as one of the "transcendentals," along with goodness and truth (with unity sometimes included). In traditional theological terms, going back to Neoplatonic and medieval thought but resurrected most notably in our day by the Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988), the transcendentals are united in the being of God, in whose unity they are said to be mutually convertible. Central to what gives pleasure in the perception of beauty is the harmony of diverse parts with the whole. From the time of the ancient Greeks, the beauty of the cosmos itself, which is also expressed mathematically and in musical harmony, became paradigmatic of the highest beauty discernible to human beings.

Where art and morality fit in with this picture of beauty is more problematical, even from the start. In the *Symposium*, Plato traces a "ladder of love" from physical beauty upward, culminating in a vision of the idea or form of beauty (regarded as quasi-divine). But Plato does not see art as functioning in the same beautifully uplifting way. Instead, most notably in the *Republic*, Plato criticizes various kinds of art and poetry for excessive emotion and for reliance on fanciful fictions as well as on the physical senses, all of which Plato sees as untrustworthy. He treats those kinds of *mimesis* (or

imitation) as morally inferior compared with the higher beauty apprehended through the intellect. Whereas Plato is devoted to beauty, he is not devoted to art (despite his own artful Dialogues). And that legacy supplies a recurrent theme in aesthetics.

The "great tradition" of beauty was perpetuated in the Neoplatonic thought, especially Plotinus, on through the thought of Augustine, then revived with medieval thinkers such as Aquinas, continuing on through the Renaissance. While modified, it even survives in the eighteenth century, when the American Calvinist theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) created a theological and ethical variation on the theme. For him, artistic beauty is secondary, as is the harmony, proportion, and fitness of creation. Primary beauty, for Edwards, consists in a "consent" to being: an unbounded benevolence of a generous heart disposed to the good as found in all things, but above all in God's supreme beauty, which is simultaneously the highest good.

Later in the same century, Kant wrote his famous three critiques – *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 1787/2011), *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), which included much of his aesthetics. Again, the structure of those critiques bore a discernible resemblance to the venerable triad of the true, the good, and the beautiful. In Kant, however, those were treated as autonomous spheres, though related indirectly. Even so, by regarding the judgment of beauty as conducive to habits that are good for the moral life, Kant came close to David Hume at the point at which that British philosopher treated the sense of beauty and the moral sense as analogous – although Hume gave a more integral role to the communal aspect of taste itself.

The afterglow of the "great tradition" lingered in the Romantic period, such as when Keats, in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn," concludes with the famous declaration that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." And in our day, despite a period of decline following Romanticism, a resurgence of beauty in relation to goodness is evident, for instance, in Elaine Scarry's influential book *Beauty and Being Just*, in which she sees a symmetry between beauty and justice, and argues, in fact, that beauty assists us in our attention to justice (Scarry 1999). Significantly, the theologian John W. de Gruchy likewise presents what amounts to an extensive new reply to Plato by linking the arts – partly in the specific context of South Africa – to the struggle for justice and to what he calls redemptive beauty (de Gruchy 2001). At the same time, feminist thinkers scrutinize criteria, varieties, and ideals of beauty, not least with regard to physical beauty and the social and cultural determinations of beauty in a global context (Brand 2013).

With the understanding that ethics in the classical sense is a matter of seeking what is good for the flourishing of life, and not only following moral principles and rules or divine commands, various thinkers have argued for the high ethical value of aesthetic experience in which beauty is enjoyed as an intrinsic good in itself, and as inherently good for life. The ethical import of beauty as a value in itself is implied in abundant appeals to preserve wild creatures and natural wonders partly because of their beauty and not only for their possible ecological utility (Brady 2003; Kemal and Gaskell 1993). That, in turn, suggests taking seriously the recent claim that even the animal world is motivated by attraction to intrinsic beauty (Prum 2017). Frank Wilczek, a Noble laureate scientist, has gone farther, arguing for the view that the universe itself embodies beautiful and elegant forms – a deeper order of beauty that is nevertheless at the heart of what we ourselves seek, and what we find pleasing and inspiring. Wilczek identifies that deep beauty, from which our own flourishing in some way proceeds, as being in accord not only with the ancient Greek idea of the music of the spheres but also with a spiritual cosmology (Wilczek 2015).

Sublimity

It is widely agreed that not all art is beautiful, nor is everything in the natural world. There are other aesthetic values, moreover, including the grotesque. But because beauty is still the most encompassing concept in aesthetics, the remaining aesthetic concepts discussed here can be treated succinctly.

The major aesthetic concept that goes beyond the bounds of the beautiful is the "sublime." The word "sublime" (whether noun or adjective) connotes awe, and possibly an exhilarating feeling (though also uncomfortable) of being overwhelmed by a powerful force such as being caught up in a storm. Or it can apply to the unimaginable and infinite extent of something, such as galaxies or the sea. Kant described the latter form of the sublime as mathematical, and the former as dynamical. But, in a characteristic move, Kant says that, even when our imagination is overwhelmed by what seems endless, our reason reassures us in being capable of conceiving of the very idea of something veritably infinite. In doing so, our reason rises to a "supersensible" level superior to the numerical immensity that overwhelms the imagination. Again, in experiencing the dynamical sublime, in which we confront potentially fearful powers beyond our control, we have the capacity to recognize that our worth as human beings is invulnerable in the face of volcanoes or hurricanes. That allows us to overcome the revulsion posed by the physical threat. Thus, according to Kant, we realize our superiority to nature.

Although Kant refrained from applying the idea of the sublime to art, other thinkers – Hegel for example – did so. In postmodern thought, however, beginning with Jacques Derrida, the sublime marks something else: that which is beyond the unending effort to contain the uncontainable, or to delimit the unlimited, by means of reason or conceptual boundaries that are always arbitrary and constructed (Derrida 1987). Postmodern thinkers would say, in contrast to Kant, that the sublime unsettles reason and decenters our transcendent sense of moral superiority because the sublime is not, after all, anything that reason can even conceive of as a definite idea. To believe in such encompassing powers of reason or moral invulnerability, as Kant would have us do, is illusory and makes for false comfort.

Some other thinkers in our time would argue, nevertheless, that this kind of postmodern sublime verges on nihilism and misses something important about the experience of the sublime in other ways – something expansive and edifying. That contrasting present-day sense of the sublime, which precedents in the Romantic era, experiences art and nature as something mysterious and beckoning, and celebrates wildness and wilderness as affirming transhuman values. That experience can be exhilarating not because it reinstates our existing sense of worth (as in Kant) but because it expands the sense of who we are and who we can become, as well as our sense of others and the world – possibly even of God, whether or not one says, as some would, that the beauty of the divine absorbs the sublime (Hart 2003). This decentering but awakening sense of the sublime can be conducive to care for the earth and to humility or reverence in the face of what, in some circumstances, can be imbued with an aura of the holy.

Expression

For much of the modern era, aesthetic expression displaced beauty – and sublimity as well – as central to the goal and activity of artistry. In being expressive, art can sometimes aim at experiences and possibilities that are not balanced and symmetrical and whole, but agitated and painful and fragmentary – and elusive of serenely well-wrought language and craft. Tragic literature and drama, for example, can be experienced as

expressive of something more sublime than beautiful, and at times more disturbing than sublime – regardless of the cathartic effect Aristotle attributed to tragedy. And when in modern times the tragic dissolves into the grotesque and ugly in art, but nonetheless seems all the more authentic and true of ordinary life, a persuasive way of describing the creativity of that kind of artistry is to call it expressive. At an extreme, Tolstoy essentially equated good art with sincerity of the artist's expression, the "fruit" of the life that the artist had lived. And art that is good in that way, according to Tolstoy, is also morally good (Tolstoy [1896] 1960).

The ethics of artistic expression is not necessarily about the self-expression of the artist, however, which is never fully available to the audience in any case. In more recent times, it is attentive, instead, to the expressive power inherent in the form and qualities of the artwork itself. The ethical component of artistic expression is closely related to the art's capacity to express an array of emotions, whether pleasing or disturbing (Gaut 2007). For some philosophers – most notably John Dewey – the experience of art and the experience of life itself are closely connected, with the major difference being that artistic expression is disengaged from the immediate concerns of life. Even so, art shapes experience in such a way as to provide *an* experience of a special kind: integrated, emotional, and "consummate." As such the medium of art becomes a special means of communication – although distinct from moral instruction (Dewey 1934).

Thinkers active more recently have again attended to the philosophical significance of the "felt" qualities and communally expressive bonds characteristic of the arts: of music and literature – and movies – in particular. Thinking in terms of ethics, Martha Nussbaum has emphasized the intelligence of emotions (Nussbaum 2001). Accordingly, she examines works of literature as vital to attaining a normative sense of historical experience and of life (1995). In that respect, Nussbaum follows the example of the critic Wayne Booth (1988), who looks to narrative fiction to cultivate insight into the qualities and character of human relationship. This line of thought points toward a growing realization that narrative form and artistic metaphor are not merely a base on which to build abstract principles, but also play a significant part in reflection itself at its most nuanced, sophisticated, and life-changing.

Imagination

Like expression, what we have come to call imagination is not confined to aesthetics. It constitutes a large and complex topic in itself. Having already treated elements of imagination under other rubrics, what needs to be unscored in the present context is something already hinted at – that is, the awareness that ethical vision and moral deliberation require not only basic principles or commands, but also creative imagination and artistry. Imagination, although potentially destructive, can be exercised constructively not only in the form of what we call the arts, but also in the acts of observing, savoring, empathizing, and deciding – all of which require attunement to "felt" qualities of life and to particulars in their uniqueness as well as in their variety and multiplicity. These functions of imaginative literature help explain why a philosopher such as Alasdair MacIntyre turns to the novels of Jane Austen when exploring a complex emotion and social force such as "regulated hatred," and when he declares that Austen provides the "last great effective imaginative voice" of the virtues and vices he is wanting to identify (MacIntyre 1981, 240).

The upshot of much recent thought is that acute imaginative awareness transcends generalities and makes a vital difference for envisioning and even enacting love and justice in particular ways. Appropriate compassion and judicious empathy are potentially enlivened through imaginative art. And that is so despite the sobering reminder from George Steiner that those who committed the greatest atrocities in

German concentration camps were ones who read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, or played Bach and Schubert. Even so, many of the critics already cited would argue that virtues and moral habits are exercised and developed in the arts and in aesthetic appreciation and criticism, even when free of explicit moral designs. Aesthetic judgment thus enters, at least indirectly, into what Francis Hutchinson and others of a former era would have called our "moral sentiments." Dewey, as a pragmatist, arrived at this by insisting that the moral value of art is closely connected to its capacity to express and envision new possibilities, although only hypothetically – a claim later advanced in other ways by Richard Rorty.

This is not to say that creative imagination has no limits or risks. Some things elude the powers of narrative and metaphor. Following the Holocaust, many argued that art had no available response beyond silence. And yet there came the poems of Paul Celan, for example, and the stories of Elie Wiesel and others, which formed a kind of testimony, along with the art of Holocaust memorials. Accordingly, Richard Kearney represents an important line of thought when he argues that there can be a postmodern imagination, in the wake of catastrophic loss – a poetics that is somehow responsive to the critical dimension of things, even things abysmal (Kearney 1994).

Not everything real can be imagined. Nor is everything imaginable now that may someday be envisioned. But, in religious and ethical terms, one could say that the life of justice, love, hope – even of faith – revives now and survives into the future in the creation and discovery of what can be glimpsed, or held only briefly, in imaginative forms.

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CHAPTER 110

Children

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore

All cultures and religious traditions distinguish children from adults, even though societies differ over the parameters of childhood and the chief moral characteristics and obligations. Children are distinct from adults because they are fresh, new, and small; less developed; more dependent and vulnerable; uniquely open to imagination and manipulation; greatly amenable to learning; sensitive to the transcendent; wise in ways that adults often lose with age; and sometimes harmed by adult action and inaction (Miller-McLemore 2003, 2017). Many of these traits create unique ethical issues for children and adults.

At the same time, it is important to note that children are no more a "moral issue" than adults, even though they present singular challenges and gifts to moral thought and religious communities. Ethicists should be cautious about bracketing them as a separate topic, as research in childhood studies suggests. Theoretically at least, almost every encyclopedia entry in this volume should consider children as active agents and subjects, not just this entry. Children comprise a third of the global population – a striking statistic that underscores the necessity of counting them. Even though children are not often on the minds of adult scholars, they are regular and important participants in religious communities and contemporary society.

Children merit a special entry, nonetheless, precisely because prominent scholarship in religious ethics often ignores them (Wall 2010). Greater inclusion of children has the capacity to reorient the study of religious ethics in fresh and even dramatic ways. Moreover, a great deal can be learned about the core beliefs and practices of religious traditions by asking how they regard children and childhood (Browning and Miller-McLemore 2009; Browning and Bunge 2009). Secular society itself would benefit from greater understanding of the inescapable role of religion in children's lives.

Social Context: Children's Ambiguous Status

An entry on children might not have appeared at all in the mid-twentieth century in an encyclopedia on religious ethics. Children appear more regularly in premodern religious texts and scholarship than in modern theology. Premodern theologians and leaders dealt forthrightly with children as they regulated religious practices of families and faith communities and addressed concerns about forming people in faith traditions and protecting, rearing, and educating children.

By contrast, until the last few decades many modern theologians and ethicists simply did not consider children a worthy subject. The academic study of religion followed the modern industrial division of

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

labor that drove a wedge between work and love, public and private, delegating work to men, love to women, and children to the female-restricted domestic sphere. Study of children, if it was considered at all, was regarded as trivial, sentimental, and second-rate (Miller-McLemore 2003). Women, families, and religious communities continued to worry about children's nurture, and people in religious education and pastoral ministry created curricula, organized social ministries for needy and marginalized children, and sometimes wrote books on children. But until the 1990s, religion scholars focused largely on adults without even noticing the adult-centered nature of their assumptions. Theologians and ethicists made sweeping claims about human nature and ethical action that presumed the average adult as the primary subject, and usually the white adult male in the so-called "developed" world.

The absurdity of such an assumption – that people do not need to take human development and variation into account in ethical analysis – seems obvious. But adult-centrism has been a serious problem for religious ethics (Wall 2010). In modernity, the presumed subject of dominant moral theories has been the mature and unchanging adult. In reality, there is no generic static adult; people are living, breathing, and evolving beings at various stages of life and maturity (or frailty). Yet children's full inclusion in religious communities and ethical discourse is far from commonplace. Many religious communities direct worship at adults and leave children on the sideline. When ethicists consider children at all, they often subsume them under the auspices of other topics, believing that the study of procreation or families or marriage, for example, already includes them. Not surprisingly, some contemporary scholars name children one of the last frontiers of liberation, following others such as women, people of color, the elderly, and the less able whose voices and rights have been obscured and marginalized.

The silencing of children is not entirely a twentieth-century phenomenon, however. Oversight in the Western world goes back at least to early modern adages that children should be "seen but not heard" and even earlier centuries of Western history when social and political hierarchies placed children in the same tier as other subordinates, such as women, servants, and slaves (Miller-McLemore 2003). Even in non-Western cultures that have greater regard for children, children have had to accommodate adult whims as well as hope for adult benevolence.

Religions and religious ethics play a key role in this arbitration, sometimes rallying to children's support, serving as a source of strength and well-being, and sometimes enforcing children's compliance to unjust and abusive rules aimed at honoring adult priorities. On one hand, religions name children in authoritative texts, symbols, doctrines, and moral teachings. They are valued for perpetuating the tradition and parents themselves (especially fathers). Religions have upheld the sanctity of children and childhood, opposing harmful social practices, such as infanticide or child labor. Religions strengthen kinship ties, benefiting children by providing safe and encouraging environments for growth. Some traditions ritually or informally sanction the wider community as extended or adoptive kin and create religious schools to educate children. All religions see socialization of children as a primary adult responsibility, although traditions differ over the extent to which they also credit children themselves as capable of religious awareness or wisdom (Browning and Miller-McLemore 2009). The Abrahamic traditions, for example, see children as blessings and gifts from God. Islam and Judaism embrace children as a fulfillment of God's covenant, inheritors of and participants in the tradition, and Christianity lifts up gospel stories that portray Jesus welcoming children as models of faith and reflections of the divine image. Many First Nation religions and some streams of Hinduism position children as closer to the divine than adults (Browning and Miller-McLemore 2009). Even though some traditions, such as Buddhism and Christianity, rank celibate religious life over families, this priority does not necessarily

mean a negation or neglect of children. Monastic communities have sometimes sustained important reciprocal relationships with the surrounding community in caring for children in extended families or taking in abandoned children. Prominent celibate traditions, such as Catholicism, identify families as a "domestic church," a small-scale institution that parallels the formal body in forming inhabitants in the faith tradition. Some religions, such as Judaism and Hinduism, locate important rituals within the domicile at the heart of regular family life.

On the other hand, almost all religions harbor moral and spiritual assumptions that are markedly one-directional (the adult-forms-child) and forward-looking (the child-becomes-adult). That is, religious literature focuses largely on how adults should form children but seldom, if ever, on how children powerfully form adults or on how children possess connections to the transcendent that adults lose as they age, assume responsibility, and become jaded (Miller-McLemore 2003, 2017). Religious traditions also enforce rituals and mores that have ambiguous and destructive consequences. The Abrahamic traditions, for example, have (mis)used the commandment of honoring parents to keep children on a tight leash, and Judaism and Christianity have upheld household codes that arrange power in families hierarchically under the *pater* with women, children, and slaves subservient to patriarchal rule. Christianity has described children as depraved and deserving of corporal punishment, predicated on scriptural passages that suggest that "sparing the rod" leads to unruly, ungrateful children. Islam has also sanctioned corporal punishment and promoted other practices that can jeopardize children, such as child labor and marriage. Religions, such as Confucianism, have strict imperatives about respect for superiors or "filial piety" that can greatly constrict children's lives. Religions also control sexuality and enforce rigid gender norms through social pressure and even invasive physical means, such as genital circumcision and mutilation. Over history, religions have given boys of all ages considerable unjust advantage over girls in education, domestic labor, discipline, social privileges, religious authority, and even survival at birth.

In short, religious traditions have benefits, affirming children's creation and bringing them up as participants in religious communities devoted to worship of the transcendent and to care of others. And they also sanctify beliefs and practices that harm children, justifying, for example, child battery or fostering an environment where clergy child sexual abuse goes unchallenged. In short, religions have the power to affirm and embellish children's value and identity and the power to distort and malign them.

Contemporary Efforts to Reconstruct Childhood

Over history and across societies, cultures construct childhood according to particular contexts and expectations, and religion has served as an active participant in this process. Western understandings of children shifted dramatically in the transition from premodern to modern to postmodern times (Miller-McLemore 2003). With the Enlightenment and the rise of modern science, prominent spokespersons challenged religious assumptions about children as flawed miniature adults-in-the-making, at fault and in need of correction, and held up new images based on scientific reason and research. In contrast with doctrines about children's inherent depravity, modern philosophers and scientists proclaimed their natural innocence and purity (Higonnet 1998). Drawing on principles of human freedom and individual autonomy, people also promoted greater gender and sexual equality, raising for the first time the idea that children have basic rights to shelter, food, protection, and education that adults must recognize and respect.

Modern secular approaches to children have had their own undersides, however, sometimes as virulent as religious approaches. Although Enlightenment ideals led to a greater recognition of children's value and needs, they also tended to discount and disempower children, picturing them as "blank slates" and hence without moral and spiritual experiences and lacking in moral responsibility and influence. Romanticized ideals of children as naïve and unformed protected them from horrendous work conditions in factories, for example, and led to the creation of new laws limiting children's employment and assuring their education. But these same ideals also eventuated in new forms of exploitation (Miller-McLemore 2003). Rendering children precious and "cute" deprived them of active contribution to household sustenance, increased their susceptibility to sexual abuse, and turned them into products to be consumed by expectant parents or used by the market to sell products. Moreover, ideals of innocence were not applied equally. They defended white middle- and upper-class children as pure while dismissing non-white and working-class children as unruly and even dangerous, thereby perpetuating white supremacy and classism. Premodern ideals at least retained a sense of children's moral role, despite patriarchal trappings and regardless of context, whereas modern ideas often externalized blame for children's problems, placing it on parents and the environment and robbing children of genuine moral agency. Modernity also ushered in an individualism that recognized individual worth but turned love and marriage into an adult-to-adult affair and pursuit of personal fulfillment, ignored children and their care as a communal endeavor, and artificially severed individual development from its inherent relational dynamics. These new family norms made it harder and harder to take children into account in important adult decisions and policy matters such as divorce, affordable childcare, parental leave, medical intervention, and social welfare programs.

A shift has occurred in the last half century that is as significant for constructions of children as the shift from premodernity to modernity. Hand-in-hand with postmodern ideas that questioned universal truths and located knowledge and authority in particular contexts, adults have begun to see children as complex and competent beings. Although not a collective development by any means, people recognize children in more fulsome and realistic terms; no longer seen as depraved or innocent, children are regarded as knowing creatures with complicated desires and significant talents and challenges, meriting greater recognition, understanding, and inclusion, even if this change means more work and more struggle for adults (Higonnet 1998).

This encyclopedia entry itself is a good example. The topic of children is included because of a growing consciousness over the last century about children as full human beings with valid desires, agency, and contributions regardless of their age. Heightened regard for children arose in the twentieth century as much a result of growth in the social sciences and related legal developments as a consequence of any action by religious organizers or scholarship in religion (James and Prout 1990). Of course, religious communities and activists have remained staunch advocates for children, and scholars in religion have added their own efforts to a research movement now commonly identified as childhood studies. Nonetheless, for a majority of the twentieth century, scholars in religion abdicated their role in understanding children to those in the social sciences. Likewise, people in religious communities were more likely to turn to childhood experts in the wider culture than to religious leaders and resources. Fortunately, progress in secular research on children has sparked fresh research in religion in the last two decades.

Childhood studies received an official label and place in the university in the 1990s as a result of efforts among sociologists and anthropologists specifically (James and Prout 1990). Its roots, however, run back to the father of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud, even if contemporary scholars accuse developmental

psychology of harboring an essentialist approach to children. Although Freud studied childhood sexuality to figure out adult pathology and regarded children along with women as more "primitive" than adult men, he still gave the study of children scientific status and plowed the ground for a century of social science research on children. Second-generation Freudians, such as Freud's own daughter Anna, one of her protégés Erik H. Erikson, and British pediatrician D. W. Winnicott, took special interest in children in clinical settings. Behaviorist psychology arose in the early twentieth century in direct opposition to psychoanalytic belief in the unconscious and early childhood memories. But both schools shared avid interest in studying children. New child "experts" ranged from psychologists and psychiatrists to pediatricians and educators. Although many social scientists distrusted religion, it remained a peripheral area of interest. Psychology documented, for example, how trust in infancy shapes adult faith, how children develop images of God after their parents, how early transitional objects like a blanket are transformed into adult ritual, and how moral and spiritual reasoning progresses from concrete images to abstract concepts.

Childhood studies benefits from this history but also stakes out new territory. Since the 1990s, it has become a recognized area similar to programs in gender or race, housed in several universities, bridging several disciplines, and offering minors and doctoral study aimed at understanding children and childhood*s* plural. As this label suggests, scholars redefine childhood as a socially constructed category without universal features (James and Prout 1990). There is no such entity as *the child*; instead, cultures construct childhood and children in diverse ways. Scholars criticize sequential developmental theories for mistakenly viewing children only in terms of progression into adulthood rather than as valid subjects in themselves and for focusing on what children are becoming rather than on what they already are. These early theories relied on modernist notions of rationality and universality, promoting a misleading schema in which children advance from simplicity and irrationality to complex rational behavior, thereby creating as natural and inherent a false dichotomy between the supposedly immature child and the mature, reasonable, competent adult.

By contrast, childhood studies scholars recognize children as full persons with voice, knowledge, and agency (James and Prout 1990). Children are active participants rather than passive recipients of adult action. They shape their own social lives and the lives and societies around them. As part of this claim, scholars strive to give voice to children. Some social scientists even go against the typical neutrality of modern science and make clear their advocacy. Research interests arise out of concern about children's welfare amid war, famine, poverty, and abuse; and the aim is to contribute to fresh policy perspectives and public practices. Distinct from earlier efforts on behalf of children, however, researchers seek to address children's silence and sometimes attempt to include children themselves as contributors. Consequently, scholars increasingly turn to ethnographic methodology in order to ground theory in children's own words, actions, and thoughts (Ridgely 2011).

Ethical Issues: Current and Future Directions

Unfortunately, a great deal of scholarship in childhood studies in the social sciences and humanities makes little to no reference to religion. This omission is a serious oversight since religion has such a widespread impact on individuals and societies, especially when it comes to moral norms and values, even within the so-called secular age. Fortunately, a decade after childhood studies was launched, scholars in religion sought to address the undeveloped state of research on children (Bunge 2012). People have

published books, organized academic societies and conferences, devoted special journal issues to children, and generally made a wealth of fresh insight available to the wider public.

Religion researchers run into one ethical problem shared by all scholars in childhood studies: how to best represent children? Even as scholars made space for children, they encountered difficulties in studying them (Ridgely 2011). Whether in theoretical examination of historical sources or actual interviews, putting children at the center is not easy. In fact, such claims negate the inextricable connections between children and those who care for them, often women and mothers who also need to remain central in theorizing about children. Conflicts of interest between adults and children arise inevitably, even in the birth process itself where infants are born months before neonatal growth is complete because of female anatomy. Childhood studies must consider how to enhance children's lives without diminishing the lives of women.

More challenging yet, how can adults do research on children without foisting adult presumptions on them? Ageism and adultism differ from other discriminations such as racism and sexism because age evolves in ways that race and sex do not. All people have once occupied the position of children, and all children become adults, at least physically. So, time partly solves the inequity, loss of voice, and invisibility. By contrast, differences such as sexual and racial status are more difficult to amend, although people affected by these discriminations often take action. Children rarely organize on their own behalf or initiate research on themselves. Can they use the research of adults to advance their own cause? Or is the research often a means to enhance the researcher's position? Even in the most carefully structured project, adults still have power over children and risk taking advantage of them or crossing appropriate limits. Minimally, adults must recognize how we often project our own needs, desires, and preconceptions on children. Children themselves often wish to please adults, including the adult researcher. As with any vulnerable population, children also raise difficult legal issues of consent, protection, and boundaries that internal review boards are justified in scrutinizing closely.

Pragmatically, scholars use various means to ameliorate these hazards (Ridgely 2011). They rely on retrospective analysis of their own childhoods, and they interview adults about their childhood experiences, although in both of these cases adult memories of childhood both aid and obscure understanding. More successful, many scholars resort to social science methods of qualitative research, ethnography in particular, to get at children's experience through observation, interviews, and extended immersion in contexts in which children live. Scholars in the humanities adopt more conventional literary and interpretative methods, rereading classic texts from a children's angle, for example, and digging for fresh textual material previously obscured by an adult orientation. Primary sources in religious studies present particular limitations. In almost all traditions, classic texts over twenty centuries reflect the elite, male, and patriarchal perspective of leaders and authors, written for other members of their own class and not representative of children's experience. This elite position excludes men of other classes, women without education, and, of course, children themselves. Innovative research in religion draws on methods from both the humanities and social sciences, unearthing new interpretations of scriptural and historical texts through a children-centered approach and doing ethnographic studies that explore the meanings that children develop in situ.

Leading religion scholars in childhood studies have urged religious ethicists to play a more prominent role in social debates about children. Many scholars also argue that including children more fully has the capacity to transform ethics as a discipline itself (Wall 2010). Serious consideration of children has the

capacity to revolutionize basic categories of analysis and interpretation, concepts such as rights, responsibility, agency, vulnerability, relationship, and so forth.

What are some of the specific ethical issues that arise for children? Considerable debate clusters around children's rights, sparked by the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, which the United States alone has not ratified. Children's welfare is often at great risk as a result of human and natural crises (see, for example, statistics available through the Children's Defense Fund, www.childrensdefense.org, and the United Nations Children's Fund, www.unicef.org). Other scholars tackle questions of children and adult responsibilities within specific communities and institutions, such as families (should children have chores or access to paid employment? what do adults owe children?), religious congregations (should children participate in key rituals?), education (how should religion be taught? what should children know about sexuality, climate change, or evolution?), and hospitals (in what ways should children contribute to their own healthcare decisions? what are optimal ways to care for sick children?) (Bunge 2012). Long before childhood studies became fashionable, scholars across a number of disciplines uncovered the deep entanglement of religious institutions and families in child sexual and physical abuse. More tangential to religious ethics but still a serious matter are questions about children's religious ideation. How do their religious lives evolve if the linear models of twentieth-century psychology are inadequate and inaccurate? Do children, for example, have religious desires, experiences, or callings?

Today, children are an important subject matter for study in religious ethics, and children are themselves viable subjects and participants in their own right. Scholars question previous assumptions about children's inability to grapple with existential and highly theoretical questions. Closer study reveals how actively children construct their world and their own unique theories about the divine, religion, faith, ritual, morality, and much more. Children reveal the powerful and life-long influence of everyday bodily experiences, especially material practices and artifacts. Their religious faith is shaped as much by routine habits as by verbal confession of beliefs. Since religion has an extensive influence on daily life, shaping who has power in families, for example, or what girls are allowed to wear, efforts to uncover and recover the rich and ambiguous history of religious beliefs and practices related to children will strengthen the depth and effectiveness of ethical discourse and public policy. Appreciation for children also means appreciation for what all people have once been, allowing us to see our own past anew. Most crucial for all of us, however, adults need to learn to listen when children talk.

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CHAPTER 111

Joy and Laughter

Terence J. Martin

The religions of the world promise people many positive things – freedom, salvation, enlightenment, even heavenly bliss – though they all too often wind up denigrating human life. Christianity, for its part, offers its adherents peace and joy, though it frequently does so by urging people to regard actual life as nothing but a transitory stage meant for weeping and groaning, while deferring joy and laughter to an unknown, future realm (Luke 6:21). In addition, some of the most creative minds in the formative period of this tradition belittle corporeal life and its manifold pleasures, and later tradition follows suit with an austere morality that threatens to strangle the vital aspirations of ordinary people. Laughter too is regularly shunned, or at least severely tamed, as laughter often is linked with the pride and insolence of those who doubt God. As Peter Berger puts it, a "long line of grim theologians" managed to constrict and darken the horizon of human life in much of mainstream Christianity, so much so that one has to wonder whether there truly is any room left in it for joy and laughter (Berger 1997, 202). Indeed, even if one grants the legitimate insights of this dark perspective – that life can be dreary and treacherous, that the mind often is distorted and the will corrupted to terrible ends, that pleasures can be seductive and then become destructive, and that laughter can be cruel – still, one must wonder, where is the joy in all this? Is there no space for a full and ample life? Is there no opening for pleasure? Is there any room left for laughter?

Some promising efforts appear in the history of mainstream Christian theology, though it proves very difficult to break the negative fetters of early tradition. Augustine, for example, states very broadly in *The City of God* that all creatures – even robbers and monsters – seek peace and joy, though most people mistakenly find fulfillment in mere "temporal things." Christians who aspire for the city of God, Augustine famously says, may rightly use these things and the peace they yield, but only in passing, as a steppingstone to a higher end, and thus never as a source of true joy, since only God offers final and eternal peace (Augustine, 1998, book 19, chapters 10–28). Such a statement means, significantly enough, that Christians need not shun involvement in the world, as some were tempted to do; and yet it also reveals a deep and abiding discomfort with physical and social existence. Human beings, as Augustine sees it, are like pilgrims making their way through an alien world, under assault from enemies both within and without, with few sources of joy and no good reasons for laughter (Augustine 1998, book 18). Echoing Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury pursues much the same line of thinking in some rarely noticed chapters toward the end of the "Proslogion." In his words, "if there are many joys in enjoyable things," and the suggestion is that in fact there are a great many such joys, then "how rich and how great must be the joy [to be found] in Him who made these enjoyable things" (Anselm 1974, 101–1). Natural goods, in short – beauty,

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

strength, melody, friendship, and so on – are legitimate sources of joy; and yet, in line with Augustine, their true value is to provide a stepping-off point for imagining that ultimate good than which no greater good can be imagined. Though Anselm sounds more comfortable with worldly joy, his entire project – as he tells us in the first chapter – is driven by his keen sense of the "heavy sorrow ... [and] unmitigated plight" that marks the "wretched fate of man" (Anselm 1974, 91–93). So the question arises once again: does the Christian tradition make space for joy and laughter in this world? Or is the whole point simply to escape the dark and dreary lives we live?

The purpose of this entry is to indicate a positive way from within one current of the Christian world for affirming somewhat brighter possibilities for human flourishing. I refer to the work of Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), the cosmopolitan scholar of ancient languages and literature, trenchant reformer of church and society, unwavering critic of war and champion of peace, and witty satirist and well-practiced controversialist. To start with, it must be acknowledged that Erasmus inherits and often works within the classical framework evident in Augustine and Anselm; and thus it is not uncommon, as we will see shortly, to find Erasmus expressing similarly otherworldly and mystical sentiments. At the same time, however, Erasmus moves beyond these boundaries to create what can best be called a joyous Christian humanism animated by levels and layers of laughter. This is an approach marked by a capacious sensibility, one that is dedicated to entertaining and savoring the myriad ways in which people are amazingly odd, if not quite simply "mad" – not in a clinical sense, to be sure – but nonetheless somehow besides themselves, slightly demented in judgment, perhaps vehement in passion, or possibly just happily mindless and full of folly. As Erasmus leads us across the landscape of human existence – certainly in *The Praise of Folly* (Erasmus 1979a), but in other works as well – we are invited to think about life with nuance and agility, marveling at the tenuous equipoise of opposites and grappling with the surprising inversion of appearance and reality. The world seems topsy-turvy, or perhaps inside-out, but in any case not the way we took it to be; and the perceived incongruity strikes home, to one degree or another, giving rise to a range of responses, at once ironic and comedic. In a manner both daring and refreshing, Erasmus confronts his readers with the zany madness of mystical ecstasy, the innocent but funny folly of ordinary life, and the laughably vile schemes of the powerful, and each elicits and deserves its own kind of laughter. Given the dreary asceticism of traditional theologies, however, Erasmus is especially provocative when – blending "moral vision with a spirit of merriment" – he outlines an ideal Christian life filled with joy and pleasure (Gordon 1990, 99–100).

In the closing pages of *The Praise of Folly*, Erasmus has the goddess Folly introduce a group of saintly fools and religious ecstatics. Quoting randomly from scripture, Folly praises these "fools for Christ's sake" who live a blessed but odd life – abandoning property, ignoring injury, and renouncing pleasure. Indeed, these holy fools live so completely outside of themselves that they seem to have been absorbed into that "Highest Good which gathers all things to Himself." Naturally, too, they flee from "whatever is related to the body," as they are "carried away in the pursuit of the eternal and invisible things of the spirit" (Erasmus 1979a, 115–138). Many interpreters have taken Erasmus seriously in extolling this type of folly, and to their credit such a reading does find support in other works of Erasmus (see Erasmus 1998, 393–397). M. A. Screech above all has championed the idea that the heart of the theology of Erasmus is to be found in the "witty, erudite, sustained and moving praise of a form of religious ecstasy which is indistinguishable from a bout of temporary madness" (Screech 1980, xvii). Indeed, as Screech puts it elsewhere, "the joy of such an ecstasy ... surpasses the natural joys that all human beings put together have ever known in this wide world" (Screech 1999, 113–117). Though such ecstatics may be filled with

heavenly joy, there nonetheless are good reasons to think twice about their praise, as these are remarkably odd people who speak "incoherently" and whose facial expressions "vacillate repeatedly"; they are "bitterly hostile to literature," something Erasmus could never embrace; and they show no interest in the moral life praised elsewhere by Erasmus. He also places signals within the text to warn us against taking Folly's praise at face value – in particular, her brazen claim to cite authorities in the manner of "great masters of divinity," though Erasmus pokes fun at the methods of theologians; and her sophistical use of proverbs to earn her listeners' approval (Erasmus 1979a, 115–138). So the joy experienced by these mystical madmen may be something noble, yet there is no denying that they are truly odd and thus deserve a good laugh.

Far more delightful are the natural fools who populate the first section of *The Praise of Folly*: the newborn and the elderly man – both bald and babbling – who charm the world with their toothless and witless manner; and between those ages, love-stricken men and women playing their wonderfully silly games of romance. What a panorama of innocent and contented fools, and what variety of pleasure and joy! There are those "thick-skulled, lumbering louts" who happily march off to battle; the bleary-eyed scholars forsaking sleep for the sake of reputation; the avid hunters and the exuberant gamblers who think of nothing else; and plenty of religious nuts fascinated with relics and magic. All of these and so many more enjoy a "sort of continuous inebriation" thanks to the good graces of Folly. Social life also depends on the "spice of folly": what party, what friendship, and indeed, what marriage could thrive, Folly asks, without the dear quirks, the slight illusions, the fortunate oversights which make life good and give it cheer? No one is "joyful and happy" without her services, Folly proudly beams, as she alone pours "forth joy into the hearts of gods and men alike" (Erasmus 1979a, 9–75). With this rollicking review of everyday life, Erasmus assumes a comical perspective that is at once capacious and generous. In principle no one is exempt from the charms of innocent folly; and yet, as Peter G. Bietenholz observes, the "true originality of Erasmus" rests in casting Folly's "compassionate approach to the common – and pleasurable – follies of human existence." Even "weakness" and "delusion" are taken as a "source of pleasure" – a fact that can only elicit a "sympathetic smile" from readers, if not a hardy and appreciative laugh (Bietenholz 2009, 133). And who can help but grin with delight when Folly suggests – surprisingly, but somehow truly, and reversing the world's expectations – that "fools, simpletons, [and] nincompoops" are far happier and decidedly more fun than the self-serious experts who run the world for their own benefit (Erasmus 1979a, 54–57)?

The laughter of Erasmus takes a satirical turn when Folly comes to deal with the vain and vicious madmen who torment the world for personal gain. From the common lot appear the crazed husbands, hypocritical mourners, savvy financial schemers, and conniving legacy hunters; but it is the professional fools who prove the most destructive – the cut-throat merchants, domineering teachers, vain authors, pretentious authors, quarrelsome philosophers, ridiculous monks, arcane theologians, decadent princes, greedy bishops, and warlike popes. What an unsavory lot, this is! And how grotesque they appear, especially when viewed from afar, as Menippus once did in a dialogue by Lucian of Samosata, when he surveys the "innumerable broil of mortals" from his perch on the moon. As Folly puts it, you would think you were looking at "a great cloud of flies or gnats quarreling among themselves, warring, plotting, plundering, playing, frisking, being born, declining, dying" (Erasmus 1979b, 76–115; see Lucian of Samosata 1988, 267–323). What Erasmus elicits from this vantage is a laugh of disgust at the treachery of these many villains. It is the job of the satirist, after all, to cut through the facades, debunking the air of legitimacy, uncovering the hidden corruption, and thereby exposing the concealed vices for all to see. Having done so, the satirist opens the way for explicit criticism and invites overt laughter at the culprits. Laughing critically

at the powerful can be dangerous, of course; and some of his targets took offence, though the satire of Erasmus is comparatively moderate and often quite light, especially by the standards of sixteenth century religious controversies. In this regard, it is interesting to note that – even to this day – there are those (Screech, for instance) who complain that Erasmus works mainly by mockery and ridicule, only occasionally "softened" by charity (Screech 1999, 164 and 312). In his defense, Erasmus avoids targeting individuals by name, often feigning surprise that someone might think that he was speaking of them, and playfully musing whether his suggestions might have inadvertently hit a guilty target (see Erasmus 1979a, 146 and 148). More importantly, many of his best satires are a kind of literary diptych, where laughing criticism is offset by a counterpoised ideal, to which the laughter ultimately leads (see Erasmus 1997a).

The work of Erasmus aims to foster a life lived in peace, filled with joy, and guided by intelligence. Given his scholarly labors, it is understandable that Erasmus would affirm an active life of the mind, something he does explicitly in "The Godly Feast," where he gathers a group of ordinary laymen for a feast of conversation that is "equally learned and devout" (Erasmus 1997d, 204). More startling, however, is the claim put forward in "The Epicurean" by a character named Hedonius that "there are no people more Epicurean than godly Christians." This proposal stuns Spudaeus, for whom Christian life is to be "as far as possible from pleasure." Not true, says the Erasmian Hedonius, as Christ – who was anything but "sad and gloomy" – did not call people to a "dismal mode of life," but in fact led "the most enjoyable life of all and the one most full of true pleasure." Hedonius is not speaking, to be sure, of "shameless love, unlawful passion, [and] excessive wining and dining," as no pleasures are worth the pains that follow such things. Instead the pleasures of which he speaks are psychological and moral, as the greatest pleasure is said to be a "good conscience," which for Erasmus entails an ethical life unburdened by remorse and a sense of reconciliation with God (Erasmus 1997c, 1073–1086). Relieved by Christ of the torment of a bad conscience, the pious come to enjoy what Erasmus calls a "complete innocence of life," or what amounts to the same thing, a personal life of peace (Erasmus 1998, 94). With a good conscience, Erasmus suggests, the pious enjoy "no less delight" in life than do the worldly, though it is done "in a different fashion." All the gladness of heaven resides, therefore, in the actual life of the godly and righteous person. This is evident, Hedonius continues, in a number of ways, but most stunningly in the great pleasure they find in banquets and in sexual love, certainly very down-to-earth pleasures, and ones usually shunned by the religiously austere. Indeed, we are told, godly people enjoy fine banquets far more than the "vulgar gourmand, as they feast on modest food and rich conversation seasoned with thanksgiving;" and they savor "sexual love with great intensity, as their pleasure [is] derived from [the] unbroken intimacy" between two people "who love each other equally and sincerely" (Erasmus 1997c, 1083–1085). With these surprising examples, Erasmus insists that the truest joys of a righteous and godly conscience are to found in the midst of the social worlds in which people live and breathe.

Erasmus shows us many characters who illustrate such a life in the *Colloquies*. In "The Old Men's Chat, or the Carriage," for instance, a kind of symposium in transit, we listen in on the stories of life shared by four old friends who have not seen each other for forty-two years. There is Polygamus, whose "hard drinking" and "unrestrained sexuality" have aged him quickly; the proper and somewhat lifeless Eusebius, who has lived "quietly" and very correctly on the "prebend" received from his "cathedral chapter"; and the likeable vagabond Pampirus, who has lived in a free but careless manner, bouncing from one religious order to another. Unlike these three, however, Glycion has lived with remarkable ethical richness – with family, in public, among friends – and for that very reason, with great pleasure.

Of the four he has aged the least, as he has lived the best, relishing the joy of "living honourably and agreeably" and savoring the "tranquility" that comes from being at peace with God and others (Erasmus 1997d). "Courtship," for its part, introduces us to two young people, with the smitten Pamphilus playfully and paradoxically suggesting to the lovely Maria that they might grow into virginity over the course of their marriage. What Erasmus manages with this richly ironic dialogue – Maria is baffled by the suggestion – is to rethink the relationship of religion and sexuality. In defiance of ascetic tradition, Erasmus insists that the pleasures of sexual life arise from nature and thus are not inherently sinful; but that also means that abstinence "from sexual intercourse isn't a virtue" (Erasmus 1997e). The banquet colloquies, finally, also are devoted to the pleasure of the participants, treating their bodies to savory dishes and their minds to "conversation as pleasant as it is profitable" (Erasmus 1997f, 928). In these and other colloquies, we are met with a host of characters – consistently presented with gentle irony, sincere delight, and a smiling embrace – who have accepted the Erasmian challenge to "run the risk of human life," even with all of its uncertainties and troubles, hoping thereby to savor the natural joys of a godly and virtuous life (Erasmus 1997e, 266).

To say the least, Erasmus takes us a long way from the ascetic and austere sentiments of much traditional Christianity. For those who would turn against life, despise the body, denigrate the mind, scorn pleasure, or even shun laughter, he responds in a manner that echoes Epicurus, bluntly telling people of this sort to get on with it and leave life, if that's what they wish, as the means are readily at hand (Epicurus 1994, 29; Erasmus 1997e, 266). This is Erasmus's parting shot at ascetic religion, and it is a quip with a satirical bite, as there is something downright mad about a life intentionally stripped of joy and laughter. Then again, for Erasmus we human beings go mad in a variety of ways, and each demands its own form of laughter, and it is by irony and laugher that Erasmus uncovers and responds to each. The sweet charms of innocent folly are met with light irony and a gentle chuckle; the savage madness of the vicious are exposed with provocative satire; the heavenly vehemence of ecstatic mysticism is praised with hesitant amazement; and the wonderfully odd life of the virtuous is embraced with merry delight. In each case Erasmus laughs, and with each kind and degree of laughter he invites us into the truth of that particular form of life. "What is to prevent one from telling the truth as he laughs?," Horace asks in defense of his brand of satire; and Erasmus would answer that only in laughing appropriately does one come to know the truth of any form of life and the joys that animate it (Horace 1929, Satire I.1.28). Indeed, as Berger comments, laughter discloses things that are missed in the "serious attitude" (Berger 1997, 135; see 83). So to get at the truth of life, one must have a well-honed capacity for irony and a sharply-tuned sense of humor.

In the end, laughter in the Erasmian manner is "a vehicle for Christian joy," as Screech nicely puts it, though the joy in question is rich in ethical value and concentrated fully on humanistic ends (Screech 1999, xxiii). In fact, Screech offers a good example of this, when he notes that "men like Erasmus were ill at ease in a world where Christian laughter was fighting a losing battle against Christian thumbscrews." And yet Erasmus persisted with laughter, certainly about the silly superstitions that infest popular piety, but also at the errors of dissidents, the vainglory of monks, the absurdities of theologians, and even the lethal madness of a warrior pope. What Screech says of Rabelais works as well for Erasmus, as "such laugher in its Christian context is positive and life-enhancing." In Screech's words, "error is not hated; it is laughed away," and the same thing could be said of vices of all sorts (Screech 1999, 72 and 269). Therein lies the great ethical value of mocking laughter. As we have seen, however, a different sort of laughter emerges when Erasmus entertains the ideal of a godly and virtuous life. Recall, for instance, those odd but balanced figures wherein transcendent and natural goods are ironically held in suggestive

equipoise – an old man who has not aged (Glycion); a marriage that will aspire to virginity (Pamphilus and Maria); and a "godly feast" of ordinary laymen. What joy these figures experience, and what virtues they embody, somehow managing to relish a taste of the ultimate, even as they remain well-grounded in their natural and social worlds. In the words of Walter Kaiser, such religious and ethical lives represent a "joyous humanism," one that rejoices in the pleasures of life, even as it insists that "the only true pleasures are those of the mind, that the pleasures most people seek are more painful than pleasurable, [and] that God is the fountain of joy" (Kaiser 1963, 80–81). In their wonderfully odd lives we encounter with eye-opening amusement the comical prospects for a joyous Christian humanism, no matter how fleeting their example might prove.

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CHAPTER 112

Play, Recreation, and Sport

Eric Bain-Selbo

Introduction

There are generally two broad approaches one can take to thinking about the relationship between recreation and sport and religion and, by extension, religious ethics.

One approach is to look at the ways in which recreation and sport intersect with institutional religion. In other words, one might try to understand how a particular religious tradition views recreation and sport. What are the resources within the tradition that lead to a particular judgment about recreation and sport? What kind of guidance do the authorities in that tradition give to their adherents about recreation and sport?

The work of someone like William Baker is an excellent example of this approach. In *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport* (2007), Baker focuses primarily on sport in the United States and particularly on how it has been viewed and handled by Christianity (though he touches on Judaism and Islam as well). Baker recognizes certain commonalities between religion and sport. As he notes, "religion and sport seem to have been made in the image of each other" (Baker 2007, 2). But the story he tells is one of institutional ambivalence toward sport.

Lincoln Harvey helpfully summarizes the ambivalence of Christianity to sport in terms of three "notes" drawn from the history of that relationship. He identifies these as instrumentalism, opposition, and popularity (Harvey 2014, 33). Christianity has used (instrumentalism) sporting metaphors and analogies rhetorically (e.g. the letters of Paul), and exploited sporting life as part of its evangelism and call to bodily discipline (think here of the "muscular Christianity" movement and the Young Men's Christian Association). But it also has condemned sport (opposition) as a possible and dangerous distraction from the religious life. From this latter position, sport is seen as an immoral activity or at least an activity that distracts from a properly moral life. At the same time, the history of the relationship of Christianity and sport reveals the incredible persistence and attraction of sport across cultures and despite religious condemnation (popularity). As a consequence, Christianity (like other religions) has had to make some sort of accommodation with sport and sporting culture (Harvey 2014, 33, 56).

In regard to recreational activities like dance, games, and popular music (activities often associated with festivals), Barbara Ehrenreich, in her book *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (2006), recounts how authorities in the Christian tradition sought to squelch such fun among the masses. These activities were thought to lead adherents to neglect the discipline needed for a proper Christian

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

moral life. Such an attitude may be exemplified in this old joke: "Why do Baptists avoid sex standing up? Because it might lead to dancing." Today, of course, many religious traditions embrace various recreational activities to form and strengthen communal bonds as well as recruit new members.

In general then, institutional religions have vacillated between condemnation and acceptance of recreation and sport, between active resistance and instrumental co-opting of recreation and sport.

The second approach to thinking about the relationship between recreation and sport and religion is to examine how the former may function very much like the latter. In other words, how are recreation and sport like religion? Do recreation and sport play similar roles for human beings that religion plays? How can we use certain religious or theological concepts to better understand recreation and sport?

It is this second approach that will be taken in this entry. While there certainly is much of interest in the first approach, the second approach looks more deeply at the intrinsic connections between recreation and sport and religion. And, by taking this approach, we will gain significant insights into those areas of overlap that recreation and sport and religion have in regard to moral virtues and the life of moral excellence. This entry will focus primarily on sport (baseball, soccer, basketball, etc.), but the lessons learned largely are applicable to recreation (gardening, dancing, yoga, etc.).

Play as Unifying Concept

The relationship between morality and institutional religions is indisputable. All religious traditions have rules about moral behavior and virtues that adherents should cultivate. At the same time, recreation and sport also have rules about moral behavior and virtues that participants (and, sometimes, even spectators) should cultivate. The umbrella concept under which we can best understand these practices, moral behavior, and virtues is "play." The most prominent theorist of play is Johan Huizinga, and his *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1955) is useful in a comprehensive account of recreation, sport, and religion.

Play is associated predominantly with recreation (e.g. hiking and dancing) and sport (e.g. competitive activities like baseball and soccer). Like religion, it is a concept that can be difficult to define. Huizinga concludes that play "is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is 'different' from 'ordinary life'" (Huizinga 1955, 28). In terms of the emotional experience of play, he adds that the "play-mood is one of rapture and enthusiasm, and is sacred or festive in accordance with the occasion. A feeling of exaltation and tension accompanies the action, mirth and relaxation follow" (Huizinga 1955, 132).

For Huizinga, play is "primordial" (Huizinga 1955, 3). As theologian Michael Novak writes: "The basic reality of all human life is play, games, sport; these are the realities from which the basic metaphors for all that is important in the rest of life are drawn. ... *Being, beauty, truth, excellence, transcendence* [italics in the original] – these words [are] grown in the soil of play ... Art, prayer, worship, love, civilization: these thrive in the field of play" (Novak 1994, xvii). He adds, "Play is the most human activity. It is the first act of freedom" (Novak 1994, 32).

Play precedes not only religion, but all civilization or culture. In fact, it is the very basis of civilization or culture. In this sense, play is the fundamental human practice or disposition from which civilization or culture (including religion, recreation, and sport) develop. Huizinga insists that "play is older and

more original than civilization" and that "culture arises in the form of play ... it is played from the very beginning" (Huizinga 1955, 75, 46). Novak reverses the typical argument that play represents some kind of human diversion when he writes, "Cease play, cease civilization. Work is the diversion necessary for play to survive" (Novak 1994, 43). Even more strongly, Huizinga argues that the "spirit of playful competition is, as a social impulse, older than culture itself and pervades all life like a veritable ferment. ... We have to conclude, therefore, that civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come *from* play like a babe detaching itself from the womb: it arises *in* and *as* play, and never leaves it [italics in the original]" (Huizinga 1955, 173). Roger Caillois makes a similar argument about the central role of play in the development of culture in his book *Man, Play and Games* (2001).

Huizinga's argument may strike many people as counterintuitive. Play seems so frivolous and trivial (after all, it is *just* play) while culture and civilization (the arts, law, religion, etc.) seem so important and serious. Play seems meaningless, while culture and civilization seem to be the very basis of meaning. But play *does* have meaning. As Randolph Feezell notes, "play is a free activity, intrinsically valued and therefore meaningful, joyous, or happy, ending in a consummation or fulfillment [not just accomplishing a task or winning a game, but even simply playing well]" (Feezell 2004, 50). If there is an absurdity to play, it is not because it is meaningless. Its absurdity arises from the intensity of our play and the feeling that it is the most important activity we could be doing and, on reflection, that we are engaged in *merely* play or that "it's only a game." For Feezell, this gives rise to the dominant attitude of the player: irony (Feezell 2004, 55–57, 74–76). Robert Ellis notes that "a strangely paradoxical thing about sport *for the vast majority* of those who play and those who watch, is that *sport is terribly important but also utterly unimportant*. [italics in the original] ... Like play, sport is a kind of serious irrelevance. Worship is often described in similar ways" (Ellis 2014, 215).

Huizinga and others affirm that play (and thus recreation and sport) is meaningful – one of the qualities that make it sacred. Play is sacred in that it creates special time and space, creates an ordered whole, includes an experience of transcendence, and (of course) is meaningful. By seeing play in these ways, we not only see how recreation and sport are akin to religion, but how religion fundamentally is play.

Play, particularly in the form of specific games or sports, takes place at a particular time and in a particular place. For example, a Major League Baseball game will have a specific time to begin and is played in a specific space (Wrigley Field in Chicago, Fenway Park in Boston, etc.). That specific time is set apart from ordinary or profane time. It is special – of a greater quality and importance. Similarly, that specific space is set apart from ordinary or profane space. It too is special in regard to quality and importance. In other words, the time during which a Chicago Cubs baseball game takes place is radically different than either the time immediately before the game or the time after. And the physical space of Wrigley Field is a radically different space than the space around the stadium. What is characteristic of a baseball game at Wrigley Field, however, is true of play in general. Whenever and wherever it occurs, that time and space is set apart or transformed. People who enjoy the physical activity of hiking and appreciate the beauty of the natural world in which they engage in that practice know the difference between sacred and profane time and space just as well as Chicago Cubs fans do. As Huizinga concludes, in all cases we end up with "temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act [the play itself] apart" (Huizinga 1955, 10). He adds, "there is no distinction whatever between marking out a space for a sacred purpose and marking it out for purposes of sheer play" (Huizinga 1955, 20). This "marking out" of space (and we can add, of time) is the process of making something sacred.

A critical aspect of the sacred is that it brings order out of chaos. Or, we might say, creating order out of chaos is how the sacred is established. Huizinga insists that play "creates order, *is* order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection" (Huizinga 1955, 10). In creating or being order in the midst of the ordinary or profane world, play provides us with a qualitatively better world (albeit temporary) in which we have heightened and meaningful experiences. To engage or be in this world is what transcendence is all about. Huizinga concludes, "In play there is something 'at play' which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action. All play means something" (Huizinga 1955, 1). In his insightful treatment of play, philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer writes:

> Play has a special relation to what is serious. It is not only that the latter gives it its "purpose:" we play "for the sake of recreation," as Aristotle says. More important, play itself contains its own, even sacred, seriousness. Yet, in playing, all those purposive relations that determine active and caring existence have not simply disappeared, but are curiously suspended. The player himself knows that play is only play and that it exists in a world determined by the seriousness of purposes. But he does not know this in such a way that, as a player, he actually *intends* this relation to seriousness. Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play. Someone who doesn't take the game seriously is a spoilsport. The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave toward play as if toward an object. The player knows very well what play is, and that what he is doing is 'only a game'; but he does not know what exactly he "knows" in knowing that.
>
> (Gadamer 1994, 102)

While Huizinga uses religious or theological language to describe the import of play, other authors are much more explicit about their theological commitments. For theologian Robert Ellis, play is the very mode of action of God. The creation itself is a product of God's play, and our play is the means by which we can participate with God and in God (Ellis 2014, 147). Thus, it is through play (including recreation and sport) that we transcend this world and connect with God. Ellis concludes, "God the player has created us *homo ludens*, restless creatures seeking to grow and mature, and seeking after God. Insofar as the move to transcendence in sport might be a seeking after God and might be met by an answering movement by God then we might feel more confident in speaking of salvation in sport" (Ellis 2014, 274).

Another theologian, Lincoln Harvey, notes that creation is "*unnecessary yet meaningful* [italics in the original]" (Harvey 2014, 83). It is unnecessary because God, perfect and complete already, did not need to create. Yet, creation remains meaningful as that within which we live out our lives in purposeful and significant ways. Harvey's point, of course, is that play is like God's creation (Harvey 2014, 83). Play is unnecessary yet meaningful. He concludes:

> The Christian doctrine of creation allows us to understand that our being – our *is*-ness, so to speak [italics in the original] – is best described as the unnecessary-yet-meaningful reality of being freely loved into existence in Jesus Christ. This would suggest that when we play – unnecessary but meaningfully – we are living out our deepest identity as unnecessary but meaningful creatures.
>
> (Harvey 2014, 83–84)

In sum, then, we see parallels between play and certain religious and even theological ideas and concepts. For Huizinga, of course, these parallels are a consequence of the fact that play is the fundamental element

before and behind civilization and culture – including such practices as religion and recreation and sport. If we grant the merits of this argument, however, what does any of it have to do with ethics? Because religion, recreation, and sport are all play practices, we find that they also have similar moral frameworks.

Ethics in Recreation and Sport

Huizinga claims early in his book that play "has no moral function" (Huizinga 1955, 6). But in a number of places he makes arguments counter to that claim. For example, he writes:

> Though play as such is outside the range of good and bad, the element of tension imparts to it a certain ethical value in so far as it means a testing of the player's prowess: his courage, tenacity, resources and, last but not least, his spiritual powers – his "fairness;" because, despite his ardent desire to win, he must still stick to the rules of the game.
>
> (Huizinga 1955, 11)

Later, he notes that play "proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner [and] promotes the formation of social groupings" (Huizinga 1955, 13). Such "fixed rules" and "social groupings" are not necessarily moral in nature, but certainly can be. Even more telling, however, is the way in which he writes about "fair play." Huizinga insists that "the essence of play is that the rules be kept – that it be fair play" (Huizinga 1955, 52). This emphasis on fair play extends beyond just a particular game, however. It has much greater cultural and civilizational implications:

> Civilization will, in a sense, always be played according to certain rules, and true civilization will always demand fair play. Fair play is nothing less than good faith expressed in play terms. Hence the cheat or the spoil-sport shatters civilization itself. To be a sound culture-creating force this play-element must be pure.
>
> (Huizinga, 1955, 211)

In short, the rules of play are no different than the rules of civilization. In both cases, rules function to maintain order and foster appropriate and fair relationships among individuals. In short, play is the root from which morality sprouts – whether in the form of religion, recreation, sport, or other similar cultural practices. The to-and-fro of human interaction is play, and that interaction gives rise to habits and norms, some of which are codified into moral rules.

Of course, there are many different ways of thinking about moral behavior – deontological, utilitarian, and more. For our purposes, we will use an Aristotelian framework (inspired by the work of Alasdair MacIntyre). In particular we will look at the human propensity to achieve excellence or even perfection in a variety of practices, the virtues that enable us to achieve our goals, and the community that sets standards and in which we engage in our practices.

In a religious context, all traditions have accounts of what an excellent or even perfect human being is. Most simply, particular founders of the religions serve as models of excellence or perfection. For example, Jesus is the model for Christians, Muhammad for Muslims, and the Buddha for Buddhists. These traditions and others also have a set of practices (generally ritualistic in nature) and behaviors in which adherents engage in order to become more like the exemplary models that they praise or even worship. The cultivation of particular virtues, such as humility, charity, and courage, allow the adherents to progress toward the

goal of being more like the model. And it is the particular communities that arise through these traditions that articulate and preserve the conceptions of excellence or perfection, define what the virtues mean in that particular community, and train people to achieve their goals.

In the context of recreation and sport, Huizinga points to all three elements (excellence/perfection, virtues, and community) when he writes:

> From the life of childhood right up to the highest achievements of civilization one of the strongest incentives to perfection, both individual and social, is the desire to be praised and honoured for one's excellence. In praising another each praises himself. We want to be honoured for our virtues. We want the satisfaction of having done something well. Doing something well means doing it better than others. In order to excel one must prove one's excellence; in order to merit recognition, merit must be made manifest. Competition serves to give proof of superiority.
>
> (Huizinga 1955, 63)

For Huizinga, one of the ways in which excellence (if not perfection) was demonstrated in ancient times was through warfare (a dangerous form of play), which required the exercise of many virtues (e.g. courage, loyalty). While modern and contemporary civilization have not been devoid of warfare, people have devised other means by which individuals can be honored by their communities – including recreation and sport (Huizinga 1955, 75, 101).

Pursuit of Excellence/Perfection

Whether someone is an Olympic athlete or a recreational runner or a home gardener, they likely hope to achieve some level of excellence even if not perfection. And all three likely have exemplary models of their practice – ranging from legendary Olympic champions to the local 10k race winner to a particular neighbor proficient in gardening – that help them understand what excellence looks like in their practice.

The Olympic athlete, of course, can hope to come close to perfection. While the recreational runner may not be after perfection, certainly she hopes to achieve some kind of excellence in that activity. So it also is the case with the home gardener, who, for example, might hope to grow the perfect zucchini or tomato. In short, regardless of the kinds of practices we engage in, human beings tend to want to do them well and even excel at them. Even the losers in competitive sports still are trying to achieve excellence in their performance. Indeed, they may even engage in the practice in an excellent way, though the winning opponent still exceeds them. Thus, Robert L. Simon advises that we not think of competitive sports as "zero-sum games," but as "*a mutually acceptable quest for excellence through challenge* [italics in the original]" (Simon 2010, 27).

From a theological position, only God is perfect. But Ellis concludes that when "players really compete and try to be the best that they can be, determined to win if they can, they are engaged in a kind of quest for perfection" (Ellis 2014, 243). True and lasting perfection may be out of the grasp of mere mortals, but there is a chance for a moment of perfection. Novak writes:

> Athletic achievement, like the achievements of the heroes and the gods of Greece, is the momentary attainment of perfect form ... as though there were, hidden away from mortal eyes, a perfect

way to execute a play, and suddenly a player or a team has found it and sneaked a demonstration down to earth. A great play is a revelation. The curtains of ordinary life part, and perfection flashes for an instant before the eye.

(Novak 1994, 5)

This perfection is a vision, however brief, of that which is divine. Novak describes it as "the reaching of a form, a perfection, which ordinarily the flesh masks, a form eternal in its beauty. It is as though muscle and nerves and spirit and comrades were working together as flawlessly as God once imagined human beings might" (Novak 1994, 16–17). Our drive to achieve such perfection is "a deep natural impulse that is radically religious" (Novak 1994, 19).

In sum, Feezell reminds us that, for Aristotle, the "good life ... requires both intellectual and moral excellence" (Feezell 2004, 136). While recreation and sport may contribute to intellectual excellence in varied ways (gardening may require more intellectual work, for example, than weightlifting), the argument here is that recreation and sport can and do contribute to achieving some kind of moral excellence – as we can see when examining the moral virtues that allow us to achieve excellence in these practices.

Virtues in Pursuit of Excellence and Perfection

Aristotle argues that virtues are means between two extremes. For example, courage is the mean between rashness and cowardice. In a military conflict, one should neither rush blindly into harm's way nor cower before the enemy. Courage designates the more appropriate mean between these extremes. In other words, courage is the way one can achieve the goods internal to a particular practice (in the military arts, for example, those goods would include victory). But cultivating the virtue of courage as well as other virtues is about even more than excellence in specific practices. Cultivating virtues is critical for living the good life. As Feezell concludes, the "virtues sustain not only practices but our quest for the good. Courage, persistence, truthfulness, and justice are as much required in our quest for how best we ought to live as for our pursuit of goods internal to practices" (Feezell 2004, 136).

In regard to recreation and sport, Feezell identifies "sportsmanship" as a kind of virtue, one that "is a mean between excessive seriousness, which misunderstands the importance of the spirit of play, and an excessive sense of playfulness, which might be called frivolity and which misunderstands the importance of victory and achievement when play is competitive" (Feezell 2004, 95). Sportsmanship also may include how the winner of a contest relates to the loser. There are no hard and fast rules here, but a tradition of customs to guide the competitors. In line with Simon's emphasis on sport as a "mutual quest," we find that custom generally requires the victor to show humility (another important virtue) toward the loser and for the former to commend the efforts of the latter (exemplifying the virtue of charity). And, of course, there are corresponding customs related to how the loser should relate to the victor.

While "sportsmanship" may not be considered a standard moral virtue, more typical moral virtues also apply to the practices of recreation and sport. For example, "truthfulness" in following the rules, humility in being a "good sport," and friendship and self-sacrifice in being part of a team are examples of how moral virtues function in a sporting context. Simon points us to other virtues when he writes, "Values such as commitment, discipline, respect for the standing of others, and appreciation of excellence are also presuppositions of moral and rational development" (Simon 2010, 200). This notion of "respect"

for others is central to what Simon describes as the "mutual quest for excellence through challenge." Ellis adds, "between great opponents there is not only fear but also respect and camaraderie" (Ellis 2014, 205). He notes that the Latin roots of the word "competition" point us toward the idea of "striving together," and that sport "is fundamentally relational, and is a cooperative enterprise even between opponents" (Ellis 2014, 206). In other words, competitive sports entail a moral relationship among participants.

Religions promote the good life, the life of virtue and the pursuit of excellence or perfection. But many other human practices do as well, including recreation and sport. What ties them all together, of course, is play. As Huizinga concludes, "virtue, honour, nobility and glory fall at the outset within the field of competition, which is that of play" (Huizinga 1955, 64).

Tradition and Community

Virtues are by nature difficult to define with great clarity. It can be difficult to know when one has struck the mean between two extremes. How do we know if a particular action is courageous rather than rash or cowardly? This uncertainty is why traditions and communities are so important.

Accounts of human excellence and descriptions of the virtues that help to achieve it are preserved and carried forward by traditions that are lived by people in specific communities. The Islamic tradition is the keeper of certain conceptions of the good life and human excellence (the prophet Muhammad being the exemplary model), and it promotes and teaches particular virtues that help people to achieve the good life and human excellence (e.g. *zakat* or charity is a central virtue in the Muslim life). Similarly, becoming an excellent swimmer or an excellent gardener may have some tangible measures (e.g. victory for the former and growing large vegetables for the latter), but they also very much depend on criteria that are provided by a tradition of those practices and by communities. And more intangible values like "sportsmanship" and "respect for the game or practice" clearly are a function of tradition and community standards. As noted above, there are no clearly articulated and accepted moral rules in this regard, but only a host of customs supported by traditions of practices and communities that support those practices (e.g. the many and varied rituals surrounding the interaction of athletes at the conclusion of a contest). Perhaps Novak sums up this view best:

> For many Americans, as for the Greeks, athletics remain the field of experience closest attuned to human perfection, where *beauty* of formal action meets the form of the *good*, where the utmost *individual achievement* is linked to perfect *solidarity* [italics in the original] with others, where the word for "good" means at once beautiful, true, and brotherly.
>
> (Novak 1994, 91)

Undoubtedly, there are important differences between religious traditions and recreation and sport. The former have a penchant for transcendental thinking that is not prevalent (at least not explicitly) in the latter. The former certainly conceive of themselves in ways radically different from the ways that the latter conceive of themselves. In addition, the former often have denigrated and condemned the latter.

But there also is much in common between religious traditions and recreation and sport. As we have seen, arguments have been made that they all arise or develop from the intrinsic nature of play in the human species. We also have seen how ethics in these cultural phenomena can be understood in the same Aristotelian framework.

In short, recreation and sport function for human beings in many of the same ways that religious traditions function for human beings – including, or perhaps especially so, in regard to ethics. It is this functional identity that has led some to argue that sport, for example, may take over those functions in the centuries to come. In other words, it may be that people drift away from religious traditions because they find other cultural phenomena that function in similar ways.

> We believe there is a great transition in the recent religious history of the Western world ... from a rigid dichotomy in which religiosity is restricted to institutional traditions and stereotypical beliefs and practices to a steady decline of those traditions, beliefs, and practices and a recognition that religiosity is diffused through our lives to greater and lesser degrees.
>
> (Bain-Selbo and Shoemaker 2016, 148)

While Bain-Selbo and Shoemaker approach the topic from a humanist and/or social scientific perspective, even theologians like Ellis are exploring this possibility. As he writes, "we must at least ask whether sport has become a meaning-making exercise in our culture just as another meaning-making practice [religion] declines" (Ellis 2014, 91). He concludes:

> People may turn to sport as once they turned to institutional religion in order to express certain feelings; experience certain emotions or states of mind; construct identity; dramatize important human instincts; inhabit a rhythm of life; participate in life-shaping ritual; and so on. Taking all this together it seems that there are good reasons for saying that some people play sport for religious or quasi-religious reasons.
>
> (Ellis 2015, 189)

Another reason why human beings are drawn to recreation and sport is to cultivate virtues that lead to human excellence and to be part of a tradition and community that affirms those virtues and the pursuit of human excellence. In this way, we might even say that recreation and sport share a family resemblance (through their common ancestor, play) with religious ethics.

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CHAPTER 113

Personhood

Darlene Fozard Weaver

In ordinary usage person and human being are largely interchangeable terms. In religious ethics the terminology of "person" and meaning of personhood is more complex and varied. Religious ethics offer longstanding and rich accounts of human persons (moral anthropologies), and locate them in broader religious cosmologies. Moral anthropologies are both descriptive and carry normative weight that informs reasoning about practical moral problems.

In addition to these broader accounts of human beings, the language of personhood has more specific meaning and operates in more technical ways in religious ethics. Indeed, the person is a central concept in many forms of contemporary religious ethics. Human persons enjoy distinctive moral status as compared with nonhuman animals. Moreover, in many religious as well as secular ethics the person has a sacral quality (Joas 2013). However, concepts of persons vary across religious traditions and within them. Disagreements about the characteristics and capacities essential to personhood, who counts as persons, and whether personhood merits the ethical importance it carries have perennial import. They not only lie at the heart of polarized debates in ethics, they are fundamental to the most pressing moral challenges humanity confronts.

Human Beings as Persons

All religious ethics entail reflection on what it means to be human. The term person derives from the Latin *persona*, which refers to masks worn by actors and, by extension, to characters portrayed and to the actors themselves. Christian thought about the divine as a personal God and as a Trinity of divine persons, and christological reflection on the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ contributed to the meaning and use of "person." Evolving concepts of personhood impacted religious, philosophical, and legal thought beyond Christianity. In modernity concepts of person variously emphasized responsibility, personal identity, rationality and moral value, to a largely evaluative or prescriptive meaning today (Rudman 1997, 144).

A contested question in ethics is whether person and human are coterminous, that is, whether all human beings are persons. Some religious traditions claim there are non-material spiritual creatures like angels which may share characteristics of persons. Increasingly, entities other than human beings are being recognized as persons. For example, corporations are treated legally as persons and some

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

non-human species are accorded the status of personhood in some legal contexts. Moreover, human beings are not always affirmed as persons. Some people deny that prenatal human lives, including embryos and fetuses, have the status of personhood. Others stipulate that to be a person a human being must display certain indicators of personhood, such as a capacity for memory or intentionality (Fletcher 1974).

Personhood as a Description of Human Beings

Debates about persons and human beings show that concepts of personhood operate descriptively and prescriptively. Descriptively, concepts of personhood are ways of interpreting what kind of creatures human beings are. While the concept "person" is largely Western, reflection on human experience, abilities, and purposes for human existence is discernible across religious ethics. In this most general sense, personhood describes the structure and conditions of human existence and provides a way to pick out particular characteristics of human beings that differentiate them from other creatures.

There are several cross-cultural, fairly generic observations we can make about persons, based on multiple dimensions of human existence. Human persons have bodies, with typical basic needs (food, water, protective shelter and clothing) and capacities. Our bodies situate us in biological kinship networks. The way human communities meet these needs, organize them in social relations, and culturally encode them, will vary. Religious convictions and practices belong to that work and provide resources to transcend it in moral critique and transformation. Human beings are therefore also social creatures. Persons typically live in communities and navigate these relationships in complex ways. Human persons are capable of developing and negotiating relationships of various kinds – sexual, familial, friendly, political, and economic. Human persons are self-conscious and cultural creatures as well. Persons inhabit social roles, which mediate a given person's identity, prerogatives, and responsibilities within a community or institution. A person might be a mother, a daughter, a spouse, a friend, a doctor, a citizen, a Muslim, a consumer, a volunteer at a soup kitchen, and a basketball coach in a youth sports league. The expectations associated with these roles are deeply influenced by the communities she inhabits, as are the scales of value through which her stellar or lackluster performance of these roles are assessed. They interpret their own existence through religious practices and creeds, art, intellectual inquiry, and moral systems.

As a more theorized and particular concept, personhood has emphasized human subjectivity more than human embodiment or sociality. Concern for subjectivity predates the Enlightenment. Early Christian development of concepts of person developed in tandem with reflection on divine person. The question of divine personhood involved debates about temporality, relationality, and embodiment, to name a few (see Augustine 1963). Jewish and Christian scriptures posit that human persons as the image of God (the *imago dei*), which was variously based on human rationality, consciousness, or freedom. Modern concepts of personhood concern human nature not divine personhood, yet during the Enlightenment the notion of personhood retained these religious influences. For Locke (1690) a person "is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking and seems to me essential to it; it being impossible for anyone to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive." Modern views of the person are often associated with the emergence of human rights discourse. Joas (2013), however argues against the idea that human rights represent the apex of

anti-religious Enlightenment thinking. Nor are human rights the clear progeny of religious claims. For Joas human rights is more properly the descendant of abolitionism, fights for religious freedom, and arguments against torture.

A morally significant concept that is allied with personhood includes the "self." The notion of selfhood not only accents subjectivity but casts personhood as largely interior. Human beings differ from other creatures because they display a capacity for purposeful action. Taylor (1989) argues that persons are distinguished by their ability to choose according to reflectively held choices. Selfhood, for Taylor, is tied to moral agency.

Personhood as a Prescriptive Concept

Prescriptively, personhood assigns human beings (and, increasingly, other entities) a moral status relative to other creatures or collective agents. Concepts of persons necessarily pick out features of human existence as salient for this status, for example, that human beings are self-conscious creatures and that this capacity of consciousness is central to being a person. However objective these features are taken to be, they are unavoidably inflected by and deployed within larger historical and cultural perspectives.

An ongoing question is who or what counts as a person. Disputes over personhood matter because they concern the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for recourse that are available to persons. The personhood of marginalized and vulnerable populations is often challenged or denied. The African slave trade, Jim Crow law in the United States, and apartheid were all predicated on a denial of the full personhood of black human beings. Eugenic movements and genocides are founded on judgments that physical and cultural differences from dominant populations indicate inferior status. The full personhood of other groups of human beings – for example, the unborn and some disabled persons – is publicly questioned.

The prescriptive import of personhood goes beyond legal status. Concepts of persons interpret the value and meaning of humanity, shape and evoke moral sensibilities like respect or reverence, and impact human social interactions and cultural expressions. Kant argued that persons have supreme moral worth on account of their rational autonomy. Persons alone enjoy a uniquely non-instrumental value, and reason attests to the respect that is due to them. Kant's affirmation of the unique moral status of persons belongs to wider philosophical and religious valuation of persons and helped drive it, too. One example is the "personalism" developed by Emmanuel Mounier and advanced by Catholic thinkers including Karol Wojtyla, who later became Pope John Paul II (Rudman 1997). According to personalism the distinctiveness of persons lies in human subjectivity, which is itself recognized as inter-subjective. Hence, the person's full realization lies in rightly ordered relationships with God and others. Moreover, in Catholic personalist thought the person comprises a moral criterion. Moral attitudes, behaviors, and relationships, as well as policies and institutions are assessed with regard to their import for persons.

Religious ethics explicate the prescriptive weight of personhood in diverse ways, though doing so unavoidably involves appeal to descriptive beliefs about human beings. In natural law thinking human capacities and experiences inform moral prohibitions and responsibilities. Beliefs regarding human sexual differentiation and the significance of this for gender roles and relations impact sexual mores, and reproductive morality (Chaudhry 2013). African religions view human beings in communal terms rather than as individuals, yet they still regard morality in terms of social duties that are keyed to human welfare realized within community. While Buddhist ethics do not conceptualize human beings as persons,

human life does enjoy a distinctive value in Buddhist ethics, chiefly because of a human capacity for "awakening." Differences among these religious traditions should not be minimized, but the examples provided here show that morally freighted reflection on the meaning of being human unfolds across world religions. Moreover, the moral status of human beings in relation to the rest of creation is a key issue in religious ethics and a profitable locus for comparative religious ethics. Finally, the dynamic relationship between the descriptive and prescriptive meanings of personhood point to an overarching question for religious ethics: how is the good related to the real? If moral obligations are somehow rooted in features or structures of human existence, moral claims are true or false, even if they are also deeply situated and shaped by historical and cultural forces. Put differently, personhood is fundamentally important for the question of moral realism.

Corporate Agents and Corporations as Persons

The notion of corporate personhood attempts to make sense of collective forms of agency. Institutions, associations, communities, and groups can act in concert, even though the intentionality, positional authority, freedom, and power of individual members will vary. In Western religious ethics it is difficult to attribute responsibility, particularly moral culpability, among individual members of corporate agents. This is because modern Western notions of responsibility privilege individual agents and tend to regard the "ability to have done otherwise" as a threshold for responsibility. Religious ethics informed by more communal views of human beings, for example African religions do not face these questions in the same way.

The language of corporate personhood also has a more narrow and specific meaning with regard to the legal status of incorporated institutions. In the United States corporations are recognized as persons for some purposes. Corporations, as a collection of individual persons acting in concert, can sue or be sued. The Supreme Court case *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission* (2010) ruled that financial donations to candidates by corporations count as an exercise of constitutionally protected free speech. But as early as 1819 *Dartmouth College v. Woodard* affirmed that corporations, like persons, enjoy the right to enforce contracts. Legal personhood for corporations underscores the importance of personhood as a socio-political locus for assigning, asserting, and adjudicating rights and obligations.

Religious ethical interest in corporate or collective forms of responsibility is growing. The topic represents an important task for future work in religious ethics.

Animals as Persons

Scholarly interest in animals and ethics is burgeoning in recent decades (Singer 1975). For religious ethics the central moral question concerns human moral obligations vis-à-vis non-human animals. Religious ethics frame human moral responsibilities toward animals in terms of larger creation narratives. Although the categories of "religion" and "ethics" are not organic to non-Western religious thought, attitudes toward the place of human beings within creation are a locus for comparative religious ethics and collaboration. It is important not to minimize differences across religious traditions. Indigenous American attitudes toward nature (and humans in relation to it) differ markedly from Jewish and Christian scriptures that depict human responsibilities to exercise dominion over or stewardship of creation. However, religious ethics must respond to developments beyond particular traditions. Arguments on behalf of the personhood of great apes, dolphins, and other non-human creatures are gaining traction. Legal cases also indicate a growing support for affirming and protecting the status of

personhood in animals. Courses in animal law are now offered in law schools. Attributing legal personhood to non-human animals allows for legal representation of their interests. Consider that non-human animals can suffer, and therefore their interest in not suffering must be taken into account (Singer 1975). The attribution of personhood to non-human animals relies upon and has import for approaches to human personhood that emphasize particular capacities. Recognition of sentience, intra-species communication, and complex social relations among certain non-human species all vex the notion that human beings enjoy a unique moral worth based on what were thought to be distinctive human characteristics and capacities. Importantly, growing recognition of animals as persons belongs to broader challenges to anthropocentrism or speciesism.

Environmental Entities as Persons

The legal status of personhood has been attributed to environmental entities in several instances. New Zealand accorded the status of personhood to Te Urewera, a national forest. In 2017 several rivers were recognized as legal persons. The Wahganui river in New Zealand is perhaps the first river to receive the status of person. Indian courts soon after declared the Ganges and Yamuna rivers as legal persons. Legally affirming an environmental entity as a person makes it possible for the river to be represented by counsel who will advocate for the interests of the entity. In Bolivia the Law of Mother Earth accords all of nature rights to life and to exist, rights to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration, the right not to be polluted, and the right not to have cellular structure modified or genetically altered, among other rights.

These cases again underscore the legal importance of personhood. They also complicate ethical debates regarding the grounds for human moral worth, the moral status of vulnerable human populations, and the best religious, philosophical, and pragmatic means for addressing environmentally unsustainable anthropocentrism. Claims about the characteristics that warrant the attribute of personhood matter because they help us to demarcate the scope of our moral concern and because they inform the ways we envision human wellbeing or flourishing. Critics argue that laws which attribute legal personhood to environmental entities diminish the value accorded to human beings, so many of whom are already denied the protections and rights associated with legal personhood. Whether or not this is persuasive, religious ethics face the daunting and urgent task of rethinking the meaning and place of human persons in the face of climate change. After all, human persons are part of a natural environment – indeed, a cosmos. Some religious cosmologies acknowledge the intrinsic value of all creation. This common ground may provide a principle for interreligious collaboration in response to climate change. Jenkins (2013), however, argues that our climate crisis is unlike any moral challenge humanity has faced before and therefore requires new approaches to moral inquiry and action. He advocates for "prophetic pragmatism," an adaptive ethics that emerges from local engagement with concrete moral challenges (Jenkins 2013, 9).

Problems with Personhood

Some scholars think that moral anthropologies in general, and concepts like personhood more particularly can smuggle in unexamined and unsupported claims (Benhabib 1992). Concepts of persons reflect particular historical and cultural perspectives which smuggle problematic assumptions into moral analysis and normative judgments. Theological anthropologies, for example, reflect the experience and perspective of the religious thinkers who develop them. As Cone (2010) argues, theological discourse about both divine and human persons in dominant Christian theology are predicated on an unexamined

whiteness. A premise of the black liberation theology he developed is that truthful theological discourse must participate in God's self-disclosure as a God of liberation. For Cone this means not only that it is true to say that God is black but that human redemption means becoming black like God. Religious moral anthropologies have not only reflected and warranted racial discrimination, they also contribute to gender discrimination. For example, hierarchical yet complementarian views of sexual differentiation can be found across the religious ethics of Abrahamic traditions. Among the tasks and purposes of contemporary religious ethics is confrontation with this complicity and exploration of religious ethical resources for correcting it. Chaudhry (2013) provides one instance as she negotiates concepts of tradition and authority while charting incommensurable patriarchal and egalitarian "cosmologies," in which concepts of gendered persons are key features.

Contemporary scholarship in several fields, particularly social sciences, challenge aspects of Western views of personhood. Behavioral economics, for example, suggests that persons not only desire and choose within environments that limit, shape, and frame the options available to them, "choice architectures," but that trivial environmental factors can unconsciously influence choice. Cognitive psychology challenges a widely held view in religious ethics that moral judgment is – or ought to be – based on reason, by offering insights into confirmation bias and other biases, and through arguments that cognition and emotion are best characterized in terms of automatic processes or reflex-like responses to stimuli (McRorie 2016). Scholarship in these and other disciplines, particularly the social sciences, complicate received thinking about human persons, particularly as moral agents. When moral responsibility is understood chiefly as the ability to do otherwise, it becomes difficult to establish accountability and culpability when so many environmental and unconscious factors influence our choices, or amount to reflex rather than choice. Of course, as non-theologians sometimes fail to recognize, religious traditions offer complex moral psychologies that sometimes anticipate much later "findings" from social sciences, and these disciplines can themselves benefit from the work of religious ethics. Religious ethics should engage the social sciences in a shared endeavor to understand the human person. As McRorie (2016) observes, thinking alongside social sciences can assist religious ethics with the work of public moral argument. Moreover, engagement with social sciences can empower religious ethical thinking about persons and agency, helping religious ethicists discern "how to change the conditions we find ourselves in when we decide they do not adequately empower the kind of agency we would prefer. ... [T]he more we learn about the determinants of our economic behavior, the more power we have to influence our own lives, and promote our agency – at least, if agency is understood ...as helping agents to achieve their own reflectively held ends" (McRorie 2016, 219).

Transhumanism and post-humanism represent additional challenges to traditional concepts of personhood. Transhumanism is a loose intellectual movement which heralds the prospects that enhancement technologies represent for overcoming human limitations. Enhancement technologies encompass everything from corrective eyewear to psycho-pharmacology to gene editing to the prospect of "immortality" in the form of downloading one's consciousness to a computer server. Post-humanism also refers to wildly divergent positions like critical theories that advocate for the deconstruction of concepts like human nature and advocates for a future without human beings, for instance a state of affairs in which growth in artificial intelligence brings about the extinction of human beings. Debates among trans/post-humanists and between them and their critics concern the moral permissibility of specific enhancements, distributive justice and access to enhancement technologies, and the morality of forging a new or post-human species.

While some enhancement technologies improve the quality of human life, emerging technological and socio-political threats endanger a viable *human* future. Some religious ethicists discern anti-humanist impulses in transhumanism and posthumanism. Schweiker (2010) and others call for renewed forms of humanism that respond to the radical extension of human power through technology.

Illustrative Practical Questions

Practical moral questions regarding personhood encompass issues at the beginning and end of human life, like abortion, embryonic stem cell research, physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia, and the determination of human death. Practical questions also include human beings in certain medical conditions, such as a persistent vegetative state, and with certain disabilities, such as severe cognitive impairment. These are complex issues, and moral arguments about them vary, but the question whether particular human beings count as persons figures prominently in them, as do debates about the moral import of personhood.

Emerging technologies pose new practical questions regarding persons. CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) expands human capacities for gene editing. Scientists can create human-nonhuman chimeras, beings fashioned through combining cells from different embryos. Technological capacities to alter characteristics of personhood outpace public moral argument about the proper use of these technologies. Moreover, some ethicists argue that transhumanist and post-humanist technologies – and the anti-human impulses within them – undermine moral commitments that are crucial for securing human rights and protecting the welfare of vulnerable human populations.

Concepts of personhood are at stake across the domain of practical ethics. Access to healthcare, education, or clean air and water ultimately rely on prescriptive judgments about what human persons need and deserve. Political enfranchisement, privacy rights, and conscience objections entail judgments about respect for persons and the conditions necessary for persons' fulfillment. Because concepts of personhood are culturally situated and therefore subject to power dynamics, critical deconstruction of these and allied concepts is an ongoing task in ethics.

Conclusion

Although there are varied and conflicting concepts of personhood, and the value of "person" as a moral concept is contested, the idea that human beings are persons, and that personhood is key to the moral status of human beings is a crucial feature in many forms of religious ethics. Previous moral atrocities such as the unspeakable evil of Shoah and contemporary moral problems – the roiling waves of white ethno-nationalism, the ongoing threat of nuclear annihilation, the unfolding crisis of the Anthropocene – demonstrate that the attribution of moral status to human beings is the fundamental moral challenge we confront. Religious ethics have constructed, legitimated, and benefited from concepts of personhood that diminish or deny the equal moral status of some human populations. Religious ethics have also envisioned, inspired, and led efforts to expand and defend the recognition of human moral worth, and to translate that worth into conditions and practices that are consistent with that worth. A perennial task for religious ethics is to revise religious traditions by their own best insights in service of ever more adequate understanding of the person and ever more inclusive promotion of human worth in a diverse and interconnected creation.

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CHAPTER 114

Pleasure and Pain

Susan A. Ross

Pleasure and pain are embodied experiences shared by sentient life, both human and nonhuman. Religious traditions see them both positively and negatively. While some experiences of pain have largely been condemned, such as torture, pleasure is an ambivalent reality: sometimes praised, sometimes cautioned against. Sexual pleasure in particular has received greater attention in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as the range of acceptable sexual expressions has widened. Religious traditions have also concerned themselves with end-of-life pain, its treatment, and implications for human autonomy and dignity.

Jewish and Christian Sacred Scriptures

The second creation narrative in Genesis provides an initial focus on both pleasure and pain as experienced by the first humans. The trees in the garden are described as "delightful to look at and good for food" (Genesis 2:9). But the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was expressly forbidden to the first couple by God, and their punishment for disobeying this command was pain: for the woman, "in pain shall you bring forth children" (3:16) and for the man, work would involve "toil" and "the sweat of your brow" (3:17, 19). Thus human existence from the outset contains both pleasure and pain, with pain seeming to be a result of disobedience.

The theme of pain and suffering as a consequence of human actions is a recurring theme in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. The ancient story of Job is in part a response to the widely held assumption that human beings bring pain and suffering on themselves by their actions. Job is an upright man, undeserving of calamity, yet he loses everything and questions God. In the end, all is restored to him but God never answers Job, leaving him only with displays of power. The Psalms are filled with laments over the pain and suffering experienced both at the hands of one's enemies and also at the pain of loss (Psalms 5, 6, 10, 13, 18, 22, 25, 31, 38, 42, 43, 55, 56, 63, 69, 77, 88, 102, 137, 142, 143).

In some of the most troubling scriptural passages, God orders the destruction of all humanity (Genesis 7), Abram to sacrifice his only son (Genesis 22), the destruction of Israel's enemies (Exodus 12), and even the cruel deaths of children who dare to tease one of the prophets (2 Kings). Such passages raise profound questions about the goodness of God and God's tolerance of pain and suffering for the Chosen People and their enemies.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

But pleasure is also given biblical attention. Many of the psalms express joy and pleasure (Psalms 9, 14, 16–18, 21, 23, 30, 34, 40, 47, 48, 65, 84, 92, 97, 98, 100, 126, 149). The Song of Songs is the most famous biblical tribute to the pleasures of a couple's love, filled with sensual descriptions: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! More delightful is your love than wine" (Song of Songs 1:1–3). The couple experience great pleasure in beholding the other's beauty and in their physical attributes. While later Christian commentators allegorized the lovers as symbols for the divine and human, the biblical couple's pleasure in each other suggests this model for human relationships as a delight.

The Jewish rabbinical tradition continues this emphasis on the goodness and pleasures of human life. The Jerusalem Talmud (Kiddushin 4:12) includes the story of a rabbi who set aside money so that he could eat from every kind of good food once a year, based on the idea that a person would ultimately be accountable for every permitted pleasure unenjoyed. Judaism also encourages the enjoyment of the Sabbath by partaking in pleasurable things, including sex, good food, and wine. Husbands are obliged to give sexual pleasure to their wives (as well as food and clothing). In Judaism, marriage and its sexual pleasures are goods of creation.

In the Christian scriptures, Jesus rejects the idea that pain and suffering are a result of one's own or one's parents' sinfulness (John 9:1–4). He is attentive to the pain of those who seek healing (Matthew 4:24–5, 8:1–4, 8:28–34, 9:1–8, 15:29–31, 17:14–20, 20:29–34; Mark 1:21–8; Luke 13:10–7, 14:1–6, 17:11–9; John 9:1–12), he enjoys good food and wine with his companions (Luke 7:33–4, 7:36, 14:1; John 2:1–12), and he suffers pain at the hands of his executioners (Matthew 27:26–50; Mark 14:43–5:41; Luke 22:47–53:49; John 18:1–19:30). Jesus's suffering on the cross will become a central theme in Christian treatments of pain and pleasure and also anticipates a shift in the Christian understanding of the place of pleasure from its positive Jewish roots. Jesus's willingness to suffer and die, interpreted as his atoning death for the sins of humankind, models how the Christian should respond to pain and suffering with humble acceptance.

In a number of passages in his letters, Paul writes of his willingness to suffer (2 Corinthians 6:3–10, 11:16–33, 12:1–10). He also writes about the temptations of the body (1 Corinthians 5:1–13, 6:12–20; Galatians 5:16–24; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5) and suggests that it is better to forego the pleasures of marriage for the higher good of self-restraint, evidencing the Greek roots of his thought (1 Corinthians 7:1–40). Paul is often credited (or blamed) for introducing a dualistic understanding of body/soul to Christian anthropology.

Western Historical Perspectives

Christian attention to pain and suffering grew in the first three centuries, especially because of persecutions by Roman authorities. Christian martyrs were admired for their willingness to endure pain for the sake of their faith (e.g. Saints Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Bartholomew, Lawrence) and their stories provided inspiration for Christians up to the present. Tertullian, a third-century theologian, famously wrote that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" (*Apology* 50). But once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the early fourth century, there was no more physical ("red") martyrdom. New forms of "white" martyrdom developed: "white" because pain and suffering were bloodless and voluntary, taken up by ascetics seeking a way to forego the pleasures of food and sex for the sake of their salvation. The stories of the desert fathers provided inspiration for Christians, as

these ascetics willingly endured temptation and physical pain. Monasticism, which developed in the fifth century, was an organized form of communal life in which the worldly pleasures of wealth, sex, and power were renounced through vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It should be noted, however, that Benedict (480–ca. 547), the founder of Western monasticism, preached moderation in all things, including asceticism.

Augustine (354–430) picked up on this ambivalent attitude toward pleasure, particularly with his idea of concupiscence, the inordinate desire of the self for its own gratification. Scholars credit (or blame) Augustine for the Christian tradition's subsequent suspicion of sexual pleasure. For Augustine, sexual pleasure could not be separated from its root in concupiscence, thus all sexual pleasure was tainted by sin. Although Augustine did not wholly condemn sex, defending it as a good creation of God, he nevertheless claimed that before the Fall of Adam and Eve, sex between husband and wife would have been purely rational and solely for the purpose of reproduction. It is also worth noting that for Augustine, sexual sins were always serious sins. This categorization of sex as "grave matter" put sexual ("venereal") pleasure under a cloud of suspicion that remains up to the present.

The medieval period saw a blossoming of spirituality, much of it based in the courtly love traditions. The mystics of this time, both men and women, drew on the Song of Songs for inspiration and the metaphor of the "spousal" relationship between God and the soul was richly developed. Spiritual writers expressed their pleasure in their relationship with God, often in very sensual terms, but also wrote of their desire to participate in the pain and suffering experienced by Jesus on the cross. Such mystics as Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) and Julian of Norwich (ca.1342–ca. 1416) asked God for illness and suffering; Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) kissed lepers' wounds. The famous Bernini sculpture of Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome shows the saint being pierced by an arrow held by an angel; Teresa herself writes: "The sweetness caused by this intense pain is so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease, nor is one's soul then content with anything but God" (Lewis and Zimmerman 1916). This conflation of pleasure and pain in spiritual experience was common in the mystical tradition.

But the deliberate infliction of pain was also a tool used by both secular authorities and the Roman Catholic Church to punish criminals and to root out heretics, especially during the inquisition. Originating in France in the twelfth century, the inquisition sought to counter heresy within the church through various means of questioning and torture. While torture had been practiced by Rome and by some of the European societies where Christianity had spread, and while Augustine had only reluctantly justified physical punishment as a part of the civil jurisdictional system, the Catholic church did not explicitly condemn torture until the early nineteenth century. It was practiced in various horrific forms by the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions and in the persecution of suspected witches in Europe and the early American colonies by both Catholics and Protestants. The thumbscrew and rack, to name only two of the devices, were used to extract confessions, but even if a confession was made, the tortured person often either died or suffered permanent damage. In the case of the persecution of witches, if a suspected witch were thrown into a body of water and did not drown, this would, ironically, indicate her guilt. In addition, the burning of witches or heretics at the stake was practiced by both Catholics and Protestants. These punishments and tortures were morally justified by the argument that the sinner's/victim's eternal salvation was at stake and thus extreme measures were permitted. It should be noted as well that torture was also practiced widely around the world in different cultures and religious traditions.

By the eighteenth century, torture and public executions became less tolerated in European society, with prisons replacing them as forms of punishment. Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), the English philosopher who developed the theory of utilitarianism, designed the prison as a panopticon, later theorized by Michel Foucault; the purpose of the panopticon prison was to maintain control over a prison population that would not know if it was being observed or not. As a replacement for torture, prison did not involve inflicting physical pain on the prisoner.

Bentham is also significant for the purposes of this entry for his theory of hedonism, which held that an action could be judged by the amount of pleasure or pain that it produced; he developed the "hedonic calculus," which measured the potential pain or pleasure that actions would involve. For Bentham and utilitarians such as John Stuart Mill, pleasure was an intrinsic good; but for Christian ethics – and for Jewish and Muslim ethics as well – pleasure is not an end in itself. The purpose of human life is ultimately to share life with God. Pleasure may be a result of living a virtuous life, but, especially for Christian ethics, the willingness to endure pain and suffering for justice's sake is equally if not more important.

A final significant figure in a historical consideration of pleasure and pain for religious ethics is Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). As a physician originally trained in neuroscience, Freud believed that human beings naturally sought pleasure and avoided pain. While infants are driven by this dynamic, the mature person is able to defer pleasure for other goods. But perhaps even more significantly, Freud's psychosexual developmental understanding of the person was based in the ideas that sex is the driving dynamic in human life and that all pleasure has a sexual basis. Each stage of life is a process of working through various conflicts so that one might arrive at a mature (atheistic) stage where one's neuroses and "hysterical misery" can be transformed into "common unhappiness." Freud was indirectly influential on Christian ethics as the tradition became more accepting of sexual pleasure as a good in itself.

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam

Although this entry is focused largely on Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam have important contributions to make in considering pain and pleasure. Hindu ascetics practiced sometimes extreme forms of asceticism and yogic practices. For Buddhism, the awareness that suffering is caused by desire is one of the "Four Noble Truths." In becoming more aware of one's reality through practices of mindfulness, and following the Noble Eightfold Path, the person can come to see that reality is not under one's control, and that seeking pleasure or pain is ultimately seeking an illusion. Ideally, one develops enlightenment in the detachment from desires. Pleasure and pain are thus two realities which have no intrinsic significance.

Islam is guided by the idea of the supreme power of Allah. Everything comes from God and one's pain and suffering, whether they come from natural causes or are a consequence of human actions, can be interpreted in different ways: as punishment, as a test or trial, as an opportunity for purification or the expiation of sin, and as potentially transformative. The devout Muslim should respond to pain and suffering with patience and confidence in Allah's mercy and power. While the pleasures of this world are permissible as long as they are seen in relation to the divine, the ultimate pleasures will be experienced in paradise. Other religious traditions, such as some Native American peoples, also practiced forms of self-mortification in preparation for certain rituals or battle.

Contemporary Issues

There are a number of ethical issues related to pleasure and pain in the present: how contemporary thinkers consider the pain and suffering inflicted by human beings on each other and on nonhuman life, how pain is or should be treated in situations of physical suffering and end-of-life care, and the role of pain and suffering in a virtuous life. In relation to pleasure, issues include how pleasurable created goods are valued religiously and the complex set of questions related to sexual pleasure.

Genocide and Torture

The question of pain and suffering has loomed large in the twentieth century, due in large part to the atrocities visited by human beings on their fellow creatures. The Holocaust has become a symbol for human inhumanity to other humans, as millions of people, primarily Jews, were tortured and murdered in the Nazi "final solution" by their neighbors and government, and as other genocidal events (Armenian, Cambodian, Bosnian, Rwandan) have erupted worldwide. Genocide, the intentional action to kill an entire people because of their religion, race, or ethnicity, is a "crime against humanity," under international law yet it continues into the present as religious, political, economic, social, and geographic forces pit peoples against each other.

Torture is also prohibited under international law, yet it too persists, often justified as necessary in order to prevent a greater loss of life. As global terrorism has increased, the morality of the use of torture has come increasingly under debate, with proponents arguing that extracted confessions could provide valuable information that could save many lives, while others continue to maintain that torture is always intrinsically evil, never to be allowed, and that it ultimately corrupts those who torture and the groups (governments, military, citizenry) that allow it. Photographs from the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib in 2004 showed American soldiers torturing and humiliating Iraqi prisoners, leaving not only physical but also psychic wounds, and leading to a chorus of protests and condemnations and later court-martials for the military personnel involved. But there remain a significant number of people, including political leaders, who maintain the usefulness, if not the morality, of the use of torture. While some argue that religious persons can, in limited circumstances, justify torture for the sake of a greater good, the vast majority of religious authorities condemn torture for its assault on human dignity, both for the torturer and especially the one tortured.

Animals

The question of whether it is moral to inflict pain on animals is a related issue to the deliberate infliction of pain on human beings. Animals are sentient creatures and experience pain. There are laws against animal abuse and organizations for the protection of animal welfare in much of the world; religious traditions see nonhuman life as part of God's creation and worthy of human protection. Some religious traditions prohibit the consumption of some animals (e.g. Hinduism), while others (e.g. Jainism) prohibit the destruction of all life, even insects. Studies indicate that persons who torture animals are more likely subsequently to inflict cruelty on human beings. Medical research on animals, which can involve inflicting pain, has led to advances in human diseases, but is also controversial. The

morality of the widespread use of factory farms, which involve confinement in small spaces, use of antibiotics, and sometimes mutilation, is questioned on a number of grounds: the harm to people (e.g. through antibiotic use), the harm to the environment, and, most significantly, the harm to the animals themselves. Although animals are unable – at least in human terms – to express themselves, and thus lack what is understood as reflective intelligence, religious traditions see all of creation as worthy in the eyes of God.

Physical and End of Life Pain

The pain of childbirth was long understood by Christianity as a consequence of the first woman's disobedience, but when medical anesthesia became available in the mid-nineteenth century, few opposed its use, other than a few religious leaders. The relief of pain is considered to be a responsibility of ethical healthcare. But the deliberate and voluntary infliction of pain is also a religious practice. Some Shi'a Muslims ritually commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet, who died in 680 at the Battle of Karbala, by voluntarily flagellating themselves in solidarity with this tragic event. Some Christian ascetics also practice self-flagellation as a discipline and as pious imitation of the scourging of Christ before his crucifixion. For some religious traditions, willingly enduring pain is a sign of virtue and spiritual advancement. There is also some research that indicates that religious faith may help in enduring pain. The crisis of opioid abuse in the early twenty-first century is in part a result of better pain management through prescribed medications, but it has also resulted in addiction to the pleasurable "high" that results from these same medications.

Given modern advances in medical care, people are living longer with serious illnesses than in the past. The "death with dignity" and "right to die" movements have largely been based in the idea that no one should be forced to suffer intractable pain, particularly at the end of life. Some countries and US states have passed legislation allowing for assisted death. Even despite advances in pain management, adherents of this position argue that people suffering from incurable and painful illnesses should be allowed to end their lives voluntarily, in full control of their minds, and without unbearable pain. Religious traditions are, with a few notable exceptions, opposed to physician-assisted death, although many also make the point that extraordinary measures need not be taken to prolong life unnecessarily.

Pain and suffering are inevitable parts of life. While no one should be forced to suffer and while suffering should be alleviated if at all possible, it is not possible to eliminate pain entirely. Religious traditions approach the significance of pain and suffering with a variety of responses. Hinduism teaches that our sufferings are the result of actions in our previous lives. Buddhism teaches that suffering is caused by desire; human beings should seek to eliminate their attachments to worldly things through contemplation and compassion for others. Judaism and Islam maintain a confidence in God's providential love and care for humanity. Judaism also has a long tradition of lament and complaint against God without loss of faith. Christianity's belief in original sin sees pain and suffering as the result of the "Fall," and that the salvific death of Jesus Christ, God's Son, frees humanity from eternal punishment.

Pain and suffering can, in some situations, result in a greater awareness and deepened appreciation of the human condition. But religious traditions insist that this point should never be used to justify them.

Liberation theologians condemn ideas that suggest that suffering is to be endured for a greater reward in the next life and work for the alleviation of pain and suffering, especially that resulting from injustice. Christian feminist theologians in particular have been critical of atonement theologies which interpret suffering as positive and necessary, and which encourage women and other oppressed people to endure suffering without complaint or resistance. Black womanist theologians have especially challenged ideas of surrogacy that see bearing burdens for another as virtuous. In sum, pain and suffering are largely understood religiously as a consequence of finitude, sin, or human frailty, to be responded to with compassion and efforts to ease them. While they can be a potential source of growth, pain and suffering are never to be seen as good in and of themselves.

Pleasure

Although life is inevitably painful at times, it is also filled with many pleasures: the beauty of natural surroundings, of other people and relationships, food, the arts, sex. Religious traditions, for the most part, see the beauty and pleasures of the world as goods to be enjoyed, but in moderation and never at the expense of others. The Roman Catholic "sacramental principle" sees the potential of divine revelation in all of creation; the "heavenly banquet" is often used as a symbol of eternal life.

Some ascetical practices are intended not so much to produce pain, but rather with the idea that depriving the self of given pleasures for a time increases one's awareness of dependence on God and of the worth and fragility of human pleasures. The Jewish marital practice of abstaining from sexual intercourse during and after the woman's menstruation is also intended to enhance sexual pleasure when relations are resumed. Similarly, the practice of "giving up" a particular pleasure in (Christian) Lent is meant to imitate Christ's time in the desert before his public mission, to train the person in greater self-control and to increase one's hunger for God. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast during daylight hours but feast after sunset; they are also obliged to donate to charitable causes. Jews fast on Yom Kippur and remember their sins.

Sexual pleasure has been a topic of much religious discussion and debate, especially in Christianity. As noted above, Augustine viewed sex for pleasure as intrinsically sinful; masturbation, sex outside of marriage, and same-sex relationships – all of which involve sex for pleasure – were and continue to be condemned as sinful in conservative Protestant traditions and in official Catholic teachings. In Roman Catholicism, even marital sex without the potential for procreation is seen as sinful, despite the fact that many Catholics use some form of "artificial" birth control. While Judaism and most mainline Protestant traditions permit the use of contraceptives, it was not until Vatican II (1962–1965) that Roman Catholicism acknowledged that the "unitive" purpose of marital intercourse, distinct from its procreative purpose, was one of the God-given "ends" of marriage.

Feminist theologians have observed that little if any attention has been given to women's sexual pleasure, which is not connected to procreation; nearly all of the religious literature condemning masturbation refers to its practice by men, probably reflecting older beliefs that held that the male seed held the whole person, to be nurtured in the woman's womb. The erotic, seen as a quality of the divine, is celebrated as delight in the pleasures of creation, including sexuality. Religious traditions, however, overwhelmingly see pornography as sinful. Pornography, its critics claim, objectifies sexual partners and thus violates human dignity, challenges the virtue of self-control, and disconnects sexual expression

from relationships. Related practices, such as bondage or sadomasochism, in which sexual pleasure is derived from inflicting or receiving pain, are also condemned as violations of human dignity.

Pleasure and pain play significant physical and spiritual roles in religious traditions, and there is much debate about how they are and are not appropriate means of growth in the person's moral and spiritual development. While Judaism has largely had a benign view of human pleasures enjoyed in moderation, Christianity has a more complex understanding of the role of pain and pleasure, given the central significance of the Cross.

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CHAPTER 115

Reproduction

Cristina L. H. Traina

Historically, religious ethics of reproduction correlated with religious visions of heterosexual marriage, which were in turn bound up with civil and religious law, women's social and religious standing, and theological and philosophical evaluations of nature and the "natural." Typically religious ethics of reproduction were religious ethics of sexuality, because fertility was poorly understood and nearly impossible to control outside of sexual abstinence. With the exception of some Tantric practices, most religious traditions have limited genital sex to heterosexual unions in religiously-sanctioned marriages in which children would be recognized both religiously and civilly. Although contraception, abortion, same-sex relations, and infertility (the latter, grounds for divorce in some traditions) were certainly concerns, it is fair to say that before the twentieth century religious reproductive ethics spent most of its energy on monitoring genital sex between men and women.

Advances in reproductive medicine, the associated increasing prevalence of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) and contraception, and the expanded availability of medical abortion have inspired changes in scholarly and clerical religious ethics of reproduction and also in religious reproductive practices. Increasing acceptance of same-sex and intentionally single parenting are also transforming religious ethics of reproduction. In general, religious ethics naturalize reproductive science, technology, and new household models by using traditional methods to reinterpret existing religious understandings of "natural" reproduction, altering moral traditions in the process.

This entry outlines some of the main tendencies and patterns in recent religious ethics of reproduction. Its main examples are drawn from Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, but its basic questions are relevant to all traditions.

Starting Points

Marriage, Sex, and Family

Although religious groups with monastic and hermitic traditions (like Buddhism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and Roman Catholicism) can be ambivalent about reproduction because of the spiritually distracting attachments that sex and children pose, major religious groups nonetheless envision a divine or cosmic purpose that values human reproduction. This purpose might be a matter of the Jewish and

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Christian divine command, "Be fruitful and multiply!" (Genesis 1:28), the Buddhist concern to provide opportunities for souls to achieve enlightenment, or Hindu and Confucian hopes for offspring to carry out ritual responsibilities. Local economic, political, and even geopolitical circumstances can amplify or damp this affirmation: for instance, economic recessions, Israeli pronatalist policies, China's former one-child law, or the structures of health-care coverage.

Religious groups have also traditionally placed reproduction within heterosexual marriage. The "natural" family into which this marriage is placed is not always a nuclear household (father, mother, children) but may be an extended family, with decisions about reproduction spread among many stakeholders. In addition, if fertility or marriage itself is a challenge, the religious ritual or legal traditions set priorities by defining family "cores" that may trump other religious guidelines for reproduction (see table below). For instance, a Confucian father may be willing to overcome an aversion to "wasting" sperm to use pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) or sperm microsorting with in vitro fertilization (IVF), increasing the chances of the birth of a son who can perform filial rites after his death. Contemporary Hindus may be uncomfortable with *niyoga* – the abandoned practice of a dead or infertile man's relative impregnating his wife to conceive offspring for him – but it has been suggested as a precedent for artificial insemination by donor (AID). Orthodox Jews may be more concerned about a mother's lineage than her heterosexual marital status, because Jewishness is passed through the matriline. Or, contemporary infertile Shīʿite Muslim couples reluctant to practice polygamy may nonetheless contract a licit temporary marriage between the husband and a second woman for the purpose of egg donation.

Religious tradition (Traina et al. 2008)	Reductive core of the "natural family"
Hinduism, Confucianism	Father and son
Judaism	Mother and child
Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy	Husband and wife, bonded by God (children anticipated and desired; childlessness does not invalidate marriage)
Islam	Husband and wife, bonded by God through children
Buddhism, Protestantism	Depending on local traditions, husband and wife (children optional but anticipated and desired)

In these cases, presented with an apparently indivisible package of interdependent, inherited elements – "natural" family structure, sexuality, sex, procreation, inheritance, gender, and marriage – religious ethics may distinguish or even separate them, prioritizing one or a few over others. For example, in Shi'a Islam patrilineage can take priority over reverence for reproduction through marital intercourse, permitting intercytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) followed by IVF. Or, religious ethics adapt to changed social and scientific circumstances by developing new justifications for existing guidelines. For example, Roman Catholicism's embrace of reproductive medicine and romantic marriage left its ban on contraception in place but allowed it to recommend family planning through timing techniques, arguing for these on the basis of spousal union, self-discipline, and self-gift, not just as a matter of respecting a "natural" process of conception (Kohlhaas 2018, Salzman and Lawler 2016). Either strategy alters the preexisting ethic.

Sources and Authorities

Sources, authorities, and their proportional weights in religious ethics of reproduction vary by tradition. More will be said about this below. Religious law, with accompanying institutions for interpretation and formal rulings, is the highest authority in Muslim and Jewish ethics of reproduction. In many Muslim countries, Sharīʿa (Islamic law) carries civil authority as well, connecting reproductive ethics to laws of inheritance and many other dimensions of daily life. Hinduism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism, and some branches of Protestantism (Anglicans and Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians) also follow religious law to varying degrees, although their law is not as comprehensive and usually is not linked to civil law. Most Protestants first consult scripture (the Hebrew Bible and New Testament). In addition, all traditions maintain some role for human reason, usually authorized by divine or cosmic intent and often exercised on the "laws of nature" it is thought to establish. In practice all groups rely heavily on cultural tradition, returning to their central sources when questions arise. Methods of discernment are addressed below.

Status of Embryos and Fetuses

Religious groups tend to believe that cosmic or divine intent is involved in some way in conception and birth. The rise of reproductive medicine and increasingly sophisticated methods of contraception and abortion have, overall, led to efforts to specify this involvement and its implications for what may and may not be done. A tradition's theory of the time of ensoulment, or the moment of personhood worthy of protection, can vary from the moment of union of sperm with ovum (Roman Catholics and many conservative Protestants) to birth (Jews). Consequences in the former case include Catholic absolute prohibition of abortion and conservative Protestant "adoption" of excess IVF embryos, and in the latter case liberal Israeli abortion law. Still, ensoulment does not dictate all. Roman Catholicism forbids even contraception, which prevents heterosexual intercourse from achieving conception; liberal Protestants who may not agree on the moment of "personhood" nonetheless agree that killing a fetus is sometimes appropriate. No major contemporary tradition embraces infanticide, or the killing of infants after birth.

Gender

Religious law aside, religious moral preference for reproduction within heterosexual marriage has many other roots: a desire to channel sexual desire and give it a purpose beyond pleasure; ritual and sacramental considerations; a concern for stability for offspring; and male-female reproductive complementarity, to name a few. In addition, gender plays a strong role in many religious ethics of reproduction, but not always with the same results. In a *de jure* example, official Catholic teaching and conservative Protestantism embrace the doctrine that men and women possess different, complementary gifts and personalities, so that a household missing a male or female parent is actually an unhealthy environment for children; for them motherhood is all women's true calling, and historically many believed a married woman should not limit childbearing. In a *de* facto example, Athenian Eastern Orthodox women agree that women are meant to be mothers, but by contrast they justify limiting or delaying maternity – even

through abortion – because of their determination to be excellent mothers, realizing their true maternal nature to the greatest degree possible. Thus even when traditions see motherhood as an accompaniment of "natural" femininity, motherhood does not take the same shape or lead to the same reproductive practices in all settings.

Religious Practices of Moral Discernment

Religious ethics of moral discernment typically take one of three forms that overlap in practice. In the Christian and post-Christian West, religious ethics is a scholarly discipline related to philosophical ethics. In addition, Christian denominations have often issued carefully argued position papers on the ethics of reproduction; in other traditions general rulings – like *fatwas* issued by state-appointed Egyptian imams – often function analogously. Globally, however, formal academic and denominational moral arguments are not typical. Rather, religious reproductive ethics is often decentralized and contextual, even individual, and may be most accessible through ethnography. Interpreting religious ethics of reproduction requires careful attention to all three genres of religious ethics.

In addition, representative religious positions on reproductive ethics range from fine-grained, definitive judgments to general guidelines. At one extreme, official Roman Catholic teaching on reproductive ethics is developed by the church's bishops, cardinals, and pope at the Vatican, the church's seat in Rome. This binding teaching is based primarily on the natural law – a kind of sharing in God's creative intentions for the world – whose principles are universally apparent and which Catholics believe God instills in all people. Thus, from the official Catholic perspective, Catholic ethics of reproduction is both centralized – because developed by the church's highest leaders – and universally applicable – because based in universal reasoning about universal human phenomena.

At the other extreme, for many reasons Buddhist moral reflection is largely local and even individual. First, traditionally Buddhists reject a Western model of exclusive religious identity; one can maintain Buddhist practice alongside Shintoism, or Confucianism, or even Judaism, and these traditions have some weight in one's moral decisions. Second, Buddhists see people as being at different stages on the path toward enlightenment and therefore toward moral perfection (and the enlightened are sometimes thought to have greater moral freedom than those still on the journey). Finally, although monastic life is highly structured, often by strict rules of behavior, lay life is less so; religious authority in lay Buddhism is decentralized, with a strong focus on local teachers as spiritual guides and on the individual spiritual journey (alongside regionally-inflected devotional practices).

In the middle, Christian Protestant denominations work out statements on reproduction. These are often democratically developed and frequently non-binding. Likewise, Hindu ritual law binds, but flexibly. For instance, even in the past *niyoga* was not the only way for a Hindu man to acquire a ritual son. He could have adopted a son or recognized a son conceived before marriage (or even a son his wife had conceived with another man).

Finally, even traditions with religious law or universal moral rules have mechanisms that account for particularity. Shi'a Islam endorses *ijtihad*, an individualized form of private, reasoned moral discernment, often exercised in reproductive decisions. Greek Orthodox Christians are comfortable with *ekonomia,* granting an exception to religious law – including prohibition of abortion – when an imperfect situation renders it necessary for the greater good. And Catholic priests in many parts of the world have

been known for granting pastoral exceptions to the ban on birth control in recognition of individual conscience and the obligation to promote flourishing.

The two traditions in which adherence to religious law is most central to observance are Judaism and Islam. Both are concerned to prevent adultery in order to preserve family and religious lineage, but with instructively flexible results for assisted reproduction. Jewish *halakhah* traces Jewishness through the matriline and defines adultery as a sexual relationship between a married Jewish woman and a Jewish man who is not her husband. Fascinating possibilities open up: for instance, a married straight or lesbian woman who conceives using sperm from a non-Jewish man bears a Jewish child and does not commit adultery. By contrast, Islamic law traces lineage through the patriline and has a stricter definition of adultery but allows polygamy – hence the Shī'ite work-around mentioned above, in which a single woman marries a man temporarily in order to donate ova to him and his first wife. Male lineage is maintained. (Sunnī Muslims, more concerned to maintain the genetic link to both parents, forbid all donor gametes.) In addition, Iranian Shi'a Islam manages the prohibition on sperm donation by permitting married couples to donate their embryos to other couples; in this case the value of confirming the marriage through childbearing takes precedence over preserving lineage.

Surprisingly, however, both traditions are also highly decentralized. In both cases, rulings on religious law are local, not universal, and believers are obligated to follow the rulings of local rabbis or imams. In the case of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, one must follow the ruling of one's own rabbi, even if it differs from another local rabbi's opinion.

Challenges for Religious Ethics of Reproduction

The recent disengagement of reproduction from sex has raised new questions with which religious groups are still grappling. In large part they stem from addressing infertility, which is a social and sometimes religious problem, through medicine, rather than through social and religious channels. Below is a sampling of these questions.

Surrogacy

As noted, masturbation to produce sperm for ARTs, adulterous use of third-party gametes and wombs, extra embryos, and extra-uterine fertilization pose challenges to most religious ideals of heterosexual marriage. Religious laws of inheritance and lineage or membership also raise objections.

Surrogacy is particularly challenging because it involves all of these elements of assisted reproduction, not to mention a commitment on the part of an unrelated person that goes far beyond providing gametes. In traditions in which surrogacy is not absolutely prohibited, surrogacy raises issues of justice: access, for intended parents, and exploitation, for surrogates. For instance, only infertile Israeli women are eligible for surrogates. To fulfill their religious obligation to procreate, single and gay partnered men must seek surrogates abroad, with accompanying worries about exploitation; and unless the surrogates are Jewish, their offspring may not be considered Jews. Majority-Hindu India accepts surrogacy but worries that intended parents will exploit poor Indian women (Sallam and Sallam 2016). Among Protestant Christians, Grace Kao is developing theologically-informed norms for surrogates and intended parents that delicately balance self-gift and self-protection, surrogate medical autonomy and parental

involvement, covenant and justice (Kao 2019). Kao's work highlights the moral complexity and singularity of the intimate relationships among surrogates and intended parents, in addition to all the issues discussed at greater length above. The ethics of surrogacy is an important frontier for all traditions of religious ethics because it will clarify so many moral arguments, methods, and priorities in the ethics of reproduction.

Two fertility procedures that do not disrupt the links among heterosexual coitus, conception, and birth – uterine and ovarian tissue transplants – may meet less religious ethical resistance than surrogacy, and ethical arguments about them will also be revelatory. First, homologous and heterologous ovarian transplants are beginning to be discussed for women whose ovaries are diseased or compromised by chemotherapy. Religious ethical rulings on heterologous ovarian tissue transplants will reveal whether traditions that value unimpeded process of conception, spousal gametes, and restrictive ethics of transplant value one more highly than the others (Lauritzen and Vicini 2011). Second, reflection on uterine transplants will reveal other hierarchies of value. For instance, many Sunnī jurists forbid all transplants and others, transplants that are not essential to the health of the recipient. These judgments would rule out uterine transplants for Sunnī Muslims, even though such transplants would permit women to conceive with their own eggs through marital intercourse, with no disruption of conception or confusion of lineage (Padela and Clayville 2018). The same reasoning might make them acceptable to Greek Orthodox, for example.

An additional challenge for religious ethics of reproduction is that, just as the burden of "natural" pregnancy falls on women, so does most of the medical burden of ARTs (male infertility is usually not socially burdensome to men, but medical treatment of it is). Religious women whose communities might previously have accepted their infertility and provided them alternative vocational pathways can face religious and cultural pressures to do everything possible to conceive and bear children, at great personal and financial cost. Granted, the fear that the advent of ICSI would lead to abandonment or second marriages among Shīʿite Muslim women whose infertile husbands need help conceiving has not been realized (Inhorn 2012). Still, traditions that accept ARTs have not yet developed rigorous religious ethical arguments that protect women in couples with fertility challenges from the double burden of vulnerability to social, emotional, and economic harm and of painful, burdensome, and expensive medical procedures. Option can easily become obligation, reinforcing rather than loosening pronatalist doctrines of marriage.

Intentional Single Parenthood and Same-Sex Parenthood

One of the strongest religious cases for ARTs is that they permit heterosexual married couples to conceive and raise the families that would be theirs absent their infertility. In essence, they provide fulfillment of a divine or cosmic intention that would otherwise be impossible to them. The ends justify the means: "Natural" ends canonize "unnatural" procedures. In most religious communions, intentional single and same-sex-couple parenthood do not carry the same procreative mandate (with the exception of orthodox Judaism, in which the procreative mandate applies to all, with the assumption that it will be accomplished in heterosexual marriage), and same-sex marriage is recognized in only a few liberal communions. Religious arguments for same-sex use of ARTs and surrogacy can proceed in several mutually non-exclusive ways: by analogy with heterosexual marriage, accepting the marriage as valid and infertile; as fulfilling the partners' deepest natures of maternity or paternity; and as enabling genetically

connected offspring. All three arguments, as well as Judaism's procreative mandate, reinforce the "nuclear" two-parent, genetically related family as the reproductive norm, albeit without parental sex and gender complementarity.

Single parenthood is harder to justify on this model, but easier to defend on gender essentialist grounds: a person's divinely-given masculinity or femininity yields the calling to become a father or a mother, whether or one is partnered or not. For women, single parenthood through AID and related means carries an additional cachet of virtue: self-sacrificial motherhood without sex (Kahn 2000); and serving as a surrogate mother can be read as self-sacrificial gift (Kao 2019). ARTs and surrogacy remain challenging for single and same-sex partnered Orthodox Jewish men, given halakhic debates over whether a Jewish woman's egg or a Jewish birth mother is the criterion of Jewish offspring.

Eugenics and Gene Editing

Although some religious ethics that embrace ARTs have endorsed preconception testing for genetically transmitted diseases (most famously, Jewish endorsement of testing for Tay-Sachs disease), ARTs press at the boundaries between avoiding and curing illness, and between curing and enhancing persons. ARTs also provide opportunities for exercising sex preference without resorting to infanticide or even abortion. PGD permits embryo selection both for sex and against known disease. Religious ethical judgment depends on a number of factors: whether there is a religious obligation to produce both male and female offspring (e.g. Judaism); whether there is a religious obligation to prevent suffering (e.g. Buddhism can be ambivalent, as suffering can overcome bad karma); and whether there is a religious case to be made that social and social justice effects trump individual freedom (private decisions to select for gender have skewed China and India male and Japan, female (Fuse 2013), with consequences for society). Germ line gene editing in theory provides opportunities for deleting and replacing harmful genes, or introducing genes thought to be advantageous. Although decisions not to risk passing on a known genetic disease – and even decisions about with whom to procreate, whether sexually or (recently) through AID – have long been acceptable, religious ethicists from most traditions agree that the new level of intervention and new degree of permanence that germ line gene editing represents urges caution or even prohibition.

Cultures of Reproduction

In the Global North and West, contemporary ethics of reproduction tend to focus on the process of reproduction: sexual or medical acts, the origin of gametes, the sites of fertilization and gestation, and the status of the fetus or embryo. Questions that are peripheral or nonexistent in the religious ethics of these countries can take center stage elsewhere.

One concern that spans geography and tradition is the commercialization of conception and childbearing, which in all traditions ideally begins with the sexual union of spouses but which is monetized when medical assistance is required. Most traditions that accept ARTs oppose payment for gametes and embryos; even payments in Shīʿite temporary marriages contracted for egg donation are for the marriage, not for the eggs. Similarly, many traditions are leery of high surrogacy fees and concerned about exploitation of poor and foreign women as surrogates. In part in response to concerns about monetization, Israeli surrogacy law limits the payment that Israeli surrogates may receive.

In addition, belief in reincarnation can involve the question, how do the parents' intent and state of mind at the time of conception affect the "worthiness" or "quality" of the soul to be born ("Medical Ethics" 2002)? In this case ethics of reproduction is as much about proper religious mentoring, prayer, spiritual discipline, and self-sacrifice as it is about the procedures of conception, pregnancy, and birth.

Finally, religious traditions have different cultures of adherence to declared religious norms. For instance, in the United States Roman Catholic women use contraception and have abortions at about the same rate as other women, despite the Vatican's prohibition of both (Jones and Dreweke 2011). Ultra-Orthodox Israeli women obey their rabbis and rabbinically-approved doctors in matters of reproduction but often try to see both as infrequently as possible (Raucher 2020). For women seeking to conceive, definitions of *hishtadlus* (adequate effort) can be elastic (Kahn 2006).

Conclusion

The strategies by which religious ethics naturalize reproduction are most visible in their responses to cases that challenge the norm of reproduction within heterosexual marriage: infertility, reproduction outside heterosexual marriage, and the like. Their treatments of these very common "exceptions" reveal their priorities and methods, as well as working subtle transformations in both.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Amanda Gvozden for her invaluable assistance identifying recent sources. Central themes and many illustrations are drawn from Traina et al. (2008).

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CHAPTER 116

Subject Formation and Subjectivity

Jonathan Schofer

The first task to address with regard to "subject formation" and "subjectivity" is the range of scholarship and formulations to take as salient. In *Oneself as Another*, Paul Ricoeur addresses in detail the significance of "philosophies of the subject," and their relation to the first-person standpoint of "I" encountering others and the world. He also exposits the role of the "speaking subject," or the person "who designates himself or herself as an I" and carries out speech acts with and in relation to others (Ricoeur 1995, 4, 41, and more generally 1–26, 40–55). Exemplary as these studies are, Paul Ricoeur's influence in contemporary ethics on these points is found not so much in an expansion of conceptualization and analysis of "subject formation" and "subjectivity," but rather in a precise clarification of the role of "the first person" standpoint, and of the social role of a speech-act, when considering both the person engaging in moral action, and those who are objects of moral concern (Schweiker, Wall, and Hall 2002). The proliferation of interest in "subject formation" needs to acknowledge that it is really the controversial and at times problematic, yet also insightful, scholarship of Michel Foucault and its influence, whose formulations and observations have been at the root of the use of this concept. The writings of Foucault, and their mediation to researchers in religious ethics by way of Judith Butler and Talal Asad, have generated a large body of work in and relevant to religious ethics, and to some extent the trajectory of scholarship has corrected the excesses and imprecisions in Foucault's own terminology, and to some extent the weaknesses in Foucault's work carry through to recent studies. The attraction of Foucault's examination of "subject formation" as a starting point for inquiry in religious ethics is that the term defines an approach to persons in social relations that attends closely to the pervasive and also complex roles that hierarchy, coercion, force, resistance, and subversion play in those social relations. From this starting point, other lines of inquiry in religious ethics appear naïve or simplistic in their presumed or actual treatment of these features of social life, which Foucault and those following him often gather as part of the broad term, "power."

In a highly influential interview, Foucault summarizes the roles of his own studies as:

> Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents.
>
> (Rabinow 1984, 351–352)

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Understanding subjectivity and subject formation, on this account, demands historical analysis of the documented ways that truth, power, and ethics have operated in the world. This historical analysis, Foucault asserts, is deeply connected with "ontology" denoting the nature of the existence of truth, power, and ethics not only in the past but also very importantly in the present.

Foucault's *The Order of Things*, as exemplary or inspirational for the study of "subjects of knowledge," opens by saying that he aims to carry out a "history of science and thought" that does not give "pride of place" to the "noble sciences" of "mathematics, cosmology, and physics," but rather to "the combination of corresponding transformations that characterized the appearance of biology, political economy, philology," and new approaches to philosophy "at the threshold of the nineteenth century" (Foucault 1970, ix–xii). Foucault attends to changes, particularly "the suddenness and thoroughness with which certain sciences were sometimes reorganized; and the fact that at the same time similar changes occurred in apparently very different disciplines," but he admits that he has difficulty explaining causation. On one hand, Foucault asserts, "the traditional explanations – spirit of the time, technological or social changes, influences of various kinds – struck me for the most part as being more magical than effective," yet he does not offer a new response and writes instead, "I left the problem of causes to one side" (Foucault 1970, xii–xiii). *The Order of Things*, then, provides a model for scholars of subject formation to address the procedures through which authorized knowledge develops, changes, and conditions understandings of persons themselves, as at least one "axis" of understanding humans in social relations as part of religious ethics.

The study of power and subject formation, for Foucault, begins quite directly with the examination of public executions and punishment. He identifies the importance in the eighteenth century of "the 'great reformers' – Beccaria, Servan, Dupaty, Lacretelle, Duport, Pastoret, Target, Bergasse, the compilers of the *Cahiers*, or petitions, and the Constituent Assembly" (Foucault 1977, 75), and also responses at individual and social levels that led to:

> a whole complex mechanism, embracing the development of production, the increase of wealth, a higher juridical and moral value placed on property relations, stricter methods of surveillance, a tighter partitioning of the population, more efficient techniques of locating and obtaining information: the shift in illegal practices is correlative with an extension and a refinement of punitive practices.
>
> (Foucault 1977, 77)

By the "turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," detention was made "the penalty *par excellence*" (Foucault 1977, 231). Disciplines had "long been in existence – in monasteries, armies, workshops. But in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the disciplines became general formulas of domination." A distinctive "art of the human body was born, which was directed ... at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful." In sum, "disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination" (Foucault 1977, 136–138). The prison "carries to their greatest intensity all the procedures found in the other disciplinary mechanisms" (Foucault 1977, 236). The discipline of the prison as the site for detention as punishment for crime, then, intensified the broader spread of discipline and docility in eighteenth-century France and beyond. This emergence of discipline as a focus and goal (most pronounced in the prison but visible and active in the domains of religion, military, and production) is for Foucault the most pervasive way that power relations have conditioned subjectivity since the nineteenth century in Europe.

Ethics is addressed directly by Foucault in volumes two and three of *The History of Sexuality*. In these works, Foucault departs from his expertise in the history of modernity in Europe and the United States, and he studies sources from ancient Greece and Rome. His inquiry into sexuality led him to consider sexuality in the broader frame of ethics. Ethics, in turn, is studied as part of the threefold axes of the subject, and Foucault's "historical ontology" of moral agency attends to dimensions of ethical life that researchers trained in ethics often find both relevant and neglected: diet, marriage, and sexuality. Foucault's research in ethics has components that today's scholars in religious ethics might find unexpected, but for Foucault they need to be addressed as part of the overall formation of moral subjects. For example, in Hippocratic collections, diet and regimen provide the context for sex:

> If in fact sexual acts were a proper concern of regimen, and if they required "moderation," this was because they produced – through the motions of the body and the ejaculation of semen – warming, cooling, drying, and moistening effects. They raised or lowered the level of each of the elements that were responsible for the body's equilibrium. Hence they also altered the relationship between this equilibrium and the interaction of these elements in the outside world: heating or drying, which might be good for a cold, moist body, would be less so if the season and the climate were themselves hot and dry. It was not the function of regimen to prescribe quantities and determine rhythms: given relations that could only be defined in terms of general characteristics, the role of regimen was to negotiate qualitative changes and make such readjustments as were necessitated by circumstances.
>
> (Foucault 1985, 115)

A key point here, then, is that moderation in sexual acts can be part of any number of aims and purposes, and the place of pleasure in a life-course has to be understood in relation to the multiple standards that condition practices. The writings of Hippocrates and perhaps also Plato present a world where regimen "characterized the way in which one managed one's existence, and it enabled a set of rules to be affixed to conduct" (Foucault 1985, 101). Marriage is another practice, that, at least in some sources, "calls for at least some sort of sexual moderation," whether understood through "a political regulation that is imposed" or by "deliberate self-limitation" of the husband's power (Foucault 1985, 166–167). The study of ethics as a part of subject formation, then, draws attention to the social practices of diet and marriage, and their regulation or guidance by authoritative experts, as points of inquiry.

Foucault's study of ethics in ancient Greece develops conceptual tools that can be transferred to other areas of research. First, Foucault specifies the relations between ethics and gender for this particular set of materials:

> It was an ethics for men: an ethics thought, written, and taught by men, and addressed to men – to free men, obviously. A male ethics, consequently, in which women figured only as objects or, at most, as partners that one had best train, educate, and watch over when one had them under one's power, but stay away from when they were under the power of someone else (father, husband, tutor).
>
> (Foucault 1985, 22)

Second, Foucault defines his primary interest as "the manner in which one ought to 'conduct oneself' – that is, the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the

prescriptive elements that make up the code. Given a code of actions ...there are different ways to 'conduct oneself' morally ..." (Foucault 1985, 26). Third, Foucault sets out four categories to consider in the formation of the ethical subject: (1) the "*determination of the ethical substance*; that is, the way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of his moral conduct," such as the "mastery of desires" or the resisting of "temptations," (2) the "*mode of subjection* (*mode d'assujettissement*) that is, ... the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice," (3) the "forms of *elaboration*, of *ethical work* (*travail éthique*) that one performs on oneself, not only in order to bring one's conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behavior," and (4) the "*telos* of the ethical subject" which includes that a "moral action tends toward its own accomplishment" and also "commits an individual, not only to other actions always in conformity with values and rules, but to a certain mode of being, a mode of being characteristic of the ethical subject" (Foucault 1985, 26–28). For scholars of religious ethics, this set of concepts may be considered with affinity to those of virtue ethics, but perhaps with added subtlety to capture the complexity of ethics as lived in multiple facets of social life and interaction. Perhaps most important, Foucault's categories fully consider rules and codes, religious and otherwise, to be appropriate starting points for inquiry, yet his interest in the variety of ways that people may "conduct" themselves in relation to rules, and the variety of codes and rules that he addresses, expand productively the range of sources and domains of life that scholars of religious ethics might address.

One corrective to elements in Foucault's studies is carried out by Michel de Certeau in his, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau sets out the metaphor of pedestrian walking to illustrate the range of possibilities that exist for people in the course of action: "The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered" (De Certeau 1984, 97). De Certeau elaborates:

> First, if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g. by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g. by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements.
>
> (De Certeau 1984, 98)

For De Certeau, the research of Foucault gives readers an account of the "spatial order" and relevant "possibilities" and "interdictions," but not the processes by which one "actualizes" some and not others. De Certeau is also particularly interested in forms of "improvisation" and innovation that he considers lost in the works of Foucault.

The analytic development of the term "subject" and the related "subjection" beyond Foucault is perhaps most indebted to Judith Butler. In her work, *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler builds a theoretical account of subjection that draws explicitly from Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Foucault, Althusser, and Lacan. For her, the breadth of Hegel, the attention to confrontation in Althusser, and the psychoanalytic depth and richness of Freud and Lacan, all generate fullness in the conceptualization of subject formation that must be added to Foucault's outlook in order to address power in life. She opens by writing:

> As a form of power, subjection is paradoxical. To be dominated by a power external to oneself is a familiar and agonizing form power takes. To find, however, that what "one" is, one's very formation

> as a subject, is in some sense dependent on that very power is quite another. We are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject from the outside, as what subordinates, sets underneath, and relegates to a lower order. ... But if, following Foucault, we understand power as forming the subject as well as providing the very condition of its existence and trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are.
>
> (Butler 1997, 1–2)

She continues, "Subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency." For Butler, "'Subjection' signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject" (Butler 1997, 2). Butler's strength and weakness in the study of subject formation is her commitment to connecting theories of power with psychoanalytic theories of the psyche. These two approaches oppose each other significantly, and Foucault himself aims to locate Freud in his studies rather than use a psychoanalytic starting point (Foucault 1965, 276–278; Foucault 1970, 373–386; Foucault 1978, 130, 150, 158–159). At the same time, for capturing complex states such as ambivalence, or the extremes of rage, as they condition or are conditioned by desire, Butler's theoretical components offer subtleties in the consideration of subjectivity that others do not.

Butler's later work, which explicitly addresses ethics – *Giving an Account of Oneself* – engages the phenomenology of Levinas to bring a strong attention to the "primacy" of the vulnerable other person into the theory of the subject. Butler is aware that there are conceptual conflicts in the positions she draws upon: "The Levinasian position is not, finally, compatible with a psychoanalytic one" (Butler 2005, 97). One might think that parallels can be found between the emergence of Levinas's "me," and Laplanche's psychoanalytic account of an "overwhelmed" infant. Butler emphasizes, however, "Although Laplanche and Levinas both subscribe to primary passivity and identify the Other at the inception of the 'me,' the differences between them are significant," and, "Levinas cannot accommodate the notion of a primary set of needs or drives" that psychoanalysis addresses (Butler 2005, 98). Along with recognizing these conflicts, Butler highlights forms of integration:

> What perhaps emerges most emphatically from this conjunction of these very disparate positions (Adorno, Foucault, Laplanche, Levinas, Nietzsche, Hegel) is that the response to the demand to give an account of oneself is a matter of fathoming at once the formation of the subject (self, ego, *moi*, first-person perspective) and its relation to responsibility.
>
> (Butler 2005, 135)

At this point in the theorization of subject formation, Butler asserts that the study of rhetoric, social critique, and the ethical topic of responsibility all gain primacy.

The study of subject formation as historical, with attention to the implications of historical examples for understanding religious traditions, appears most influentially in the work of Talal Asad. In *Genealogies of Religion*, Asad provides two extensive studies of Medieval Christian practices, integrating the awareness of "discipline" highlighted by Foucault with attention to tradition as formulated by Alasdair MacIntyre, which is familiar to religious ethicists. Asad emphasizes that he examines "disciplinary practices," meaning "the

multiple ways in which religious discourses regulate, inform, and construct religious selves." He aims to examine "two kinds of power process: formations of the self and manipulations of (or resistances to) others." He emphasizes his interest in the point that "monastic discipline" notably "aims to create, through a program of communal living, the will to obey." He wants to study how "force is a crucial element in the particular transformation of dispositions, not merely in the keeping of order among inmates" (Asad 1993, 125–126 and generally 83–170). The researcher interested in the category of "subject formation," though, should be aware that Asad himself has an explicit and narrow account of the "subject," which rejects many uses of the term: "*agent* and *subject* (where the former is the principle of effectivity and the latter of consciousness) do not belong to the same theoretical universe and should not, therefore, be coupled." While he connects the subject with consciousness, he also wants to identify many sources of agency: "Instinctive reaction, the docile body, and the unconscious work, in their different ways, more pervasively and continuously than consciousness does" (Asad 1993, 15–16, emphasis in the original). For Foucault and Butler, though, the "subject" is not specifically "the principle" of "consciousness," and the overlap between their approaches to "subject formation" and Asad's study of "disciplinary practices" and force is quite close.

One form of integration between the work of Asad and that of Butler can be seen in Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety*, an ethnography of Egyptian movements of Islamic revitalization in the 1990s. Mahmood attends to women in these movements, and her research is based on interviews at three mosques in the Cairo area. Her research emphasizes the forms of agency that appear when women cultivate virtues and expertise in religious practices, which are forms of agency that are obscured when subversion or resistance are taken to be the primary markers of response to hierarchy. For Mahmood, ethical training that transforms both emotion and desire has to be understood as a form of agency in the context of social relations and gender inequity. The process of acquiring new internal ideals, in response to external commands, may itself appear to be submission but actually is understood by a woman as learning and transformation. Mahmood gives great attention to perhaps controversial dimensions of embodied action in religious contexts, such as wearing a veil and achieving a virtue of shyness. She also discusses the significance of these observations for contemporary feminism and related attempts to "destabilize the normative social structure" (Mahmood 2005, 167).

A recent synthetic treatment of ethnographic, historical, and conceptual studies in subject formation and subjectivity can be found in Jonathan Schofer, "Ethical Formation and Subjection" (Schofer 2012). A core observation of that essay is that the analytical terms "subject formation" and "subjectivity" have been used actively by scholars since the formulations of Asad and Butler to address cases from antiquity to the present, in both "Eastern" and "Western" religions as well as philosophies, and also to some degree in constructive accounts. The categories enable scholars to integrate the study of power and social relations with the study of ethical ideals and norms, and to address emotions and desires along with rules and regulations. The scholarship on subject formation and subjectivity has moments of analytical clumsiness, along with contrasting moments of perhaps overly polemic assertions of rigor, which may rightfully frustrate those trained in analytic philosophy and theological correlates. With that caveat, the turn to address the subject and its formation is taken by those who want tools to understand the full significance of the relations between force and hierarchy, bodies and habituation, interpersonal relations, and ethical standards. This cluster of concepts and related scholarship offers a sophistication in the treatment of these relations, and of the human place in history and culture, that all students and scholars of religious ethics benefit from learning.

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2 Challenges

CHAPTER 117

Ability and Disability

Jana M. Bennett

Disability and personhood are intertwined in contemporary ethics conversations. It is the case that many ethicists do not explicitly treat disability in their work, yet here I argue that if ethics is to be truthful about the world in which we live, ethicists *must* find ways to incorporate questions about disability into their work.

In making this claim about disability, I should add that I find the terms "personhood" and "disability" themselves to be deeply contextual, and particular to Western concepts. Thus, the focus of this entry's descriptions and concerns with personhood are primarily drawn from Western philosophical and religious traditions, especially Judaism and Christianity. I will reference other perspectives as appropriate.

Before articulating my main argument – that good ethics begins with considering disability – I will describe four major ways that people in Greek, Roman, and Judeo-Christian traditions have discussed disability in the past, especially in relation to personhood. While past people have not necessarily dealt with disability in the ways we might do today, the question of disability was central to major philosophical and theological discussions. For example, is a person's lack of virtue connected to a person's disability? The Judeo-Christian tradition more particularly asks whether sin and disability are connected, which in turn raises the question of how a person might be saved from their sin if their bodily deformities themselves suggest sinfulness. These kinds of questions in previous centuries influenced and shaped how people responded to those with disabilities – what we might call ethical consideration and moral response, and continue to shape ethical response today.

Following that historical examination, I move to more contemporary questions in theology, ethics, and disability, with a particular focus on how contemporary philosophical and theological questions dovetail with serious concerns in disability studies. Modern philosophy brings new questions to the table regarding disability, in addition to the questions that are more long-standing in religious thought. I show that questions of disability and ability are embedded in contemporary questions in theology, but also how those questions of disability get ignored, at theology's peril. I conclude by suggesting how theology and disability may fruitfully seek a path forward in today's theo-ethical conversations.

Before turning to the historical narrative, I do want to emphasize that my use of the term "disability" in this entry is broad – encompassing mental and physical disabilities, and including both long- and short-term disabilities. The question of what counts as able-bodiedness and disable-bodiedness is contested, but is connected to the question of who controls what counts as health and ability. A difficulty with contemporary ethical theories is that they presume physical and mental health and, further, the idea of what health means is connected to the physical and mental health of white men of means. Usually the people

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

who control the social definition of health are the ones who comprise the dominant social group. For example, Meghan Henning, who writes on disability in antiquity, notes that literate educated elites, doctors, and priests at Temples and healing shrines were the ones who controlled that definition.

Part of the work of disability studies is to argue that ability and disability need to be defined far more broadly than everyday speech and current power structures allow. Disabilities include both temporary and lifelong bodily limitations. Most people will be disabled at some point in their lives, even if only briefly. Disability therefore should raise questions about the ways we understand people.

Disability in Western Religious Traditions

Ancient literature, scripture, and their early commenters all write about disability and what it means to be connected to God. The meaning of disability takes on both positive and negative connotations in the tradition.

One strong strand is to see disability linked to a person's sinful actions. Greek and Roman cultures linked disabilities to divine retribution. One text says, "But the gods who live at their ease were angered with Lykourgos, and the son of Kronos [Zeus] struck him to blindness, nor did he live long afterwards, since he was hated by all the immortals" (Kelly 2007, 43). Jewish tradition debated the precise kinds of physical ailments that prevent people from being priests. Leviticus 21:17–23 names laws against people with a range of disabilities (from permanent blindness to the more temporary broken hand). The laws in Leviticus prevent those with disabilities from doing priestly rituals. More than that, disabilities are seen as impediments to priestly service because there is a link between sin and disability. The New Testament develops this question of disability's connection to sin. At several points when Jesus is healing disabled people, he combines that healing with some phrase like, "Go and sin no more." In John's Gospel, Jesus himself makes a link between sin and disability to a paralyzed man that he heals. Jesus says, "See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you" (John 5:14).

Yet depravity or sinfulness is not the only focus in relation to disability. Sometimes disability is also linked to a person's superability to see God, or to show God to others. In Greek and Roman literature, prophets are often blind: one example is Teiresias, named in Homer's *Odyssey* (Kelley 2007, 44). Another example appears in John's Gospel, Jesus heals a blind man (chapter 9). Jesus's disciples clearly see a sin–disability connection, for they ask him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" But in this case, Jesus answers them, saying that neither had sinned. Rather, this man was born blind so that God's work might be revealed in Jesus.

While seeing disability as a superability connected to divinity, they also have the potential to make disabled people seem not quite like human persons. Nancy Eiesland's landmark contemporary book *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* narrates the Christian tradition's discussions of disability in this way:

> The Christian interpretation of disability has run the gamut from symbolizing sin to representing an occasion for supererogation. The persistent thread within the Christian tradition has been that disability denotes an unusual relationship with God and that the person with disabilities is either divinely blessed or damned: the defiled evildoer or the spiritual superhero.
>
> (70, 1994)

The disabled person is other than human: either more sinful than able-bodied people, or more heroic than able-bodied people. Either way, what it means to be a person gets related more closely to ability than to disability. Disabled people today may encounter either or both motifs of "disability as sin" or "disability as heroic" in their congregations' healing services, special prayers, or other liturgical acts.

A third way people have long treated disability is to spiritualize or allegorize physical and mental ailments. For example, an often-debated text in disability studies is from the New Testament letter 2 Corinthians 12. In this chapter, Paul describes being caught up into heaven, and seeing God himself. Yet Paul tempers his elation at seeing God with the following words:

> Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

How should that "thorn in the flesh" be interpreted? Some see the thorn as a physically-experienced thorn, some kind of disease or ailment that enables Paul to experience Christ's own suffering. Others see that thorn in the flesh as a symbol of people who oppose Paul – so that disability caused by a thorn might in fact be symbolic of political or theological opposition. Basil of Caesarea is one church father who suggests that a heretical group opposed to him is a thorn in his flesh (Collins 2011, 168). Thomas Aquinas suggests Paul experienced physical pain, but this was so that he would not be tempted by greater spiritual evils, such as the sin of pride (Collins 2011, 171).

Another example of spiritualizing disability is the ancient use of the word *phrenitis*, a word describing mental illness in ancient Roman society, and which theologians borrowed. *Phrenitis* was used in similar ways to today's "crazy," as in "that person is driving me crazy," but took on the additional meaning of opposition or heresy. As Wright (2017) notes:

> In Augustine's work, as in the writings of contemporary preachers such as John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and Peter Chrysologus – *phrenitis* served as a metaphor or a model for illness of the soul. That is, in early Christian terms, the failure to be saved. *Phrenitis* stood in for the delusion, the loss of self-control, and the threat of death that Christian authors associated with alternative religious paradigms.

Using mental illness in this way is troubling for a number of reasons related to personhood. One is that it enables simple dismissing of both people and arguments, on the basis that they are crazy or insane. Dismissing people for perceived mental illnesses dismisses their personhood and leads to ableism – a sense that only people with apparently perfect mental health (so often determined by people with power and money) deserve a hearing. Spiritualizing physical or mental health is a major way that contemporary people continue to respond to disability; for example, Catholics might still "offer up" their suffering to heaven, in which they link their suffering to the suffering of Christ.

A fourth major way to depict disability is to link disability with caring "for the least of these" as Jesus commands in Matthew 25:40. The third-century theologian Gregory of Nyssa's homilies on poverty include discussion of people who are disabled in some way. He comments on leprosy, which "robs

humans of 'their human form,' turns them into 'monsters,' 'beasts" (Caspary 2012, 31). Yet Nyssa continues by suggesting that sickness and ill health are part of human nature and belong to all of us. We all therefore have a responsibility to recognize each other as human and care for each other as people made in the image of God. In Nyssa's view, illness and disability do not take away that central theological claim, that what it means to be a person is to be made in God's image.

Several difficulties emerge with these four characterizations of disability. First, an emphasis on sin connected to disability risks placing those who are disabled permanently outside their human communities. Second, emphasizing disability as a means of finding God may make disability seem overly desired, or overly triumphalist about disability, which may lead to people ignoring the real pain and suffering of the disabled. Third, spiritualizing disability or using disability as metaphors for other questions can have the effect of dismissing disability and its concerns. It also makes philosophical or theological disagreements into an illness to be cured. Fourth, while emphasizing care for the least of these is a way for emphasizing the need to establish real relationships with disabled people, it also can establish that relationship as a one-way street, suggesting that disabled people do all the receiving of help.

Of course, the four trajectories I describe in this section do not describe all the possible ways that people have engaged with disability. Still, these are major emphases that are present to this day. All of these emphases run the risk of objectifying disabling conditions – in positive or negative ways – without proper attention to the *person* who has the disability, and without fully including or engaging that person.

Some scholars, like Amos Yong, have argued for re-reading scripture with disability in mind. In his book *The Bible, Disability and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (2011), Yong uses scriptures to tell a story in which God in fact includes people with disabilities into God's own life, and into the church. He focuses, for example, on the "one body, many members" vision in Ephesians to suggest that there is a unique, desired, and important place in Christian life for disabled people (see especially chapter 4 in Yong, 2011).

Contemporary Philosophical and Theological Strands

The modern period (1750 to the present) presents its own particular questions related to disability, questions that at times link to earlier historical concerns but that also develop in new or different ways. These questions arise especially out of modern philosophical thought (for example, the Enlightenment), and have significant proponents in contemporary ethics.

For example, Enlightenment thought (and its antecedent ways of thinking) has focused on rationality and autonomy as important characteristics of what it means to be human and what it means to be part of human society. To be autonomous is to be truly free, and to be able to make choices about one's own life. To be rational is to be able to participate in free society, and recognize the importance of freedom and individuality. People with profound disabilities complicate the notions of choice and rationality, since most disability is not had by choice. In addition, disabled people are often perceived as people without the physical or mental capacity to participate fully in a rational, Enlightened society.

Utilitarian thought has some of its roots in Enlightenment thinking. Jeremy Bentham (1747–1832) is credited with originating this ethical framework, which emphasizes "the greatest good for the greatest number" as a means of determining what is right or wrong to do. On this view, it is possible to determine and calculate human happiness in a rational and universally-recognized way. A utilitarian view often

does not leave much room for those with disabilities, since the default thinking is "a person with a disability must necessarily be unhappy." A corollary thought is that parents or other caregivers of people with disabilities are unhappy or miserable by association, or that people with disabilities add burdens to the human community because of their medical costs or inability to hold a job. One of the more notorious arguments in this vein comes from utilitarian thinker Peter Singer, who has aroused much anger and concern from Christian scholars because of his view that disabled infants do not satisfy the requirements for what it is to be human (Singer 1993, 175–217).

Disability studies suggests that focusing on pleasures and pains not only wrongly emphasizes able-bodied people as the ones deserving of life and happiness but that it is also unwise to make judgments about disabilities from the perspective of misery, especially since our perception of misery is culturally situated. A white person with economic advantages probably perceives misery and unhappiness by different markers.

Another strong influence in contemporary understanding of disability is the influence of scientific studies of health and genetics in the nineteenth century. Using some of the newfound scientific discoveries of the day, nineteenth-century thinkers developed a conception of what a "normal" body looks like. Examples included measuring head size, height, weight, and color of skin, and comparing them to determine a normative view of bodies. Late twentieth-century philosopher Michel Foucault described this new view of what counts as normal as the "medical gaze." Foucault further argued that this medical view led to "docile bodies" of people that could be controlled by those in power. The way that we take on these docile bodies is by pretending that we have choices about how we use our bodies and that we could and should therefore change and fix those bodies as necessary. Thus, the "normal" body could be used to compare to other bodies and determine not only who was disabled, but to determine a standard by which the abnormal body could be fixed. A person with a missing leg could have that leg restored (via prosthetics) and thus disability would be fixed. The same could occur for those with vision, hearing, and other such impairments.

Later scholars of disability have named this the "medical model of disability." The medical model has persisted through the twentieth century to the present day. Medical models have a particular focus on using technologies to enable disabled people to be part of society. Much medical literature emphasizes this kind of view, as we might expect.

In addition, the idea of a "normal" body easily mapped onto newfound nineteenth and early twentieth-century concerns for hygiene, health, and preserving a robust human race. Authors and activists of the day argued that "feeble minded" people should be sterilized so that they wouldn't pass feeble genes on to others. This was most noted in the Buck *vs.* Bell case that tested whether the state of Virginia had rights to sterilize people deemed unfit. The plaintiff in the case was Carrie Buck, who probably suffered from effects of poverty and a worrisome foster care program rather than anything that could be called "feeble mindedness." (Lombardo 2010). This early version of a eugenics movement has not disappeared from sight. In the early twenty-first century, versions of eugenics and eugenic reasoning appear in relation to abortion and Down's syndrome. In fact, aborting supposed Down's syndrome babies has, in disability circles, become named as one of the most significant issues of justice. Babies diagnosed with Down's syndrome via prenatal testing are aborted at rates between 60 and 90 percent depending on the country (Gee 2016; Wolfberg 2012). Such hints of eugenics appear in relation to other disabilities, too. In a medical model of disability, for example, dwarfism is something to be fixed via growth hormones. For some dwarves, this may mean complete eradication of a group of people, depending on point of view

(see Little People of America, an advocacy group for dwarves and others of short stature, www.lpaonline.org). Cochlear implants are also sometimes seen as an eradication of deafness, and with it, deaf culture, with its sign language (Tucker 1998).

Numerous thinkers have been concerned with the effects of a medical model. Pope John Paul II's famous phrase "culture of death" applies to much work in disability studies. A culture of death promotes death of those who are imperfect, the ones who don't meet the standards of normalcy. A culture of death sees people as expediencies. Those who are unable to match and support the efficiency required by a capitalist economy can and should safely be ignored or removed. This not only connects disability to the already fraught debate about abortion, but also to euthanasia, genetic testing, prenatal care, and other bioethics concerns (Pope John Paul II 1995, on the connection between disability, abortion, and culture of death, see especially paragraph 63).

John Paul II's concerns about global capitalism mirrors concerns raised by people in non-Western religious traditions, who have very different views of disability, and who also see capitalism as unjust colonization of native peoples. Non-Western views of disability may well be more accepting of disabled people, and at the same time similarly call capitalist regimes into question. There is additionally a link between a medical model of disability, colonization, and missionary work, as Benedicte Ingstad argues: "Linked to education, also from the start a missionary concern, biomedical knowledge provided new options for treatment of conditions that previously seemed unchangeable" (Ingstad 2001, 777).

Christian theologian Stanley Hauerwas writes about the tyranny of normality (in a chapter by the same name) in which he argues against some of the moral language ethicists and others use about disability. "We usually associate movements toward justice in our society with the language of equality. We assume to be treated equally is to be treated justly, but on reflection we may discover that is not the case. Often the language of equality only works by reducing us to a common denominator that can be repressive or disrespectful" (Hauerwas 1986, 213). Normalcy suggests a kind of equivalency – a desire to be a community of equals. This might seem nice on the face of it, except that what normalcy doesn't allow for is difference. The fact of disability might make us focus less on an ideal of equality, and more on difference. As Hauerwas goes on to argue "good communities learn to use the experience that comes from different functions" (Hauerwas 1986, 216).

Hans Reinders further articulates some of the concerns with liberal philosophies in his book *The Future of the Disabled in Liberal Society*. The kind of freedom and choice articulated by some also means the destruction and death of others. For example, Reinders argues that the possibilities present in genetic research – the eradication of certain kinds of genetic traits and diseases that seem to prevent people from participating fully in society – also seems to mean eradication of a whole group of people. If we work to eradicate diseases and traits, that also tends to mean we neglect to work for the inclusion of all people in our society, since we are actively working for the exclusion of certain groups of people. This exclusion, in turn, links to another aspect of liberal philosophies, which is the concept of equality. Equality has been an important idea for many thinkers. Reinders argues, however, that when it comes to genetic "fixing" of individuals, we are not really interested in an equality that includes all, but an equality of all those who might be considered "normal." A hope in genetic science suggests a hope in progress, especially scientific progress, and yet that limits our ability for care and compassion with others who do not meet the demands for normalcy (Reinders 2000).

One response to liberal philosophical thinking is to provide an alternative philosophy of what it means to be a person. Thomas Reynolds, basing his work in part on Alasdair MacIntyre's (1999) book *Dependent*

Rational Animals, suggests that what it means to be human is to be dependent, rather than independent and autonomous. The dependency of disability simply becomes one among many kinds of dependencies, a shared trait among all human beings. Thus disability is not an oddity in a society that privileges normalcy, but disability is itself simply part of what it means to be human (Reynolds 2008). Similarly, Deborah Creamer's important book on disability claims to be neither too triumphalist, nor too negative about disability. She speaks about bodies as having limits, which means both abled and disabled bodies (Creamer 2008). Embodied limits simply name a truth about what it means to be human, and thus places ability and disability squarely in the definition of what it means, quite simply, to be human.

In the late twentieth century, some scholars devised a new model of disability that moved away from a focus on normalcy and fixing the disabled individual. This new model is named the social model, and it sees society as the chief problem in disability. In the social model view, society creates disability by not enabling people – all people – to interact with each other. For example, a building without a wheelchair ramp has dis-enabled people in wheelchairs.

Social models of disability take the emphasis off of the seeming abnormality of the disabled person, and instead hints that it is society that is abnormal and unjust for not being inclusive. Social models of disability have allowed space for disabled people to seek justice. Social models are also the predominant model in disability studies currently. For example, the authors of the book *Deaf Gain* articulate several ways in which the very fact of being deaf is a benefit for contemporary society, rather than a hindrance (Bauman and Murray 2014). Examples include that deafness was the impetus for SMS technology, which we now encounter as the ubiquitous texting that provides much modern communication. Sign language and silence are other aspects of deaf gain explored in this book.

The social model of disability is now the major way of thinking about disability across disciplines. One important example is John Swinton, a foremost thinker in disability and theology, who has written the book *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefullness, and Gentle Discipleship*, which argues for a new conception of the theological doctrine of creation and the theological understanding of time. By rethinking these, we create space in our communities for the profoundly disabled and those with dementia or other serious brain injuries (Swinton 2016). For Christian tradition, rethinking community in order to be more inclusive of those with disabilities is a significant and important theological attempt to recognize disabled people as full persons made in the image of God.

Social models of disability have significant limits, however. One of those limits is that by over-emphasizing society as the chief problem, we may overlook the fact that people with disabilities do rely on medicine for help. Medical fixes can be important for people with disabilities and their participation in society. Social models of disability might also be dismissive of a person's pain and suffering insofar as they focus on social ills and suggest disability is a construct.

Going Forward

What I have tried to show so far is a broad array of ways people have thought about disability and personhood, both historically in the West, and in terms of contemporary ethical theories and questions. I suggest that disability is implicated in so many ideas, texts, and philosophical questions, that I would argue that disability needs to be assumed from the beginning of any work as having importance for any particular ethical conversation. In this entry alone, we have seen links to creation, sin, depravity, the

image of God, hermeneutics of ancient literature and scripture, poverty, colonialization, politics and power, choice and free will, worship (including healing services), and common ethical issues like abortion and euthanasia related to personhood and disability.

In my estimation, ethicists therefore need to be aware of disability and its implications in all our work, regardless of whether we write on something we would name explicitly as "disability studies." We have a very broad Western tradition with which to dialogue about disability, both positively and negatively, and we need to make use of that tradition.

More than that, ethicists need to think seriously about what it means to be a community that truly recognizes the personhood of all, regardless of body type and ability. In this respect, we have a practical example in Jean Vanier. Vanier has long been an icon for disability theory and theology, but he writes extensively about the nature of what it means to be community together (Vanier 1992). Vanier is a founder of the L'Arche communities, in which abled and disabled people live together in community, and in which people do the hard work of ensuring that each person's life and work is valued and seen as integral to the functioning of that community. Vanier's L'Arche stands in stark contrast to the predominant ways that disabled bodies are treated in mainstream society. Vanier does not shy away from the fact that being community together is a quite difficult task. Yet, describing what it means to consider all as persons – and to consider the implications of saying so, even and especially in communities like Vanier's – this is the call of religious ethics.

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CHAPTER 118

Class

Devin Singh

Introduction

In this entry, I review attempts to describe and analyze class in relation to common metrics such as income, wealth, earning potential, and economic mobility. Rather than simply by quantitative indices, I claim that class should be defined primarily by the forms of economic power and privilege accessible to a given subset of society. Such power and privilege can be further understood by the relationship to labor and the means of production, and by the capacity or lack thereof to realize the economic interests of a given social subset. Such positionality is deeply imbricated in culturally specific markers of status, intellectual and cultural capital, and other forms of symbolic power. It also intersects crucially with categories of race, gender, and sexuality and requires intersectional analysis. I consider matters of class consciousness and relate this to discussions of the epistemic privilege of the poor and marginalized. I then explore what class means for religious ethics, asking how religious and ethical concerns (informed primarily by Christian traditions) interact with the question of class. I offer outlines for a normative framework for approaching the question of class within religious ethics, informed by liberationist perspectives, womanist traditions of social ethics, and an ethics of care.

What is Class?

While any given society is multiform, and social groupings are crisscrossed with a variety of differentiating factors and markers, for heuristic and socio-analytic purposes, not to mention the needs of demography and policy, class distinctions are typically based on economic factors (Wright 2005; Rieger 2013). Class is a term used, often vaguely, to capture the level and form of economic power and privilege accessible to particular segments of society. While this is not all that one might mean, this dimension of economic power is significant and even central to understanding the category of class. Such economic power is signaled by indicators like wealth and income level, as well as earning potential and economic mobility. Yet attempts to delineate class neatly with quantitative metrics such as income or education levels are usually inadequate for providing a meaningful descriptor of class identity. Class also signals one's positionality with regard to labor power, and the ability one has to command and enjoy the fruits of labor. Class location and mobility are often a function of education or forms of cultural and intellectual

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

capital, such as skill, training, and experience, and often run together with other social factors such as one's relational network and the opportunities that arise because of one's affiliations. This is why multidimensional and intersectional analyses are typically necessary when class is under consideration, since many social and cultural factors are at work in determining class identity and the mobility one might have within and out of a class.

Demarcating class based on simple quantitative metrics may be useful from a technocratic perspective of social policy and planning, but it is rarely socially explanatory. It may also lead to interesting tensions depending upon the metrics used. Consider the option of basing class distinctions on either education level or income level, both common metrics used in the United States. In an oft-cited comparison between university professors and tradespeople such as construction workers and electricians, professors may be in a "higher" class relative to tradespeople when education level is considered, but in a "lower" class relative to tradespeople when income level is considered. Beyond the potentially contradictory policy proposals that might originate from such a case, depending upon what measure is used, such metrics consider class identity in a vacuum, evaluating a single variable that on its own yields little insight.

One influential way to delineate class draws upon classical Marxian categories (Marx 1976). Class figured centrally in Marx's analysis of capitalist society and indeed was extended to various other periods and economic formations. Arguably, "[c]lass is the focus of Marx's work not because he assigns it a greater explanatory role in human history than other aspects of society, but rather because it has been repressed from consciousness generally and from the consciousness of capitalism's critics in particular" (Wolff 2013, 30). Class thus emerges as a pivotal explanatory lens in part as a corrective to regnant forms of social analysis blind to its importance. His approach defines class in terms of the mode of production and one's location within the particular relations of production within that mode. One can delineate and assess segments within a society based upon how they operate within the specific mechanisms of power that sequester labor and use it to generate value through the engines of production.

Within capitalism, the major class distinction is between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The former class owns the means of production and hence retains control over technology, machinery, land, and all elements used by labor to create value and produce goods. Members of the latter class own only their labor power and must sell this labor to the bourgeoisie in exchange for a wage. The wage is therefore used as a demarcator of labor and signature of value. Class belonging here thus defines where one stands in this broad economic schema. The bourgeoisie or capitalist class retains control over the means of production and various artifacts of congealed labor power such as machinery and other technology. The proletariat or working class retains control over its labor power, and is constrained to work for the capitalist class to generate the means of subsistence and social reproduction. Its labor also generates a surplus, however, and yet the mechanisms of capitalism allocate this surplus to the ownership of the bourgeoisie or capitalist class despite it stemming from the labor of the proletariat. This approach using classic Marxian categories is thus useful for understanding the allocation of power and access in a society, prompting questions of justice and resource distribution, such as whether the needs for survival and flourishing are being broadly met.

The Marxian lens draws attention to two factors that remain central to class analysis: economic power and privilege and the fact that class is a relational category. As suggested at the outset, class remains meaningful when attending to economic dimensions primarily, even while intersectional realities must be kept in view. Beyond economic metrics, however, many of which take class as a static category, the significance of class analysis emerges when power and privilege are brought into view. Power is the capacity to realize one's class interests and those interests are often conflictual and agonistic with respect

to other classes. Therefore, power includes the capacity to influence and direct the will and actions of other classes. Class thus pertains to the types of economic power that a certain subset of society is able to exert on other segments of society, with privilege indexing the particular advantages a class has in exercising said power.

Most complex societies involve divisions of labor, with subsets defined by the types of labor they perform, the differential values placed on that labor, and potentially but not necessarily different allocations of the fruits of such labor. Group levels of economic power and privilege are modified and conditioned by the group's location in a social network. Such levels are dynamic and processual, and best captured not in isolated or fixed indices but in analysis of the entire network and of the operation of the parts in relation to the whole (Thompson 1964). Class is thus a relational term, addressing classes in distinction from one another and in terms of their respective forms of agency and effects on each other (Aronowitz 2003; Zweig 2004). This is why class is less helpfully demarcated in purely quantitative terms – such as income level, net worth, or years of education. It requires additional evaluation in qualitative terms – the forms of economic power a particular social subset is able to exercise as well as the types of economic power to which it is subjected (Rehmann 2013).

Class in Society

Because class is a relational category and involves group location in a social network relative to other groups, the category of social capital offers important resources for class assessment. Here I draw on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who extended Marxian categories to account for cultural and relational aspects that remain critical for grasping the dynamics of economic power in societies. His analysis of the forms of capital and the nature of distinction and symbolic power are particularly relevant in this regard (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu 1998). Bourdieu's approach draws attention to the relational aspect of capital, which in turn connects with class as a relational category. His theory is also useful in helping to conceptualize the signals and symbols that mark class, the ways symbolic power and cultural methods of distinction figure into class agency and privilege. This also sheds light on how other social categories may be indexed or cross-referenced with class and modulated based on class position.

Bourdieu explains that capital can take on various modes in society, outlining three main forms: financial, social, and cultural capital. Financial capital deals with material wealth and typically economic dimensions. Such a lens pertains most directly to dominant conceptions of class, calibrated as class tends to be to "properly" economic factors. Social capital indicates the benefits that come from membership within a group, however we define such benefits and however we demarcate group belonging. Such benefits stem from formal and informal relational networks within a social grouping, and provide a member access to other benefits enjoyed by group members, many of which are economic. These benefits may also be symbolic, wherein being marked as a group member alone affords advantages and privileges in a society that ascribes honor, status, and power to such group identity. Cultural capital speaks to resources of intellect, education, and artistic and cultural formation afforded certain group members that provide unseen advantages in negotiating a society's particular challenges and opportunities. Bourdieu notes that capital exhibits fluidity and a capacity for conversion: one form of capital may transmute – or transubstantiate, to use his intentionally theological terminology – into another. This is why it is common that access to one form of capital often affects one's capital levels in its other forms.

Social capital signals that there is a kind of capital that inheres in *belonging* to particular social groups. By necessity, social capital thus understood requires differentiation and exclusion. Without boundary markers, such group membership is meaningless. In other words, if belonging to a certain group means social status and advancement, such capital would evaporate if the barriers to entry were eliminated and anyone could become part of the group. By its very nature, then, social capital requires forms of distinction, exclusion, and boundary maintenance, however arbitrary. Observers concerned with matters of justice and equality, as well as deleterious effects of segregation and marginalization in society, have thus highlighted the exclusionary dynamics of social capital's operations.

Because of the need for distinction and group boundary maintenance, groups develop symbolic markers and signals of group belonging. Thorstein Veblen's (1899) classic study of the leisure class offers a glimpse into the ways classes differentiate themselves from one another. In this case, ruling class belonging is marked by the forms of conspicuous consumption and leisure exhibited by group members. He also demonstrates how such practices are at times emulated by those outside the class, in an attempt to signal belonging or enjoy aspects of the privilege afforded such a class. Yet because groups are highly effective at policing their boundaries and forms of social distinction, such emulation is typically discernible, meaning it does not lead to seamless inclusion within the dominant group. Indeed, the emulated group may then modulate its practices, as in the case of the wealthy adopting forms of modesty and occlusion of affluence, while the less wealthy exhibit types of ostentation in an effort to mimic a now obsolete set of aristocratic practices. The insight from studies such as Veblen's is that class belonging, while centrally a factor of the type of economic power and privilege enjoyed by that group, is also bound up with sets of practices and symbolic markers that indicate access and can transfer the privileges of group belonging.

Whether or not symbolic differentiation is intentional, such distinction is often nevertheless at work in societies, as groups based on class factors of economic power and forms of labor often accrue other cross-references such as race, gender, sexuality, and ability. It has long been observed that class is racialized and gendered, with growing recognition that sexuality, too, factors in. Since labor power figures centrality in class identity, matters of ability are also clearly indexed, as barriers to and constraints around work influence one's ability to sell labor power. This means that categorization within particular identity groups in society has a consistent, observable bearing on one's class designation. This can be documented in the statistically significant paucity of women and racial/ethnic minorities among the class of owners of the means of production. The long history of legal barriers to property ownership for such groups is one of several clear causal factors for such disparity.

Therefore, both because of the group tendency to differentiate and police boundaries, and the historical legacy of eliding class with other markers such as race, gender, sexuality, and ability, intersectional analyses are called for (Crenshaw 1995; Collins 2000). At the most fundamental level, this means that when assessing class, that is, when evaluating the factors that forge differences among social subsets based on economic power and privilege, looking for "purely economic" factors is insufficient. Examining the existence of class also requires attending to the reproduction of classes, and thus matters of social reproduction and affective labor must also be considered (Bhattacharya 2017). Answers to the why, how, whence, and whither of class differences will therefore come from analyzing these other important identity markers and social categories that transcend the economic, narrowly construed.

Class Consciousness and Epistemic Privilege

In assessing the presence and persistence of class differences in society, one is led to ask whether a society and its various classes are aware of and recognize such differentiations, and what such knowledge means for these allocations of economic power. Marx observed that members of the proletarian class had differing levels of awareness of their social location or of the existence of their class at all, their class significance, and their capacity to change their class status. This awareness has been termed "class consciousness." Such capacity for recognition is historically and economically conditioned (Marx 1963; Jameson 1981). One of the paradoxical benefits of capitalism is that the forces of abstraction and reification that form commodities can also contribute to a critical distance that enables a class to recognize itself, in ways that may be distorted but can be clarified (Lukács 1971). The Marxist tradition generally seeks to transform the consciousness of the proletarian class from mere self-recognition ("class in itself") to united solidarity and action against capitalism ("class for itself"). A broader tradition of the sociology of knowledge stops short of advocating a specific political program while recognizing more generally that class location will affect one's perspective and view of reality (Mannheim 1959).

Class consciousness can be related to what has been called the hermeneutical or epistemic privilege of the poor and marginalized, a principle taken up in liberation theology (Boff 1993; Singh 2017). This notion builds upon the biblical sense of God's favor upon and presence among the poor (e.g. Matthew 25:31–46), as well as the Catholic magisterial principle of the "preferential option for the poor." The position extends the idea of such prioritization of the poor to a claim about where truth, clarity, and, in some cases, revelation, are to be found. The claim is that the realities of the world and society are seen most clearly from the vantage point of the poor. Those who would have eyes to see must adopt a position alongside the poor and marginalized in order to grasp the truth of the situation. Not only can the world be glimpsed more clearly, but divine truths apprehended more accurately from this perspective.

For instance, the establishment of base ecclesial communities in Latin America – centered upon reading scripture closely with members of impoverished and exploited classes – was fueled by the quest for a clarity of mind and heart that was enabled by this lens of poverty and exclusion. Reading the Bible and society "through the eyes of the poor," then, proclaimed the belief that one's particular social position in relation to economic power and privilege served or inhibited one's access to the truth (Sobrino 1984). Those of wealthy and privileged backgrounds had skewed views of reality. Aligning themselves with the poor was a way not only to serve and show solidarity, but to seek their own epistemic salvation and interpret the world, themselves, and God correctly.

We can see how this coincides with the idea of proletarian class consciousness. The latter asserts that a class for itself understands its position in society, the reasons for this location, and the mechanisms that need to be changed in order to establish more just and equitable socio-economic relations. Such a class has achieved a kind of enlightenment, a heightened awareness of social realities, and a sense of the course that must be plotted for liberation. Such awareness is not idealistic, however, remaining in the realm of thought alone. Rather, it is manifested in praxis, in concrete action and effort to change class distinctions. The class sees and acts clearly, and presumably any who join in solidarity with its struggle and position come to see clearly as well.

Class and Religious Ethics

These matters of solidarity and alignment with marginalized classes raise ethical issues around class. While class analysis may be done for the ostensibly neutral concerns of demography and social investigation, typically, when class is invoked, conversations about the appropriate individual and communal responses to class tensions and inequities quickly follow. Already implicit in many of the approaches cited above, ethical concerns abound concerning the nature of power differentials, inequities of privilege and access, and the relative agency of certain classes with regard to others. Marx set his sights on a classless society, free from the injustices engendered by class distinctions and differences. Working within a Marxist trajectory, Bourdieu's analysis of social capital also explores ways to overcome class power differences, in part through the reallocation and redistribution of capital, often in its non-economic forms, such as changes to education systems that prevent the ossification and exacerbation of cultural capital inequities.

What might it mean to think about class from the perspective of religious ethical theory? A number of ethical theories and frameworks may be relevant to assessing class and responding to moral challenges raised by the realities of class difference and disparity. At the outset it is important to recognize that class location itself shapes religious ethical theory, both in the decisions about which approaches to adopt and in the forms it takes, including which norms and goals to establish. Stemming from the aforementioned insights about class consciousness, social location, and perspectivalism, we must continually keep in sight the reality that class location influences how we might view the moral quandaries raised and what shape responses take.

In an effort to establish a minimal basis for a normative framework, my intervention is informed by womanist social ethics and feminist ethics of care. Womanist ethical approaches lend themselves to and interface directly with questions of intersectionality implicated in class analysis. Womanist scholars were some of the first to point out that the class interests advanced by white feminists, even when inflected with religious concerns, may be at odds with the needs and concerns of black women (Grant 1989). This reveals that class analysis is neither neutral nor purely objective, but involves the subject positions of the analysts and activists involved, including embodied matters of race, gender, and sexuality. The fact that white and black women concerned with class inequity could devise projects that were not in alignment revealed that race remained a critical modulator. Similarly, black women challenged the gender blindness of black male theologians, whose projects left patriarchy unaddressed, revealing that challenges to class inequity could not ignore gender. Poor, black and brown women thus provide a unique paradigmatic position for considering the multiple levels and directions of oppression and domination within contemporary society. A class analysis that employs a womanist lens and framework will thus ideally remain held accountable by these dimensions and avoid some of the typical and recurrent blinders that emerge even when liberationist and progressive class interests are advanced.

Womanist ethics attends to the whole person in conscious resistance not only to the forces of abstraction in capitalist society but to the dehumanization of marginalized peoples. Such a wholistic approach seeks to overcome the fragmentation of existence that is the result in part of the instrumentalization of certain segments of society for the purposes of labor. Implicit, then, is a resistance to considering people solely on the basis of class allegiances, even while economic injustice remains a central object of concern. Yet this challenge opens up into a broader and more thoroughgoing critique of at least two dominant ethical theories: utilitarianism and deontology. While theoretical purists may resist the implication,

utilitarian frameworks can result in the use of others for one's pleasure or utility maximization. The abstraction of class further enables this, where an entire social segment of laborers excluded from ownership from the means of production comes to serve the needs and desires of another governing class.

Deontological ethics within a Kantian tradition, which propose a categorical imperative that remains binding on all agents when certain conditions are met, also run into tensions with womanist priorities. Such an approach evinces a universalism that imagines abstract human needs and ethical concerns regardless of history and context, let alone embodiment and materiality. The situated, perspectival approach of womanist ethics raises concerns about the hidden assumptions of white, male perspectives masquerading as neutral standards for all times, places, and peoples. Therefore, the womanist challenge to abstraction and to disembodied and instrumentalist views of humanity that figure into class inequity also ends up challenging dominant strands of ethical theory, revealing the mutual implication of ethics and class.

Womanist ethicists and theologians question the centrality of suffering in Christian narratives of salvation, specifically challenging the role of surrogate suffering (Townes 1993). Surrogacy in this case denotes suffering on behalf of another, and has been elevated based on a particular interpretation of atonement theology that presents Christ's suffering as redemptive for humanity. In light of the role that black women have played in America, often serving as nannies and wet nurses, laboring and toiling on behalf of their white masters or employers, womanist thinkers critique the supportive role that Christian thought has played in this problematic arrangement (Williams 1993). From the perspective of a religious ethics of class, then, womanist thought issues the caution that Christian narratives of redemptive suffering, which have influenced the development of policy, politics, and economy in the West (Singh 2018), may be at work supporting a system that makes one class toil, labor, and suffer to support another.

The ethics of care is an ethical approach that centers relational existence and assesses morality in terms of one's fulfillment of various relational obligations. It focuses on the needs and concerns of those with whom one is relationally connected, emphasizing the particularity of the needs of others in their specific social and historical contexts. Virginia Held (2006) offers the care of a child as a paradigmatic instance to think through such concerns. Acting morally and ethically in such a scenario stems from vulnerability, affective bonds, relations of mutual dependence, and other senses of obligation that may precede and exceed universalized and abstract maxims of moral virtue. Despite utilizing the child as an exemplary case, an ethics of care is not to be relegated simply to the familial, personal, or private sphere, but has bearing on broader publics including the national and international level. It also bears on matters of justice, and while care and justice cannot be collapsed together, they refine and shape one another in significant ways. Care and concern for the specificity of actors and contexts will emphasize restorative and redistributive forms of justice more than retributive. Beyond models of simple fairness or balance, care will emphasize corrective and ameliorative measures that may look imbalanced when contextual differences are ignored. In this way, a care ethic also coincides with the preferential option for the poor introduced above, prioritizing the vulnerable and marginalized as those in need of special attention and protection.

The ethics of care emphasizes relational existence and eschews atomism and individualism. Not only does ethical formation not happen in isolation, but the ethical as such is relational. Such ethical relationality puts this view into tension with virtue ethics, which at times imply internalized and individually construed paths of moral formation. The ethical individual – and, originally, the virtuous man [*sic*] – were the paradigm to attain, as opposed to ethical postures of relatedness and ethical social networks as such. In attending to the specificity and particularity of ethical others, the ethics of care also pushes back against the universalism of typical deontological approaches. Maxims such as the categorical imperative commend

a universalizable course of action that intentionally denudes the ethical actor of history, society, and culture – not to mention biographical particularities including race, class, gender, and sexuality. Rather, an ethics of care emphasizes that moral action necessarily varies across time and space, that context and the specific needs of the other dictate what the ethical looks like in each situation. Furthermore, religiously inflected ethics of care derive injunctions to care for the poor and vulnerable from religious traditions in ways that resonate powerfully with the normative vision of this ethical system.

Given its attunement to relational dynamics and the variability emerging from specific relational encounters, an ethics of care is particularly suited to class ethics. Because class can be defined by the forms of economic power exerted and experienced by particular social groupings, agonistic relations between and within classes can benefit from an ethical vision that keeps such relationality central. In this regard, an ethics of care can provide systemic critique of the relations among classes, and call for care and concern for the classes rendered vulnerable or precarious. Moves toward restoration and redistribution will also challenge the differences and disparities in economic power and privilege. At the same time, an ethics of care recognizes particularity and the unique differences of those within relations. In terms of class, this means the vision need not entail the erasure of qualitative differences such as the division of labor, but seek to rectify quantitative differences where some are barred from access to the goods of life.

These approaches offer a variety of moral attunements that remain crucial for constructing a religious ethic of class. An overall posture informed by liberationist ideals that give priority to the poor and marginalized means that the exploitation and abuse of classes with less economic power and privilege must be kept in view. Furthermore, a liberationist lens converges with Marxian analyses of class that prioritize the economic mode of production as a central framework for understanding class structure in a society. Womanist ethics refines the general liberationist impulse by situating its analysis more self-reflexively within the intersecting matrices of domination that impose upon poor black women. Assessing and challenging class disparity by examining economic power and privilege alone gives way to a richer lens attuned to the ways racial, gendered, and sexualized differences play into class distinctions and inequities. Womanist thought also casts a critical eye upon the notion of suffering as labor, as productive, particularly on behalf of a more powerful and privileged other. It refutes the ways religious thought has valorized such productive suffering, recognizing how such associations have contributed to the view that enforced labor or labor as drudgery are somehow purifying and redemptive for the exploited worker. Finally, the ethics of care provides an ethical vision situated within relational networks, enabling assessments of class that recognize how various social positions and relations inflect what the moral thing to do is in any given situation. Surpassing individualistically and universally construed moral frameworks that may be blind to the communal and social realities that bear upon the moral problems raised by class, it offers a way to speak about ethical challenges of class with more faithfulness to the actual realities of the situation.

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CHAPTER 119

Disease

Neil Messer

Introduction

This entry is concerned with the ways in which certain religious traditions think about disease, and the ethical response called for by their perspectives. It focuses on Christian and other Abrahamic traditions, and on human rather than non-human disease. Three questions must be addressed: first, what should we understand by disease?, second, how should we evaluate disease, so understood?, third, in the light of these understandings and evaluations, what responses to disease are called for?

Understanding Disease

Disease is usually defined in opposition to health, and there is a debate within the philosophy of medicine about which of these concepts has priority (Messer 2013, ch. 1). In a Christian perspective, health is associated with the capacity to live the kind of life for which we have been created (more of this later). It therefore makes sense to give conceptual priority to health, so understood, and think of diseases as deficits of that capacity or threats to it. For this reason, it is necessary first to sketch briefly the understanding of health which will shape the following account of disease.

Reflections on health in Abrahamic traditions often conceptualize it in terms of wholeness and integrity, connotations suggested by both the Hebrew *šālôm* and Arabic *ṣiḥḥa* and *salāma* (e.g. Gaiser 2010, 243; Sachedina 2009, 78). Such views articulate important insights, for example that a flourishing creaturely life is characterized by bodily and mental integration (cf. Barth 1961, 356). They also fit well with the widespread use of "health," "sickness," and their cognates as spiritual and theological metaphors. However, such holistic views of health also have their dangers, particularly when coupled (as they often are) to the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO 2014, 1). The kind of holistic vision suggested by the WHO definition has well-known philosophical difficulties (Messer 2013, 2–6), but is also theologically problematic. By tending to subsume the totality of human good under the heading of health, the definition makes it more difficult to articulate the theological insight that health, though a real and important human good, is not the only one. It can also encourage the attribution of what a theological tradition may regard as disproportionate value to health.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

For a Christian tradition, health can appropriately be understood as the capacity to live the kind of creaturely life that humans have been given by God: "strength for human life" (Barth 1961, 356). This line of thought may find echoes in other Abrahamic traditions (cf. Dorff 2012, 313), though it will take distinctive forms in each. Christian theology is likely to develop it christologically, seeing in Jesus Christ the fulfillment of what it means to live a human life.

If health is the capacity to live a human kind of creaturely life, then disease has to do with the loss of that capacity, or threats to it; but of course, not all threats to the fulfillment of the penultimate ends of human life are sensibly described as diseases. In this view, "disease" names a certain kind of threat: an internal state or condition that disrupts our physical or mental functioning and so hinders or threatens the fulfillment of our embodied creaturely lives (Messer 2013, 184–186). It is worth emphasizing "physical or mental functioning": in this perspective, a human creature is an integrated psychophysical whole, so it makes sense to speak of mental as well as physical health and disease.

The concept of disease is related to various others, such as illness and sickness. In some accounts, "illness" is sharply distinguished from "disease." The latter is taken to mean an objectively defined physiological (or perhaps psychological) condition, while "illness" refers to the subjective experience of having a disease. Some religious accounts make a similar distinction between subjective and objective perspectives (e.g. Sachedina 2009, 80). The disease/illness distinction may be a helpful reminder of different perspectives from which disease may be understood and experienced: for example, the inescapably different ways in which doctor and patient experience the patient's body and its suffering (cf. Toombs 1992). However, it should not be drawn too sharply, nor should too much weight be placed on it. In the philosophical literature it has sometimes been used in an attempt to define disease (and therefore also health) in objective, value-free scientific ways (Boorse 1975). But in the religious perspectives discussed in this entry, to speak of human creatures' health or to name conditions as diseases is always already to make a claim about the *good* of human creatures: description and evaluation cannot be sharply separated when we speak of disease.

Evaluating Disease

Disease and Evil

Typically, disease involves suffering (physical, psychological, or both) and is therefore experienced *subjectively* as an evil by the sufferer. In the religious perspectives surveyed in this entry, it will often also be regarded as *objectively* evil; yet various kinds of ambivalence about this can be discerned in the traditions.

The New Testament Gospels bear witness to Jesus's resistance to the power of disease and death, for example in narratives of healing, exorcism, and raising from the dead, and ultimately in Jesus's own resurrection from the dead. In the light of this New Testament witness, the Protestant Karl Barth infers that disease must be recognized unequivocally as an aspect of the evil opposed to the goodness of God's creation. Yet he holds this insight in tension with another, to be considered later: that diseases may serve as salutary reminders of our finitude and mortality (Barth 1961, 366–374).

From an Islamic perspective, Sachedina (2009, 77–79) argues that disease may include elements of both moral evil – as when people fail to take proper care of their health – and natural evil, for example

genetic diseases that are not brought on by unhealthy lifestyles. For Abrahamic traditions, the presence of diseases in the world therefore raises questions of theodicy. For example: must an all-powerful Creator be recognized as the originator of diseases, and if so (since God is perfectly good), does that mean they should not, after all be considered evil? Should we rather say that they exist by God's will, to serve God's good purposes? Within Islam, Sachedina traces a range of answers to these questions, reflecting divergent views of divine action in the world and human freedom. At the more "determinist" end of the scale, diseases are seen as occurring by the will of God, and "whatever God does, he does for the best" (Sachedina 2009, 97), while at the other end of the scale there is more emphasis on human agency and responsibility.

Some recent Christian reflection places questions of theodicy in the context of modern evolutionary biology, which intensifies the challenge of accounting theologically for the presence of disease and suffering in the world. The biological processes of disease are products of the same evolutionary processes that gave rise to the human (and other) species celebrated as God's good creatures. Therefore, some authors (notably Southgate 2017) argue that a Christian theodicy must recognize evolutionary suffering (including disease) as part of God's good purpose: God wills the existence of a cosmos that includes all the goods associated with complex life, and an evolutionary process is the only way in which even an all-powerful God could bring such a world into being. This argument is often accompanied by others: that God suffers along with God's creatures, that God will bring suffering to an end and compensate the victims in the life of the world to come, and that humans are called to work with God for the relief of suffering and the healing of the world here and now.

Other Christians, however, still maintain that phenomena like disease should be understood as features of a "fallen" world, opposed to God's good purposes in creation (e.g. Messer 2009). "Fallenness" here is not taken as a historical claim about the origins of evil, but a statement about the present condition of the world. Features of the present-day world such as disease are to be understood as evils, contrary to the will of God. The biblical and theological themes already mentioned are taken to indicate divine opposition to such evils, and to point to the eschatological hope that they will, in God's promised good future, be fully and finally overcome.

Disease and Sin

Abrahamic traditions have often seen diseases as connected in some way with sin. For example, a well-known New Testament text exhorts the sick to have the elders of the church pray for them and anoint them: "The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (James 5:15–6a).

One way of understanding this is to think of diseases as punishments sent by God for specific sins; this understanding is found, but also vigorously questioned, in the Abrahamic traditions. In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Job thoroughly problematizes such a view, as does a New Testament story in which Jesus heals a man born blind: "His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him'" (John 9: 2–3). Similarly, there are elements of Islamic tradition which see diseases as expiation or purification from sin, but others in which this view is challenged quite pointedly (Sachedina 2009, 91–93).

Apart from a simple view of diseases as divine punishments for specific sins, there are various ways in which Christian thinkers make sense of biblical texts, theological traditions, and practices that make connections between sin and disease. In general, as we have seen, both sin and disease may be understood as aspects of evil. For a Protestant like Karl Barth, we humans – sinful and alienated from God – have subjected ourselves to evil, and our subjection must therefore also be understood as God's judgment on us. Paradoxically, this is fundamentally good news, because it points toward God's mercy and the promise that both sin and disease, like other aspects of evil, will be overcome through God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ (Barth 1961, 366–369). A more specific connection often made in the Abrahamic traditions is that ill health is one kind of harm suffered by those who are sinned *against*, either by individuals or as a result of unjust social systems and structures.

Disease and Spiritual Growth

St Paul's story of a "thorn in the flesh" that afflicted him (2 Corinthians 12:7–10) is one Christian source of the insight that disease – though evil in itself – may nonetheless be an occasion for spiritual growth and the exercise of greater faith and trust in God. This thought is developed in various ways in different Christian traditions. In Protestantism, Barth (for example) insists in the strongest terms that sickness is a real and terrible evil, opposed to God's good purposes. Yet without wanting to compromise that insight in any way, he also argues that the experience of sickness can remind us of our frailty and mortality. It can thereby redirect our attention to the true source of our ultimate hope, the eternal life promised by God in and through Jesus Christ (Barth 1961, 371–374).

Other Christian traditions may emphasize even more strongly the connections between disease and spiritual growth. In the Catholic tradition, Pope John Paul II reflected on the salvific meaning of suffering, in the light of the New Testament themes of sharing in Christ's suffering and (in St Paul's words) "completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of ... the Church" (Colossians 1:24; John Paul II 1984; but for a critique see Biggar 2004, 50–55). And in Orthodox Christianity, diseases and afflictions diseases may be seen, not only as potential prompts to reorient one's life toward God, but as chastisements graciously given by God to undo the effects of sin in believers' lives and help them on their ascetic journey toward deification (Delkeskamp-Hayes 2006).

The spiritual value of suffering is also a significant theme in Islamic tradition, for example in Qur'anic texts and Prophetic traditions in which "suffering caused by illness and death is [seen as] a divinely ordained tool for testing and perfecting human beings" (Sachedina 2009, 91). For example, illnesses may serve to expiate sins, to admonish and warn, or to test and refine a person's faith.

Responding to Disease

A Mandate for the Work of Healing

To name disease as an evil, opposed to God's good purposes for human creatures, is to state a strong theological mandate for the work of healing in its various forms. In the Christian tradition, this is illustrated by the Gospel narratives of healings performed by Jesus, which can be seen as signs that in his life, death, and resurrection God "has overcome and bound [the forces of death] and therefore those of

sickness" (Barth 1961, 368). This also implies a theological mandate for human beings to oppose the destructive work of disease in the world. In this respect Barth is one among many voices echoing a core Christian conviction about disease and the proper response to it, a conviction reflected in diverse ways in Christian practices of healing and healthcare from New Testament times to the present day. On the one hand this takes the form of Christian involvement in the practice of medicine, and on the other a ministry of healing involving practices traceable back to the New Testament, such as prayer, the laying on of hands, and anointing with oil (Archbishops' Council 2000). There is potential for tension between these two expressions of the Christian mandate to heal, for example if seeking medical treatment is perceived as a lack of faith in the healing power of God. In practice, though, even theologians with a very confident view of God's supernatural healing work tend to play down this tension, arguing for complementarity rather than conflict between medicine and Christian healing ministry (e.g. Warrington 2003).

Qualifications of the Mandate to Heal

Counterparts of the theological mandate to heal can be found in the other Abrahamic traditions; yet within all three Abrahamic faiths, elements of ambivalence about the work of medicine can also be discerned. In Judaism, some Talmudic and later texts say that healing is authorized or even commanded by God, so that from one perspective the value placed on healing in Jewish tradition amounts to "a virtual love affair between Jews and medicine over the last 2,000 years" (Dorff 2012, 314). Yet other texts suggest a more ambivalent attitude, seen for example in Talmudic debates about whether consulting a physician betrays a lack of faith in God the true healer (Sinclair 2003, 145–154). In Islam, Sachedina observes that those traditions which took a more determinist view of divine activity have at times been a source of quietism and reluctance to seek medical care, yet Islamic tradition also includes much more positive estimates of the work of medicine (e.g. Sachedina 2009, 82, 84, 91–94).

Within the Christian tradition, the theological mandate to heal will generate a strong ethical presumption in favor of medical practices and therapeutic interventions. However, both the mandate and the ethical presumption require some qualification and nuance. One way of expressing this is by means of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's distinction between the "ultimate" and the "penultimate" (Bonhoeffer 2005, 146–170). In this theological perspective, health is a *penultimate* human good, of genuine but not *ultimate* importance. Diseases which threaten or destroy health will be seen as real and sometimes terrible evils, but not ultimate disasters, nor the worst things that can happen to us.

Those who adopt this qualified and nuanced affirmation of the work of healing will be critical of any tendency to attach *overriding* importance to the curing of disease, or to imagine that it must be done at all costs by any means necessary. This will have many practical ethical implications; a few examples must suffice. It may influence the ways in which Christians think about the allocation of scarce healthcare resources, motivating them to face honestly and faithfully the tragic choices which cannot be evaded (Verhey 2003, ch. 10). It will also influence a Christian ethical analysis of biomedical research, particularly in morally controversial areas. In public ethical and policy debates in some Western countries, to conduct such research is sometimes rhetorically presented as an overriding imperative; moral concerns may be dismissed as the private and irrational scruples of a religious minority, which should not be allowed to obstruct the relief of human suffering. The Christian perspective outlined here will be critical of such rhetorical appeals. It will certainly affirm the great value of biomedical research; but it will resist the tendency to brush aside moral concerns about particular research programs, or to exclude those

moral concerns from the arena of public rationality and confine them to the realm of private religious opinion (Messer 2011, chapters 1, 2).

This account of health and disease also informs an ethical perspective on human enhancement. The distinction between *therapies* (technological or other interventions intended to cure or prevent diseases, and restore or maintain health) and *enhancements* (interventions intended to expand human capacities aside from curing or preventing disease) is often said by non-religious bioethicists to be conceptually incoherent, ethically insignificant, or both (e.g. Harris 2007, 44–46). Some theological ethicists also question its significance (e.g. Koios 2012). Yet if "health" and "disease" refer to a specific and limited sphere of penultimate human good and its deficits, then it makes sense conceptually to distinguish between interventions intended to treat disease and those which aim at overcoming human limitations not caused by disease. This distinction also bears some ethical weight: the theological affirmation of the work of healing will generate a strong (though, as we have seen, not absolute) ethical presumption in favor of therapeutic interventions, but not of enhancements. This need not imply a blanket rejection of the latter, but will suggest a theologically motivated suspicion of such projects insofar as they represent a dissatisfaction with the limitations of embodied creaturely human being as such (Messer 2017, 167–175). In this religious perspective there is nothing wrong with being a finite, mortal, embodied creature.

The Spiritual Value of Disease and Suffering

What of the view that diseases, even if evil, may be occasions for spiritual growth or even serve a salvific purpose? To treat one's disease and suffering as an opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ, or to refuse treatment in order to make progress in one's ascetic journey, are best regarded as vocations of some rather than all people (even those who emphasize this view of disease may acknowledge that few believers are able to respond in this way: see Delkeskamp-Hayes 2006, 227). There may be good reasons to organize healthcare practices and institutions in ways that keep open the space to follow such vocations (e.g. by respecting decisions to refuse treatment for such motives, and continuing to care for patients who make such decisions), but not to impose them as general obligations.

In a more general sense, though, the argument of Barth noted above – that diseases can serve as reminders of our finitude and mortality, and so redirect our ultimate hopes to God – can in Christian perspective be seen as applicable to all. One implication of this might be a reminder that for all of us, fragility, vulnerability, and dependence are simply part of what it is to be a human creature in this world. In modern times we are sometimes reluctant to acknowledge these aspects of our human condition in the ways we imagine and practice healthcare. Patient autonomy, for example, is sometimes conceived in ways that assume the human good consists in being independent, self-determining individuals. The religious perspectives on disease outlined in this entry will be critical of constructions of human flourishing which tend to deny the inescapably frail and (inter-)dependent character of human life.

Again, this may have various practical ethical implications. To give just one example: it is increasingly argued that not only unbearable pain, but also the indignity of losing one's autonomy and becoming dependent on others, can justify voluntary euthanasia or assisted suicide. A religious perspective that regards frailty and dependence as part of the human condition may be critical of this line of argument, since it will contest the view that the value of anyone's life is diminished by dependence or loss of autonomy.

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CHAPTER 120

Home and Homelessness

Laura Stivers

Homelessness is becoming a widespread problem in our world, from refugees fleeing war-torn countries to shantytowns in large urban areas to displaced homeowners from gentrification in the United States. Homelessness is not inevitable. In some cultures, families ensure their members are housed and in some countries, governments prioritize housing people through particular public policies. In the United States we are increasingly accustomed to seeing homeless encampments and people begging on street corners and often think there is little that can be done to address the problem. We also tend to equate homelessness with these visible homeless, but there are many invisible homeless, people who are sleeping in campgrounds, in cars, or at the homes of friends or family. Even for many who have housing, overcrowding or dilapidated dwellings can be a problem. Homelessness and substandard housing are the result of extreme poverty and inequality. Globally this is even more the case, with people displaced by war and violence, natural disasters and extreme weather (often linked to climate change), and global economic policies that favor the rich and hurt the poor. Without a critical analysis of homelessness and global displacement, religious communities can often unwittingly reinforce some of the stigmas and structures that keep poverty and inequality in place. They can also confine hospitality to charity and not envision avenues of advocacy for structural changes that might prevent homelessness, poverty, and inequality.

State of Homelessness in the United States

Since 1984 researchers have classified people who are homeless into three groups (although the groupings are not always distinct): first-time/crisis/transitional, episodic, and chronic. Transitional homelessness refers to individuals or families who are homeless only once or twice and for a short period of time, usually related to an unexpected crisis such as unemployment, divorce, or eviction. Episodic homelessness entails people who cycle in and out of homelessness for differing lengths of time, often related to inpatient treatment centers, detoxification programs, or jail. Chronic homelessness includes people who have lived on the streets or in shelters for prolonged periods of time, and who usually face many obstacles to holding secure employment or housing.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) collects data on visible homelessness (in homeless shelters or on the street), but misses many forms of hidden homelessness, such as people doubling up with family/friends or people staying in motels, campgrounds, or shelters for domestic violence.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Estimates on homelessness differ with the HUD's 2019 point-in-count 567,715 (HUD 2019); whereas the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty estimates that more than 3.5 million Americans are homeless each year and an additional 7.4 million are doubled-up with others due to economic necessity (NLCHP 2015). While people who are chronically homeless are the most visible, the US Conference of Mayors estimates that only 14 percent of homeless individuals fit into this category (US Conference Mayors 2016).

The only consistent variable for people who are homeless is extreme poverty, but there are some frequently found characteristics among people who are homeless. Families whose cash income is less than half of the poverty line ($26,500 for a family of four in 2021) are in extreme poverty (Health and Human Services 2021). According to the United Nations (UN), almost 18.5 million Americans lived in extreme poverty in 2018 (UN 2018). Based on HUD 2019 data, individuals constitute 70 percent of the homeless population and families make up the remaining 30 percent (HUD 2018). While men make up 60 percent of the homeless population, homeless families are more likely to be headed by women. Race is also a factor in who is homeless. For example, African Americans, while only 13 percent of US population, make up almost 40 percent of the homeless population. In contrast, White people constitute 77 percent of the population, but only 48 percent of the homeless population (HUD 2019). Veterans make up 6.5 percent of the homeless population, but this group has seen a 50 percent decrease in homelessness between 2009 and 2019 (NAEH 2020). Chronic homelessness has also decreased due to an emphasis in many urban areas on Housing First, an approach to get people who are chronically homeless into supportive housing. The rationale for focusing on those most in need is in part an economic one as people with chronic illnesses use many public systems in an inefficient and costly way (e.g. emergency rooms, corrections, mental health). In contrast, there was an increase in homelessness over the past ten years for families and unaccompanied youth and children.

The 2016 Hunger and Homelessness Survey administered by the US Conference of Mayors says that for families with children, lack of affordable housing is the leading cause of homelessness, followed by poverty, unemployment, and low-paying jobs (US Conference of Mayors 2016). For unaccompanied individuals, lack of affordable housing and poverty are primary causes of homelessness and for some mental health and/or substance abuse are contributing factors. For women, domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness. A fourth of homeless adults are employed but do not make enough to afford housing (Parade 2018). Some experts on homelessness have used the analogy of musical chairs to illustrate the causes of homelessness. The players are poor households and the chairs are affordable housing units. When the music stops, some people will not get chairs since there are fewer affordable housing units than poor households due to structural factors of housing supply, prices, incomes, and welfare spending. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), there is a shortage of 7 million affordable rental units available for extremely low-income households in 2019 (NLIHC 2020). Those who lose out in this situation of scarcity will be the most vulnerable, due to individual factors (e.g. disability, substance abuse, domestic violence, foster care, prison) and/or discrimination (e.g. racism, sexism, homophobia). The structural factors explain why we have homelessness, while the individual factors identify who is homeless.

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) notes that in the last forty years, wages (adjusted for inflation) have gone down for a vast majority of workers in the United States (EPI 2018). In addition, job security has been steadily dismantled. At the same time, public assistance also decreased. When US postwar hegemony diminished, corporations found they could not make the same profits from production and so good paying manufacturing jobs decreased. Many manufacturing jobs went overseas as corporations could find a cheaper labor supply and lower labor and environmental regulations in developing countries. A number of corporations got involved in mergers and acquisitions to make higher profits, contributing to more job loss.

A shift from investment in production to investment in finance, which was increasingly unregulated, led to dubious investments and financial speculation. Technology and increased automation is also putting a lot of people out of work.

There has been decreased funding for low-income rental assistance despite the increasing income/housing affordability gap. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), federal spending on housing assistance took a sharp turn in 1996, decreasing by 30 percent (CBPP 2016). Chronic underfunding to HUD has also meant that public housing developments are not well maintained and next to no new public housing is being built. Section 8, the Housing Choice Voucher program, is currently HUD's largest rental assistance program. It serves over 2 million households, including families with children, elderly households, and people with disabilities. Participants pay 30 percent of their income toward housing costs and the program covers the remainder up to a set amount (varies by region). The rent cap, as well as landlords in more well-off neighborhoods reticent to take Section 8 vouchers, can make finding housing difficult and often consigns voucher holders to impoverished neighborhoods. Furthermore, lengthy voucher waiting lists mean many families are not getting assistance.

Homelessness is clearly linked to structural factors, namely a lack of affordable housing, poverty, and oppression. We have a political economy without enough jobs for everyone, and too many jobs with inadequate pay and benefits. Furthermore, since the 1980s we have a smaller safety net to catch those who fall through the cracks. While the US government offers some rental assistance for low-income families, it is paltry next to the tax breaks it gives to promote homeownership (e.g. mortgage deduction on up to two homes). According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 60 percent of federal housing spending goes to households with incomes over $100,000 (CBPP 2017). While viable solutions to homelessness would need to address the different needs of particular groups of people who are homeless (e.g. veterans, children, domestic abuse survivors, people with disabilities, people with addictions), all would most likely benefit if we were serious about addressing poverty and decreasing inequality.

Global Displacement

Internationally, the forced displacement of people has hit a record high. Displaced persons have to abandon their homes. Often facing discrimination due to ethnicity or place of origin, they are more likely to become homeless. A United Nations Refugee Agency report finds that almost 79.5 million people were displaced by conflict and persecution in 2019 (UNHCR 2019). Long lasting conflicts, like those in Somalia and Afghanistan; new conflicts and situations of insecurity, such as those in Syria, South Sudan, Yemen, and Venezuela; and a lack of solutions for refugees and internally displaced people, have caused a precipitous rise in the number of people without a home. Heartbreaking is the fact that 40 percent of the world's refugees in 2019 were children, many without their families (UNHCR 2019). A majority of refugees find asylum in neighboring countries but the overwhelming influx of refugees has led some countries to talk of closing their borders. There are also a large number of internally displaced people who have been forced to flee their home but who remain within their country's borders. At the end of 2019, a record 45.7 million people have been displaced internally due to conflict and violence (UNHCR 2019).

Natural disasters and extreme weather (e.g. floods, storms, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, landslides, and extreme temperatures) have caused twice as many displacements as conflict and violence. The Norwegian Refugee Council estimates that fourteen million people every year will be displaced from

weather-related events (NRC 2017). In recent years, south and east Asian regions have had the most weather-related displacements. For example, a 2015 earthquake in Nepal forced 26 million people from their homes, small island coastal people have increasingly been displaced by climate change-induced storms and flooding, and extreme typhoons, cyclones, and monsoon floods have led to displacement in the Philippines, China, and India.

Root causes of global displacement are multidimensional and interconnected. Conflict and violence are often not separate from environmental-related causes such as resource depletion and climate change. Existing racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural divisions are exacerbated by poverty and underdevelopment, weak governments and corruption, and environmental destruction. Colonial legacies and neocolonization in the form of globalization (e.g. unfavorable terms of trade, external debt, and economic reform programs in the Global South) also contribute to poverty, inequality, insecurity, and conflict.

When people flee their homes, they lose most everything – their homes, their jobs/livelihoods, and their material possessions. They can also lose their connection to particular communities that provide support networks and cultural identity. In addition, the education of children is disrupted. The more people are displaced and the longer they are without a home, the more they are traumatized, affecting their ability to recover both physically and psychologically. Displacement and forced migration cause an escalation in poverty and have public health impacts, such as higher rates of communicable diseases, acute malnutrition, and even mortality.

Hospitality and Justice

Hospitality is a foundational value of many different religious traditions. Hospitality is not simply about giving a homeless person charity. It also entails offering places of welcome and care, shaping healing neighborhoods, and advocating for policies and systems that are just and humane. In other words, hospitality must be connected to justice. In Judaism and Christianity, for example, hospitality as justice was a foundation of all morality. Having been freed by God from slavery, the people of Israel understood that a covenant with God included caring for all within their midst by sharing their bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless poor into their houses (Isaiah 58:7). For Christians, Jesus also modeled hospitality as justice. At the last supper, and throughout his ministry, Jesus opened the banquet for all to be seated at the table in relationship with God and one another. Jesus envisioned abundant life for all, where humans are not only physically housed, but are truly at home within caring, inclusive, and sustainable communities. Paul sought to make such a vision of *koinonia* community a reality in the early church. Translations for *koinonia* include fellowship, contribution, sharing, and participation. The early church aimed to embody these values by caring for all its members, distributing goods according to need, and worshipping and praying together (Acts 2: 42–47). Each member of the community participated fully in the fellowship and worship of the community because hospitality as justice was practiced with God's gifts shared sustainably by all.

The problems of homelessness and displacement are not only about people who find themselves without a place to sleep, but reflect a problem in our collective identity as a people and a society. Our high value in the United States on individualism and each person being responsible for him or herself can hinder our ability to envision alternatives to what seems inevitable. Many Americans have been socialized to accept a dominant cultural worldview that promotes individual initiative, enterprise, and achieving the American dream, but a society founded on such a competitive worldview privileges the winners and

marginalizes the losers. The neoliberal agenda that promoters of globalization espouse is also based on an individualistic competitive worldview. The elites in all countries benefit from the global capitalist economy at the expense of the rest. Religious worldviews, in contrast, ought to be based on inclusion and cooperation, encouraging religious followers to challenge the idea that homelessness and displacement are inevitable.

Jesus challenged those who tried to limit the seats at the banquet table and share crumbs rather than abundant loaves. Hospitality as charity does not afford the recipients full human dignity in ways that enable them to participate fully in community and fellowship. The bountiful goods at the banquet table are not earned, but are gifts from God, meant to be sustainably shared by all (including non-human creatures), not hoarded (Leviticus 25: 18–19, 23–24). All of God's creation is interdependent, with each person an intricate part contributing to the whole. Love of neighbor entails both being a neighbor to others and allowing others to be neighbor to us. As the story of the starving widow who serves Elijah (I Kings 17–18) attests, those who are poor and outcast can be just as hospitable as those who are rich and powerful.

While many religious communities preach the values of hospitality and justice, these are empty generalities apart from actual practices that consistently embody these norms. Out of fear, most communities stop short of fulfilling these values. Our real problem is our inability to see everyone as a neighbor. Out of fear we try to protect ourselves and justify such protection by constructing stereotypes that turn our neighbors into "others" who are dangerous. Thus, the homeless are often depicted as dirty, lazy, and drunken despite the fact that many people who are homeless work and many of those affected by homelessness are children. Immigrants, some of whom are refugees fleeing violence and/or environmental destruction, are simply trying to find a home place where they can restart and create stable and flourishing lives. Yet, undocumented immigrants are regularly labeled as "aliens" and increasingly immigrants and refugees are being labeled as dangerous terrorists.

Theologians have argued for the importance of rootedness and home to human well-being. The places we occupy have a lot to do with what and who we are. In short, our individual and communal identities are tied to home places, through both human and ecological relationships. Many have argued that humans need a sense of home if their identities are not to be dispersed and fragmented – we need a place we can pass through the stages of life, where we can belong to a community, where we can have a relationship with the natural elements, and where we have access to the sacred, however understood. Truly belonging to a place means being intimate with the people, land, and institutions of one's community and region. Home is where a person feels rooted, yet for many, rootedness and a home place are elusive. Religious communities can support rootedness and home through their inclusive and welcoming hospitality and by their support of and advocacy for structural justice in our institutions and global economy.

While there is no single blueprint, we could establish some basic levels of human and environmental flourishing. For one, all people in a society ought to have decent housing, access to adequate healthcare and a good education, and if they are able, work that allows them to live healthy lives and contribute to a healthy society. For people who are not able to contribute through work, we ought to find other ways that they can contribute to society and have services and safety nets so they can live well. Basic goods are not all that is necessary for people to flourish, however. Meaningful avenues for participation for all individuals in communities and the broader society are also important. If we are all to participate in society and relate to one another as neighbors, then there also needs to be a rearrangement of wealth and power, on both a national and international level. The substantial inequality in our society and world blocks

solidarity between people and thwarts just and compassionate communities. Charitable paternalism that sustains the status quo supplants solidarity and justice.

Hospitality as justice also requires sustainability. The issue is not simply about how all are going to be seated at the table but also about how we are even going to have a table. Hospitality as justice entails that people with wealth and privilege live more simply so that the earth can continue to sustain itself and its inhabitants. Domestically we must ask what type of houses and communities we are building. Sustainable hospitality requires structural changes that would move the American housing industry's emphasis away from investment in high-end, single-family homes toward earth-friendly, higher density housing and smart growth. Internationally, people from developed countries and elites from developing countries must start consuming less to ensure a home for both human and non-human animals on this earth. Poverty is intricately linked to environmental destruction and addressing climate change by lowering our dependence on fossil fuels is key to preventing global displacement.

Homelessness and global displacement are human-created problems. Religious communities can promote hospitality as justice by treating everyone as a neighbor and by changing structures to protect and/or create a sense of place and home for all. Structural change will require radical change of practice for all but the very poor. True hospitality that promotes solidarity with and justice for the homeless and displaced requires inclusive communities and implementation of domestic and international policies that address poverty, inequality, and climate change.

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CHAPTER 121

Moral Struggle

Elizabeth Sweeny Block

Struggle in the moral life is a given. Moral struggle conveys the reality that human beings are "moral works-in-progress," that is, we are "broken, incomplete, morally blind persons trying to understand and live with other broken, incomplete, morally blind persons" (Clairmont 2011, 12). The moral life is not characterized by comfort and certainty; rather, it is a challenge and a journey. Humans are finite, flawed beings, limited by our bodies, by our historical, social, and cultural locations, and by the challenge both to know the right thing to do and to act on that knowledge. Moral struggle is the condition of being a moral agent, and yet the reality of moral struggle does not mean the moral life is characterized only by confusion and despair. In fact, certain kinds of moral struggle can be constructive, formative, and productive. Moral struggle is a reality of human life; it is the labor that characterizes moral agency. Basic moral struggle is the difficulty in discerning the right and good and in aligning one's intellect, desires, and will. A person may know the good and still not do it. Other forms of moral struggle, experienced and carried out by those who endure and resist oppression, are unique in that an agent is unable to do what is commonly considered good given the circumstances and context. This moral struggle, connected with moral injury or conditions of oppression, is distinct from the basic moral struggle – the conflict between knowledge and action – that characterizes the moral life. Additionally, large scale, global moral problems "such as violence and climate change" give rise to a new kind of struggle to deal with moral challenges that overwhelm individual agents.

The phrase "moral struggle" calls to mind a quandary, a particular moral problem for which there is no easy answer. However, moral struggle refers more broadly to the continuous, laborious journey of moral agents toward a life well lived and not just to the difficulty experienced in the discrete choices that moral agents must make, such as deciding on a particular course of treatment for one's illness or no treatment at all, telling a friend something hard to hear or keeping it to oneself, or stealing money or doing what you know is right. Therefore, moral struggle is present not only in particular quandaries but throughout one's life. The struggle of the moral life is inevitable given the realities of sin, structural injustice, human freedom, and competing goods. The reality of moral struggle is recognized most explicitly in virtue ethics, which understands human beings to be works-in-progress in need of ongoing habituation. Some other ethical models, by contrast, view the moral life as a matter of clear absolutes. The struggle of the moral life is especially represented in the work of conscience.

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Moral Struggle Characterizes the Moral Life

Moral struggle is evident throughout the history of religious ethics and is especially prevalent in Christianity with its heavy emphasis on sin. Christianity is a religion of and for sinners, and so it focuses on what humans lack and cannot achieve on their own, without God's grace. The concept of moral struggle – the difficulty in knowing the good and the challenge of doing the good that we know – fits quite well into Christian anthropology. Although other religious traditions view humans as flawed, none does so quite to the extent of Christianity. Judaism "emphasizes the naturally weak and fallible character of human beings," while Islam "underscores the ability of humans to overcome their weakness," but Christianity stresses human failure (Mathewes 2010, 55). Islam assumes that people have the capacity to know the good and can act to realize it, while Judaism reflects a pattern of human weakness or helplessness in contrast to God's redemptive power. However, persons in any religious tradition can experience moral struggle: it can be difficult to obey religious laws, to put into practice what is taught, to discern when certain obligations outweigh others. Human beings struggle to know and do the good, no matter how much emphasis a religious tradition places on obedience and regardless of the close relationship between morality and human flourishing.

Acknowledgement of moral struggle begins at least with Aristotle, who countered Socrates's claims that knowledge is virtue and that it is not possible to act against what one knows to be right unless one is compelled by an external force. For Socrates, only an ignorant person would fail morally. In response, Aristotle addresses the problem of moral struggle, which he terms *akrasia*, often translated as "moral weakness" or "weakness of the will." Moral weakness for Aristotle means either knowing the good but not pursuing it because one is derailed by one's passions or failing to understand the good to be pursued in the first place. Moral struggle is a failure of the will to move one to act rightly.

Aristotle's ethic captures several additional features of moral struggle: the difficulty but importance of aligning one's actions and one's intentions; the need to account for the context in which one is acting and one's own unique characteristics; and the goal of consistency in character and action over the course of one's life. Aristotle recognized the human good to be a life that accords with reason, aided by virtue, but he famously noted in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle 1999) that "one swallow does not make a spring," meaning that living a virtuous life does not happen in just one moment, and a life cannot be judged to have been well lived until it is complete (Aristotle 1098a 15). A life of virtue requires ongoing, repeated virtuous actions and habituation: we become virtuous by acting virtuously. However, Aristotle observes that the right way of acting in every situation cannot be determined abstractly because questions about how to act have no fixed answers. The best one can do is give an outline of right action; exact answers remain elusive without accounting for particularities. Ultimately, for Aristotle, virtue is found in the mean between excess and deficiency of virtue. Therefore, Aristotle concludes that it is hard work to be excellent because of the difficulty in finding the mean between extremes. Spending money or getting angry are easy to do, "but doing it to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, for the right end, and in the right way is no longer easy, nor can everyone do it. Hence doing these things well is rare, praiseworthy, and fine" (Aristotle 1109a 25). One struggles not only to act well, but to do so for the right reasons and in the right context.

Moral struggle is present in scripture as well. The profound struggle of the moral life and the potential for conflict between God's commands and what appears to be the right thing to do are felt in the story of Abraham, who, following God's command, almost kills his son, a story found both in the book of Genesis

(22:1–19) and in the Qur'an (37:83–109). This story suggests, among other things, that what humans want and desire and what God wants may stand in tension. Moreover, the story implies that God does not provide a "seamless set of axioms and rules, a moral algorithm that will smoothly produce the right answer for devotees every time" (Mathewes 2010, 28). Rather, there is tragedy, complexity, and mystery in the moral life. There are no easy, obvious answers to moral dilemmas.

Moral struggle is also famously captured by Paul's words in his letter to the Romans: "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:19). Paul conveys the struggle of knowing the good but not doing it. St. Augustine grappled with this very problem: how one could act against what one knows to be good. Both before his conversion to Christianity and after, Augustine wrestled with the problem of evil. We are created good, but we are mutable, and our falling away from the good is caused by our own will. The struggle of the moral life is to order our loves so that we love God above all and love ourselves and things of this world in so far as they enable our love of God, but only God can turn our will away from evil and toward the good. The power to live a moral life is grace from God. For Augustine, Christian life is characterized by unremitting moral struggle, reflected in his own life, his conversions, and his self-described wayward youth.

Moral struggle is implied in Thomas Aquinas's approach to law and virtue as well (Aquinas 1948). Moral struggle for Aquinas is not an intellectual fault but results from a misdirected will. Reason apprehends the good, and the will moves us to that end. The problem lies in the motivation (or lack thereof) to act in regard to our own well-being and the well-being of others. Knowing the good is not necessarily sufficient to move one to act. This constitutes moral struggle. Furthermore, one can also fail when one desires the wrong thing or the will moves one toward something bad. Additionally, the right way to act is not always readily apparent. Knowledge of the good in particular situations is not obvious or consistent across all times and places. Aquinas asserts that the first principle of the natural law is to seek good and avoid evil, but what that entails in concrete circumstances will differ. We can ascertain that there are certain basic goods that ought to be pursued based on the natural inclinations of living things and humans in particular – goods such as life, reproduction, education of offspring – but these goods do not give us concrete directives for every situation in which we find ourselves. In fact, Aquinas states that the more we descend into particulars, the more likely it is that we will fail. The work required of moral agents to discern what the natural law dictates in particular situations constitutes moral struggle.

Some well-known religious figures wrote about moral struggle as they lived it. Martin Luther, for example, was no stranger to moral struggle. He wrestled with how to overcome his sinfulness and ultimately concluded that only God could save him. He wrote about the difficulties of living a moral life, noting that in an ideal world we would not need laws or punishment because we would all do what is right automatically. However, he observed that there are very few "true Christians" in the world, and so we need laws and the threat of punishment to restrain the wicked. In an imperfect world, the Gospel alone is not sufficient. Moral struggle was very real for Luther, although he came to realize that he could not save himself through any amount of human struggle.

There are times in the history of religious ethics when moral struggle is not readily acknowledged. The manualist tradition, dating back to the seventeenth century, gives the impression that morality is cut and dry and that there are clear answers to every moral dilemma. In contrast to this legalistic approach to morality, late twentieth-century scholars have emphasized the ambiguity of the moral life and moral knowledge. Rules and values are often experienced as conflicting, and at times it is impossible to realize two distinct, competing values given the limits of human existence. Justice and peace may conflict, for

example, and one may need to find a third way that preserves as much as possible of both. In such cases, the task of moral discernment includes prioritizing values and goods in difficult cases. Moral struggle reflects the reality that moral discernment is often a difficult choice between competing claims. The Roman Catholic Magisterium in particular has often been accused of failing to acknowledge moral ambiguity and instead insisting on a binary framework in which actions are either entirely good or entirely evil. A failure sufficiently to acknowledge moral ambiguity is a failure to recognize the inevitability of moral struggle. Competing values and claims and the lack of easy, ready-made answers to moral challenges render moral struggle a necessary part of the moral life.

Moral Damage and Structural Injustice

Moral goodness and human flourishing are limited not only by our own individual shortcomings – our struggle to align what we desire with what we know to be good and the difficulty in knowing what is right to do in the first place – but by the situations and conditions in which we are located and the systems of which we are a part. There is a type of moral struggle that arises in situations in which one cannot do what is typically identified as the good or right thing to do. Moral luck is that which is outside an agent's control but affects that agent in a morally relevant way (Tessman 2005). Bad moral luck interferes with human flourishing. Moral damage is bad moral luck that accounts for the difficulties in being virtuous that result from what is outside of our control. Moral damage names a particular type of interference in the ability to live a good life that is outside an agent's control. Oppression interferes with flourishing by creating circumstances external to the oppressed agent that limit her options. Oppression also interferes with flourishing by causing moral damage in the oppressed agent such that the agent is inclined to do what she would not do otherwise. In the context of a tragic dilemma, an agent may (need to) engage in an act that she would not choose otherwise, and this act brings with it sorrow and suffering. Moral damage results from bad moral luck that has shaped an agent in such a way that her character traits and choices are not completely in her control. Lisa Tessman (2005) provides the example of rape, which is often accompanied by victim-blaming. If a woman strategically submits to an attempted rape rather than risk her life resisting it, the woman might be blamed for the rape. The typical response would be to recognize that blame lies with the rapist, but Tessman also suggests that the gender system may have contributed to a woman's vulnerability such that she is afraid or unable to fight back because she has been socialized to have character traits such as passivity, fear of self-defense, or a lack of clarity about her own sexual desires (Tessman 2005, 38). The constitution of her character is not entirely in her control, although this does not remove her moral responsibility for her character and her choices. It does not diminish her agency.

All of this constitutes a certain type of moral struggle, wherein agents do not or cannot do what is expected or recommended.

> Moral damage may interfere with the ability of an oppressed person to carry out the actions suggested by her/his own liberatory principles or at least to do so without internal conflict. Moral damage may also be directly destructive of the damaged self; feelings of hopelessness and an internalized belief in one's own inferiority are examples of forms of damage that may not only retard resistance but also cause great pain or an immediate lack of well-being for their bearer.
>
> (Tessman 2005, 48–9)

Moreover, there are other virtues, such as sensitivity to the pain and suffering of others, which may be necessary but also detrimental to a person's well-being because possessing them causes great discomfort. There is acknowledgment, particularly on the part of feminist philosophers and theologians, that morality is not neat and tidy. Oppression and structural injustice result in a kind of moral conflict where one's own flourishing or, one's own ideas of what constitutes flourishing, are challenged by the context and reality with which one is confronted. This kind of moral struggle is not simply a matter of struggling to do what one knows to be right; this moral struggle is embedded in unjust structures and can be exacerbated by moral damage.

Competing Goods, Conflicting Moral Judgments, and Moral Incompetence

The struggle of the moral life is due in no small part to the reality that various values and goods compete with one another. Hard decisions must be made, and lesser evils must be chosen. The moral dilemmas before us do not always have obvious right and wrong answers, and often the right choice is accompanied by difficult consequences. This is explained by concepts such as the principle of double effect, which recognizes that a good action may have an unintended but foreseen negative consequence. Just war theory uses the principle of double effect to explain the destruction and loss of life that accompanies justified warfare. The principle applies to the treatment of ectopic pregnancies as well to explain the unintended loss of the fetus in remedying the inviable, harmful pregnancy. For an act to be licit, the principle of double effect requires that the act in itself be good or morally neutral, the agent's intention must be good, morally evil means may not be used, and there must be a proportionate reason to permit the premoral evil effect. These categories imply that the moral life involves hard choices.

Feminist scholars in particular have highlighted potential conflicts between values and judgments. For example, they have attended to the way emotion factors into moral decisions and whether and how reason and emotion work together or conflict. Some argue that reason and emotion cooperate: reason can be influenced and tutored by our emotions, just as our emotions can be tempered or excited by reason. However, the relationship between reason and emotion is not always harmonious. It is also possible that the conclusions reached through reasoning and through intuition conflict. Rather than contending that one method of moral judgment yield to another, some recent scholars have emphasized that life is fraught with unavoidable moral failures. Whereas Aristotle argued that in virtue right reason and desire ought to converge, the reality is that intuitive moral judgments may conflict with other intuitive moral judgments or with reasoned moral judgments. The "crying baby" dilemma is a helpful example:

> You and several others are hiding from enemy soldiers when your baby starts to cry; if the baby is allowed to cry the noise will alert the enemies, who will kill all of you including your baby. Should you smother your baby if this is the only way to silence him or her and avoid alerting the enemies?
> (Tessman 2014, 138)

The answer here is not simple. "The emotional response – a powerful negative affective response to the thought of smothering one's baby – competes with the reasoned judgment that there is no benefit to

refraining from smothering (the baby will still die)." Grappling with the conflicting judgments of reason and emotion constitutes moral struggle.

Recognition of the reality of moral struggle is part of accepting moral uncertainty. Not only do we struggle to do what we think or know to be right, but we are also faced with global moral challenges that do not present obvious, easy answers. We are, in many cases, overwhelmed by the scope of a moral problem such that we are unable to act or unsure where to begin. Willis Jenkins calls this "moral incompetence," the notion that a moral problem is so grand in scale that it overwhelms us almost to the point of paralysis (2013). Moral incompetence names the inadequacy of our concepts and practices in confronting large-scale or even global moral problems. Facing overwhelming problems, such as climate change, constitutes a type of moral struggle that surpasses the conflict between what we know to be right and what we want to do. This is a type of moral struggle that challenges us to act in spite of our struggles and our ineptitude. Although the right answer may not be obvious, inaction is not an option.

Moral Struggle and Conscience

The term "conscience" captures the struggle of the moral life, often depicted as the angel on one shoulder, the devil on the other, attempting to persuade the agent of the right course of action. The definition and work of conscience can be understood more broadly as the labor of the moral life, the work that moral agents must do to discern the good and to live it. The term first appears in Paul's writings in the New Testament, but references to the heart in the Hebrew Scriptures and to prudence and practical wisdom in Hellenistic writings are its precursors. Conscience has many definitions and associations: the voice of God within, the act of making a judgment, the internal dialogue that precedes judgment, and the guilt one feels after making a decision, to name a few. Conscience is both an internal sense and also transcendent, the place where subjective and objective morality converge, where individual discernment meets the objective reality of God. In Paul's writings, and for St. Augustine conscience is the law written on human hearts. Jerome wrote of the spark of conscience that remains, even when we give in to pleasure or are deceived by reason, in that we know we are sinning. In and through conscience we experience moral struggle: we labor to know the good, or we know the good but fail to do it. But conscience is not only relevant in particular struggles and conflicts. Conscience is also the work of the moral life: discerning what it means to seek good and avoid evil in the course of our daily lives and interactions, and putting into action what we discern to be good.

Twentieth and twenty-first-century scholarship on conscience is situated in debates about whether morality and moral norms are static and fixed, independent of context, given by an authority, or whether morality is instead fluid, changing, and entails effort on the part of moral agents to do the work of formation and discernment. Conscience does not invent morality independent of an objective reality given by God, but neither is conscience merely obedience to law or authority because morality is not that simple or straightforward. Conscience is a delicate balance between subjectivity and objectivity, personal discernment and God's law. As a medium between the person and God's law, conscience is necessarily embedded in the struggle to know the good and to do it. In conscience, we live the struggle of the moral life.

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CHAPTER 122

Posthumanism and Transhumanism

Ron Cole-Turner

Posthumanism and transhumanism are distinct but related features of the cultural landscape of the early twenty-first century. They are responses to the humanism of the modern West, especially that of the Enlightenment. Posthumanism is best seen as a philosophical and literary critique of humanism and its central claims, while transhumanism favors the enhancement of the human through technology.

These movements gained prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For all their differences, they agree in rejecting the idea that humanity is a fixed reality with an immutable essence. Posthumanism sees humanity not as a biological species but as a flawed social construct characterized by anthropocentrism, rigid human/non-human ontological boundaries, sexism, and racism. Transhumanism sees humanity not as a flawed concept but as an incomplete product of evolution, limited by the constraints of its biology. They agree that science and recent technology both undermine the idea of a fixed humanity.

Despite their similarities, however, posthumanism and transhumanism differ in their histories, core claims, and significance for religious ethics. For example, their views on the enduring value of Enlightenment humanism could not be more opposed. As its name suggests, posthumanism is defined by its rejection of humanism and by its call for a cultural era that moves beyond humanism's core claims. Transhumanism, on the other hand, is a movement that seeks technological enhancement of the human as defined by humanism. Posthumanism proclaims for the end of humanism, while transhumanism calls for its enhancement.

This is not to say that the terms do not overlap or are never conflated. One widely-read critic of both movements, Francis Fukuyama, is often accused of running them together. Nick Bostrom, a key advocate of transhumanism, argues that humans should seek to become posthuman. Radical enhancement of intelligence or physical traits beyond the range of our species will produce a *trans*human and ultimately a *post*human, engineered to the level of a superior species. Transhumanists hope this is so, but posthumanists see it as their worst nightmare.

Some suggest that posthumanism is pessimistic while transhumanism is optimistic. Others claim that posthumanism is rooted primarily in continental philosophy and transhumanism arises mainly in the English-speaking world. These generalizations are overly simplified, but they gesture toward important differences between the two movements. Posthumanism insists that humanism, which has largely defined the modern West, is a flawed construct that views normative humanity as the autonomous European male. Transhumanism, on the other hand, views humanity through evolution. Humans are intelligent but limited biologically. Our challenge is not to deconstruct humanism's flawed view of normative humanity but to recognize that there is nothing enduring about the human, except perhaps a longing for self-improvement.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Posthumanism: History, Forms, and Claims

Posthumanism appeared in academic circles in the 1990s as an interdisciplinary conversation among scholars in philosophy, literary theory, and cultural studies. Perhaps more than any other single publication, Katherine Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman* (1990) marks the debut of posthumanism as a widely-recognized focal point for academic exploration. Hayles's work, however, looks back to the emergence of posthumanism in various sources that were posthumanist in theme if not in name. Far beyond the usual academic disciplines, posthumanist ideas have found creative expression in fiction, visual and performing arts, film, and video games. Wherever the boundaries of humanity are stretched or challenged, a posthumanist perspective is being expressed even if posthumanism is unnamed. What unifies these disparate forms of posthumanism is their challenge to the concept of the human as advanced by Enlightenment humanism.

Criticisms of humanism are almost as old as humanism itself, mostly in isolated expressions that did little to undermine near-universal Western confidence in its concept of humanity as a secure, almost axiomatic foundation for Western culture and social order. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) raised profound questions about the meaning of the human person or subject, and her novel has been followed by countless other similar literary works over the past two centuries. From almost every imaginable vantage point, science fiction has probed the meaning of humanity as it confronts science today or in the future, or as it encounters intelligent but non-human beings on distant planets. Coming somewhat later and addressing different audiences, critics of technology such as Jacques Ellul, Martin Heidegger (in particular, his "Question Concerning Technology"), and Michel Foucault sparked intense discussion of the origins and the coherence of humanism and the role of technology in redefining natural boundaries.

In the late twentieth century, however, the growing chorus of challenges to humanism became more urgent and convincing, fueled in part by the broad cultural response to the horrors of war, mass death, colonial domination, and the environmental crisis. When these challenges converged, posthumanism came together as a movement with a name and a place on the agenda of the early twenty-first century intellectual scene, becoming a kind of lens through which selective central tenants of the humanism of the Western Renaissance and Enlightenment are identified and deconstructed.

Not everything about humanism is rejected by posthumanism, but several core humanist claims advanced by thinkers such as René Descartes and Immanuel Kant are seen as especially problematic. Chief among these are anthropocentrism and a distinctive view of the human subject as a rational and autonomous individual. Against a material universe that is viewed as a lifeless machine, human subjects stand alone in possessing and creating moral value. The natural world, including all forms of life other than humans, is a mechanism that blindly follows the laws of nature. Only humans are free, rational, and intrinsically valuable.

Human exceptionalism, as it is often called, is sometimes buttressed by anthropological dualism. Humans are free and rational because they possess an immaterial essence, which may be described as a rational soul, the mind, the self, or the person. The immaterial essence is housed in a physical body, which is subject to nature's laws, leaving only the human mind as free, moral, and rational. This nonmaterial mind is what distinguishes humans ontologically from other creatures. While exempt from the deterministic laws of nature, the mind is able nonetheless to decipher these laws through mathematics and empirical science, thereby gaining a measure of control over nature and over the body. Aside from

God and angels, whose existence is doubted more as the Enlightenment matures, only humans possess this nonmaterial rationality and freedom. This is the ground of their absolute moral superiority over all other beings, including animals. Only humans are able to define, generate, and create value in nature. They are free and accountable for their own behavior, their personal religious beliefs, their own account of human happiness or flourishing, and their success or failure in life.

While these notions gave rise to claims of universal human dignity and human rights, in practice they coexisted with mass enslavement, rigid patriarchy, Eurocentric perspectives, and racism. For the posthumanist critique, such contradictions are not mere lapses or pragmatic concessions but are baked into humanism's very core. Human superiority over nature appears to be tied intrinsically, in practice if not in philosophy, to the superiority of some humans over others.

The thorough-going critique of humanism begins to take shape in the final decades of the twentieth century. The literary critic Ihab Hassan deserves special mention for introducing the word posthumanism in his 1977 essay, "Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture." Hassan's article was followed a few years later by the much-cited and reprinted essay by Donna J. Haraway, commonly called the "Cyborg Manifesto," which first appeared in 1985. In this article, Haraway gives posthumanism its most popular defining metaphor, that of the cyborg. She introduces the concept of the cyborg with these words: "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology ... a condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (Haraway [1985]2013, 191).

The cyborg is a compelling metaphor for posthumanism because it expresses many of the core affirmations that define the movement. As cyborgs, humans are not strictly human, at least not as humanism defines the human. The cyborg is neither human nor machine, but both at once. It very existence undercuts binary categories. It blurs ontological distinctions that mark the boundaries of what is human or animal, living or nonliving, natural or contrived, valued or used. The cyborg is all these and yet none of them. It cannot be made to fit into any one category of gender, race, or species. It deconstructs the anthropocentric foundation of the modern world.

By the time of the 1990 publication of Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman*, the movement was on its way toward recognition as a point of engagement within the academy. Posthumanism did not emerge in an intellectual vacuum. Its advocates are engaged in other intellectual movements, from feminism to gender studies to ecology, arguing that the Enlightenment's concept of the human underlies problems that are being addressed in each of these conversations. For example, posthumanists embrace a strong ecological awareness. However, unlike some environmentalists who may see nature as worth preserving for human benefit, posthumanists see all nature as a mutually interdependent web of creativity and value. The problem is that anthropocentrism has led to the idea that the natural world is nothing more than a resource for human exploitation. As a consequence of this way of thinking, the human impact on the planet and its climate has been so profound that some have suggested that we have entered a new geological age, with the Holocene of the past 12,000 years now giving way to the Anthropocene. The damage of anthropocentrism is planetary in its extent and geological in its enduring impact, and its underlying cause is a dangerously flawed concept of what it means to be human. For the posthumanist, there is an obvious link between anthropocentrism and the Anthropocene.

The impact of humanism on the environment is a phenomenon of history, but posthumanists are careful to point out that humanism has always been wrong, well before its consequences exposed its flaws. In that regard, the metaphor of the cyborg may be misleading to some. We might think that because

we are able now to create cyborgs and chimeras, we have just now entered a new era in our human relationship with nature, one in which we are erasing the categories of the past. According to posthumanism, however, it would be wrong to think that these categories were real until engineers messed with them. Haraway's cyborg does not mix categories to make them outdated. It shows that they never existed.

Even more important is the claim that the posthuman is not something that comes into existence in history. It is not something new (like the cyborg) that replaces something old (the evolved human). Here the practical difference between posthumanism and transhumanism becomes most sharply defined. According to posthumanism, transhumanists and their critics share the mistaken assumption that now we are "human," but someday we may become "posthuman." They disagree on whether the transition is our salvation or our suicide. Posthumanism, on the other hand, rejects the underlying assumption. We have never been "human" as defined by Enlightenment humanism. We are "posthuman" and always have been.

Transhumanism

The central claim of transhumanism is that human beings should be free to develop and use technology to enhance their capacities and to free themselves from the limits of their biology. Like posthumanism, transhumanism has a complex history and exists today in several forms. Some transhumanists point to the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, especially his theme of the *Übermensch* ([1883]2008) as a superhuman goal for humanity, as the most significant source for the movement. The most prominent transhumanists in Great Britain and the United States, however, question the centrality of Nietzsche's role in the rise of the movement. They point instead to the impact of Francis Bacon and eventually to Julian Huxley as the source of the movement.

Bacon was widely read in his own time (1561–1626) and ever since. His outlook was shaped by traditional Western Christianity, especially the idea that human beings were created to live in harmony with nature, ageless and healthy, but that this original state was lost through sin. In the Garden of Eden, the event called the "Fall" disrupted the harmonious relationship Adam and Eve had with God and with nature. Theology addresses the relationship with God, but Bacon sees the empirical method (what we today call "technology") as a way to restore our harmony with nature. Technology can provide an antidote to sickness and other forms of human misery, including aging and death, if only human beings will work hard to unlock nature's secrets.

More than three hundred years later, Julian Huxley drew on evolution rather than theology to advocate the use of technology to improve the human condition, not of course to repair human fallenness but to advance human evolution to a higher stage, from one evolved species in the genus *Homo* to the next. Huxley does not coin the term, but he uses the word "transhumanism" in a published lecture in 1951, which was expanded and reprinted in 1957 and which contains these oft-quoted words:

> The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself – not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way – but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.
>
> (Huxley 1957, 17)

Huxley found inspiration in the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit priest and paleoanthropologist who speculated about technology and the human future. The two contemporaries agreed that technology opens the door to profound human transformation, completing and in some ways going far beyond what evolution has begun.

The technological advances of the twentieth century inspired many writers and artists to explore how technology might change humanity. The first steps toward an organized transhumanism movement, however, date to the early 1980s. Max More's 1990 essay, "Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy," helped define the discussion in the academy and beyond. In 1998, the World Transhumanist Association was launched. More than anything else, this event helped give rise to today's transhumanism as a cohesive and visible feature of the intellectual landscape. That organization, now known as "Humanity Plus" or "Humanity+," is the institutional focal point for transhumanism, and the core documents that define the movement are located on the Humanity+ website (humanityplus.org).

Among these documents is the "Transhumanist Declaration," first drafted in 1998 and modified over the years. The short statement provides a summary of the movement's vision: "We envision the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth." As products of evolution, we human beings have room to grow because "humanity's potential is still mostly unrealized" (World Transhumanist Association 2002).

Another defining document is the "Transhumanist FAQ" (or frequently asked questions), which also dates to the late 1990s. A key sentence says that transhumanists affirm "the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities" (World Transhumanist Association 2008). Some transhumanists think that these enhancements might produce "posthumans," individuals that began as humans but who are so profoundly changed that they no longer fit within the range of normal humans. Unlike posthumanism, transhumanists see the posthuman as something that we might create, not as a criticism of humanism.

In fact, transhumanists are clear that they do not accept the core claims of posthumanism. Transhumanism defines itself as part of the tradition of Western humanism. According to the transhumanist FAQ, "transhumanism can be viewed as an extension of humanism, from which it is partially derived. Humanists believe that humans matter, that individuals matter." Because humans are evolved, they are also radically changeable because of the growing power of technology. In fact, "we are not limited to traditional humanistic methods, such as education and cultural development. We can also use technological means that will eventually enable us to move beyond what some would think of as 'human'."

Thinkers such as Hans Moravec (*Mind Children*, 1988) and Ray Kurzweil (*The Singularity is Near*, 2005) stand somewhat on the edge of transhumanism. While transhumanists agree with them about what appears to be an unstoppable evolutionary emergence of intelligence, other ideas associated with Moravec or Kurzweil are questioned by some transhumanists. For example, they argue that the full contents of the human mind can be extracted from the brain and "uploaded" to some form of computer substrate, where it might continue with conscious awareness of its present life and past identity. Mainstream transhumanists find the idea somewhat far-fetched, doubting "whether uploading will be possible," according to the transhumanist FAQ. Others "have a pragmatic attitude: whether they would like to upload or not depends on the precise conditions in which they would live as uploads and what the alternatives are."

Another idea advanced by Ray Kurzweil, among others, is the notion of the singularity. The idea is that the pace of technological advance is accelerating, leading perhaps to the invention of superhuman intelligent machines that are themselves inventive. If technological advance can be viewed as a curve that slowly turns upward, there will come a time when the slope of the curve becomes nearly vertical, resulting in a near-instantaneous technological transformation of the world and perhaps the galaxy or even the cosmos. The moment the curve becomes vertical is the moment of the singularity, so-called because (like the original singularity, the "Big Bang"), it is impossible for the laws of physics or of technological prediction to comprehend what is on the other side. According to the transhumanist FAQ, transhumanists "differ widely" on the likelihood of a coming singularity. But "almost all of those who do think that there will be a singularity believe it will happen in this century, and many think it is likely to happen within several decades."

While differing on questions of mind uploading and the singularity, transhumanists strongly agree that with its inevitable advance, technology will modify human bodies and brains so much that evolutionary limits will be transcended, freeing human beings to achieve what has previously been impossible. Since the first Lomekwian stone tools some 3.3 million years ago, our hominin predecessors have made tools and thereby set in motion an evolutionary feedback system by which our humanity has been shaped by the tools we make. Today the pace of technological advance is more rapid than ever. But more than that, technology today directly targets human modification. Until recently, even the most powerful technologies changed the environment around us, which then, through the relatively slow action of Darwinian mechanisms, changed human beings over generations. Now technology targets the human organism directly, changing individuals in a single lifetime far more than lineages were changed by technology over many lifetimes. It is the era of direct technological modification and enhancement of the human that inspires transhumanism.

The emerging technologies that show the potential for direct human enhancement are sometimes grouped together under the acronym "GRIN." These are genetics, robotics, information technology, and nanotechnology. In reality, however, the most significant technological contribution to human enhancement available today is pharmacology, most often through the use of drugs developed to treat disease but thought to have enhancement potential for those in normal health. The general public is very much aware of the use of drugs to enhance athletic performance, and sports authorities have struggled to stay ahead of the technologies that are widely used to increase strength or stamina.

The publicity that surrounds debate over the use of performance-enhancing drugs in athletics provides a window on public reactions to other forms and dimensions of human enhancement. For example, the competitive pressure to use drugs that many athletes report may provide insight into the academic and job performance pressures that others identify as their reason for considering such things as cognitive enhancement drugs, which appear to be widely used in some circles. Transhumanists generally support the development and use of such drugs, but they also support careful study of side effects, both individual and societal, including the possible contribution of such drugs exacerbating economic and social gaps between rich and poor. They are also vocal in their opposition to systems of competition that put coercive pressure on individuals to use enhancement technologies against their will.

Some critics claim that the use of technology in place of hard work deprives us of personal integrity, authenticity of identity, and the sense of personal achievement. Another key issue in the debate is whether a meaningful distinction can be drawn between therapy and enhancement. While nearly everyone endorses the use of various medical technologies for therapy, many have doubts about using some of the same techniques for enhancement, which is often defined as the treatment of healthy individuals aimed

not at making them well but "better than well." Transhumanists recognize the seriousness of these concerns, but they defend nonetheless the right of individuals to make choices about whether or not to use enhancement technologies.

Increased longevity presents a special attraction for some transhumanists, who hope to live long enough to experience firsthand some of the benefits of other technological enhancements that are not yet available. Simply extending life as we know it is not especially appealing, but transhumanists show strong interest in life extension in order to "live long enough to witness currently foreseeable technologies come to fruition," hoping to "get the chance to become posthuman." Even incremental enhancement is highly appealing for transhumanists, especially in areas such as cognitive enhancement. Beyond caffeine, various other drugs are seen as offering a boost to cognitive performance, perhaps by extending the productive work-day or sharpening the ability to focus. Future developments might stimulate the brain or create direct links between normal brains and computers, connecting the mind and the Internet and thereby opening the world of information to internal "search." Most transhumanists are convinced that, one way or another, humans in the future will be more intelligent than we are today.

Like most people, transhumanists value having a positive mood, and so they embrace the use of psychopharmacology not just to treat such things as depression but to elevate the mood for heightened experience and performance. Some transhumanists see a connection between elevated mood, enhanced intelligence, and moral development. Given the pace of technological advance, and with the likelihood of enhanced intelligence, future humans with unenhanced moral capacity will be a danger to everyone. Human moral capacity, of course, is complex, and so there is widespread doubt about whether true "moral enhancement" will ever be possible. If not, then classical and religious means of moral education become increasingly important as science and technology advance.

Recent advances in genetics, especially in the power and sophistication of gene editing techniques such as CRISPR/Cas, have triggered a new phase in the debate over so-called "designer children." While transhumanists are generally open to the idea of genetically modified offspring, enhanced perhaps for overall resistance to disease or to boost intelligence, they recognize the technical and societal hurdles that would have to be overcome first.

The relationship between transhumanism and religion is complex, considered both in the past and the present. While Huxley does much to promote the discussion of transhumanism in the mid-twentieth century, Teilhard's (1965, 2004) theologically-inspired ideas draw more attention today than Huxley's. In 2006, the Mormon Transhumanist Association was organized, and the Christian Transhumanist Association was organized in 2014. Academic conferences on religion and transhumanism have been held intermittently since at least 2004, and the American Academy of Religion has included a study unit on transhumanism as part of its annual meeting since 2009. In these settings, attention is given to the relationship between technologies of human enhancement, as advocated by transhumanism, and religious ethics.

Taken together, transhumanism and posthumanism pose various challenges to traditional religious ethics, especially to assumptions about definitions and norms for humanity. The bioethical principle of autonomy, for example, is widely assumed by transhumanists but widely challenged by posthumanism. Across the varied terrain of religious ethics, unchecked assumptions about humanity are called into question by the deconstruction of posthumanism and the techno-progressive reconstruction of transhumanism. Each movement asks in its own way about the meaning of human flourishing, offering a challenge to religious ethics to enter the public sphere with ideas that take seriously the current context.

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CHAPTER 123

Violence

John D. Carlson

Context

For all its ubiquity, violence is ignored and underappreciated as a theme of sustained reflection. So mused the eminent political thinker Hannah Arendt in her 1970 essay on the topic. Politics, since its inception, has located war at the center of its study, much as military history has done with the strategies, tactics, and tools of warfare. There is extensive literature on the philosophy of punishment. Yet, "violence as such" receives no comparable consideration. When Arendt consulted the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* while writing *On Violence* – in the wake of violent crackdowns against civil rights marches, a spate of riots in American cities, college protests and workers' revolts in Europe and the United States, and political uprisings and revolutions throughout the world – she discovered there was no entry for the term (1970, 9). She found this lacuna disquieting in light of two other features of her day: first, a swelling enchantment with violence not simply as an instrument for expressing genuine grievances and pursuing justice or liberation (as there had always been) but as a positive step toward human self-actualization worthy of celebrating; and, second, the haunting and apocalyptic specter of a thermonuclear war that hovered over the world. It was not lost upon Arendt that these trends coincided: that liberationists and others on the Left influenced by Georges Sorel, Frantz Fanon, and Jean-Paul Sartre were glorifying violence at the very moment when humankind's complete annihilation at the hands of nuclear doomsday devices was a reigning fear. "The more dubious and uncertain an instrument violence has become in international relations" as a result of the nuclear arms race, she averred, "the more it has gained in reputation and appeal in domestic affairs" (1970, 11).

Arendt penned these thoughts at the end of a turbulent decade, the apex of which was 1968, the year of Martin Luther King's assassination and ensuing nationwide riots; the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia and Students' March in Poland; and the height of the Vietnam War and anti-war protests. Fifty years after Arendt's work, the ubiquity of violence in 2020 (amid a global pandemic responsible for millions of deaths) remains uncontestable: in protests against police violence in dozens of cities throughout the United States (some accompanied by looting and arson); in Hong Kong demonstrations against China's authoritarian encroachment; and in ongoing civil wars and insurgencies in Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan. This year of violence bled into 2021 when, on January 6, President Trump incited an insurrection among his supporters after falsely claiming that the presidential election was stolen from him. In a dramatic siege that played out before the world, the protesters-turned-rioters stormed the Capitol while

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Congress was certifying the election results. The siege killed five people, injured hundreds, caused physical damage to the most famous symbol of democracy, and disrupted the peaceful transfer of power between presidents for the first time in American history.

A scan of several recent encyclopedias shows that the omission Arendt identified now has been filled with new entries on "violence." Yet, many of the critiques she lodged – about the way violence is poorly conceived in the academy and the public – still pertain. Her judgment that "violence as such" is understudied remains particularly apt for scholarly discussions in religion and ethics, prompting ethicist Jean Bethke Elshtain (notably influenced by Arendt) to comment in one of her final essays, "Ironically by 'seeing' violence everywhere – transferring the substantial moral force of the word *violence* into contexts where it fits poorly – scholars have hampered themselves and others in locating it anywhere" (2012, 273). Like Arendt, Elshtain trains her aim at the Left of her day. Though, in Elshtain's case, those who "see violence everywhere" are rarely glorifying it. Rather, she believed, they are overly prone to condemn any form of coercion, force, or war: from military organizations waging war against terrorists abroad; to police and law enforcement agencies charged with keeping the domestic peace; to economic and political forces preserving "structural violence" throughout many sectors of society. If anything, those drawn to violence now are found predominantly among the Right, whether terrorists pursuing the religious calling of martyrdom or paramilitary groups, white nationalists, and Islamophobic vigilantes. In the name of "freedom," protesters on the Right wielding semi-automatic weapons and spewing hate-filled slogans have descended upon public monuments in Charlottesville to celebrate white supremacy and occupied the statehouse in Michigan to protest public health measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Citizens can reasonably debate how to balance individual freedoms – to guns, free speech, and free assembly – with concerns about public safety and health. But the omnipresence of weapons, Confederate flags, and skull icons found on one side of this debate – spurred on by a tough-talking president who spurns limits on force and extols "private, extralegal violence" and "vigilante justice" – has emboldened fringe elements of the Right and mainstreamed the glorification of violence in public life (Sarat and Obert 2020). The presence of plentiful religious symbols at the Capitol insurrection announces how some on the Right justify their violence (Manseau 2021).

Finally, while the threats of nuclear war of which Arendt spoke have receded in recent times (though hardly disappeared given the collapse of multiple US-Russia arms control treaties), new forms of global violence have emerged, associated with natural disasters and other effects of global climate change. Arendt herself had lamented, "If you ask a member of this generation... 'How do you want the world to be in fifty years?'... the answers are quite often preceded by 'Provided there is still a world,' and 'Provided I am still alive.'" Alas, fifty years later, some members of today's youth answer similarly – not so much out of fear of nuclear war, but out of serious concern that global warming and natural disasters could destroy the planet or render it uninhabitable in their lifetime. About 7 in 10 young people say climate change will cause a great deal or moderate amount of harm to people in their lifetime. Climate change, in the words of one anxious 16-year-old climate activist, is "the greatest threat to life as we know it and [to] humanity as we know it. When your mom's yelling at you, and you have classes, and, on top of that, everybody's going to die ...it's easy to let fear overtake you" (Kaplan and Guskin 2019). In this context, it is unsurprising to find the new face of political activist youth is not the Marxist revolutionary of Arendt's day, but a gritty teenager, who memorably implores "How dare you!" as she chides world leaders at the United Nations for stealing her dreams and childhood.

Still other forms of violence have been pressed into the psyches of youth and parents alike. Those growing up in the era of major terrorist attacks in New York, Washington DC, Oklahoma City, London, Paris, Oslo, Baghdad, Istanbul, Madrid, Mumbai, and Moscow know well how much one event can

shatter lives, rock societies, and indelibly shape an entire generation. In response, declared wars and undeclared military actions around the globe – from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen; to Libya, Mali, Niger, and Somalia; to the Philippines, India, Pakistan, and Iran – have sought to defeat terrorism and other threats portrayed as such. Despite Western governments' preoccupation with terrorism and counterterrorism, most innocent victims of both live in predominantly Muslim nations.

A focus on violence originating from or projected upon places outside the West easily obscures the reality of distinctively Western forms of violence carried out by disgruntled, disaffected, and often mentally disordered males who unleash their internal chaos on others. Far more mundane and recurrent than terrorism carried out by the religious militant are prospects of being mowed down in a mass shooting while at a movie theater, night club, concert, workplace, house of worship, or – of all places – at school. It took a pandemic rivaling the Spanish Flu of 1918, including lockdowns and school closures, to achieve a significant decline in mass shootings in America – a pause that broke once people emerged from their homes to re-enter public spaces.

Scholar Mark Juergensmeyer reminds us that terrorism, whether domestic or international in scope, extends its impact well beyond the moment when the players perform their gruesome acts and influence audiences long after they exit the "theater of terror" (Juergensmeyer [2000] 2003, 127). Terrorism seeks to instill persistent fear of violence. It connects a past act of violence with a hypothetical one in the future. Indeed, the very fear of violence elicits its own form of trauma. Some American parents and educators even have begun to worry that "active shooter" drills in schools take their own psychological toll on their children. In an odd reversal of post-traumatic stress, preparations to prevent violence create trauma based on an imagined future.

Still others encounter violent crimes or fear of crime in their own neighborhoods: assault, theft, murder, and rape. Cities in Mexico overrun by gangs or hampered by weak law enforcement face extraordinary forms of violence such as extortion, torture, and forced disappearances. We recoil with a special form of indignation when violence is carried out at the hands of corrupt officials charged with preserving peace and ensuring justice. A surge of highly publicized beatings and killings of unarmed Black Americans by US police officers – many caught on video and replayed around the world – sparked massive protests under the Black Lives Matter movement and vociferous calls for police reform. The outrage over police violence also has found voice through lootings, burnings, riots, assaults, and other destructive acts that reflect the shattered trust between citizens and those entrusted to serve and protect them. During these moments, it is the very police whose brutality is being protested who also are called in to quell violence. The protester wielding the sign that reads "Policing is violent" is herself dependent on the same police she condemns to protect her home and business. Alternately, the Trumpist insurgents who overran police and injured 140 officers while storming the Capitol forsook the Right's call to "back the blue" and Trump's own polemical idolization of law enforcement. Such cases and contradictions call for a deep reckoning with the meaning and nature of *violence* – a phenomenon featuring complex religious, political, and ethical dimensions.

Religion and Violence

Amidst so much violence – in so many forms – where does one begin to proffer the sustained reflection Arendt enjoined to make sense of phenomena so often deemed senseless? Scholars of religion, politics, and ethics are particularly attuned to the readiness with which violence has been linked to religion in

recent years. Religion's role in violence is worth reviewing though should not displace a broader ethical and political analysis needed to cogitate on violence in its more essential forms. As well, religious resources can illuminate and amplify the moral valence of violence, even if religion is not *per se* the cause or determinant of it.

Around the turn of the twenty-first century, a cottage industry of scholarship emerged exploring religious violence or, at least, the relationship between religion and violence. Those who were already tracing emerging cracks in the secularization thesis before September 11, 2001 were joined after by countless others eager to remind the world of the deadly violence that can explode when religion and politics mix (Appleby 2000; Kimball 2002; Lincoln 2006; Selengut 2003; Stern 2003). For a brief period, "new atheists" became the most strident critics of religion, reinscribing a new kind of Manichean worldview, whether claiming that "religion poisons everything," calling for "the end of faith," or otherwise arguing that secularism is peaceful and tolerant while religion is violent and bigoted (Harris 2005; Hitchens 2007). This heyday of interest in religion and violence has enjoyed a surprisingly enduring run with new work coming out throughout the second decade of the century (Murphy 2011; Carlson and Ebel 2012; Armstrong 2015; Sacks 2015; Powers 2020, and Jerryson 2020).

In response to scholarly and public preoccupations with religion's violent propensities, however, scholars such as William Cavanaugh have adopted a strong rebuttal: first, that "religion" is less responsible for the world's violence than secular institutions are; and second, Western actors and government institutions define and enforce categories of religion and secular in order to preserve the "myth of religious violence." This myth relies on religion's putative extremism, irrationality, and "peculiarly virulent and reprehensible" violence to deflect critical attention from how war and force are used by secular and nationalist governments – which "hardly counts as violence at all" (Cavanaugh 2009, 13). As Cavanaugh goes on to show, "Without a clear distinction between what is religious and what is not religious, any argument that religion per se does or does not cause violence becomes hopelessly arbitrary" (Cavanaugh 2009, 21). Some make the point more starkly: that "the secular," not religion, is the *real* locus of violence (Jakobsen 2004).

Those on either side in this debate can find ample evidence to reinforce their view. The power of religion in war is seen in the avowal of a Taliban fighter who proclaims of the decades-long struggle against the United States and US-backed Afghan government, "We see this fight as worship. So if a brother is killed, the second brother won't disappoint God's wish – he'll step into the brother's shoes" (Mashal 2020, A1). Yet a student of Cavanaugh (or a mentor such as Stanley Hauerwas) might conclude that the motivations of American soldiers in war are no less religious, redemptive, and worshipful than one finds in the Taliban. Hauerwas, pondering Lincoln's memorable words from the Gettysburg Address – "that these dead shall not have died in vain" and that "this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom" – shows how the Civil War influenced "Americans to think they must go to war to insure that that those who died in our past wars did not die in vain" (Hauerwas 2012, 227). Inasmuch as "fighting terrorism" and "defending freedom" have become sacred causes for which thousands of Americans have sacrificed their lives in Afghanistan, the withdrawal of US forces after twenty years of war would be an admission that their deaths were in vain. Where Arendt condemned revolutionary liberationists who celebrated violence as creative, teleological, or regenerative, the study of religious violence cautions against redemptive violence – whether undertaken by Crusaders, Islamist martyrs, or those who die for nationalist causes.

Scholars such as Cavanaugh and Hauerwas oblige us to ask what is so special about religious violence. Indeed, they rightly show the disservice of conceiving religion narrowly in ways that shield secular

causes or civil religion from scrutiny. Yet, neither tells us much about what he means by *violence*. Does Hauerwas, a pacifist, conceive violence the same way as Cavanaugh who is not? Indeed, in most of the religion and violence scholarship, violence rarely gets defined. It is as if, as has been said of pornography, we know it when we see it. But such an approach is insufficient, for it fails to make distinctions, for example, among power, force, punishment, coercion, and authority. Nor does most religion and violence literature attend to the moral dimensions of violence. We can do better. Arendt's political thought helps us begin to frame violence in implicit ethical terms, as informed by examples of her day.

Violence, Politics, and Power

If violence bears no essential relationship to religion, neither is it, for Arendt, a political concept. Indeed, violence is antipolitical. She conceives politics as a normative project involving the collective pursuit and exercise of power. Arendt upends the conventional view that violence is the supreme exercise of power. If anything, violence is negatively defined: "Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance ... Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it" (1970, 56). For Arendt, power – human beings' ability to act in concert – is legitimate in a way that violence is not. Several insights flow from this formulation of the inverse relation between power and violence.

To begin with, a government in power – that is, one empowered by the support of its people (*potestas in populo*) – has no need to resort to violence against its citizens. It can respond to peoples' objections through established and nonviolent political channels. Such is the lesson of the Civil Rights movement, which arduously but successfully employed nonviolence to demand an end to segregation through massive legislative and cultural reform. When individual US states turned their police dogs, firehoses, and armed posses against peaceful protesters, this resort to violence represented the loss of power, which they substituted with an effort to maintain its simulacrum: control. Authoritarian crackdowns on peaceful demonstrators – whether in Prague, Selma, Cairo, Aleppo, or Hong Kong – illustrate how governments resort to violence against their own citizens when governments lack power (*potestas*), hence, legitimacy.

Second, Arendt undercuts the assumption, most famously asserted by Weber, that the state possesses a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (1970, 35). Weber equates violence and force in a way that Arendt rejects. Institutions such as the military and police, when they enjoy the support of the citizenry they protect, do not, as a matter of course, resort to *violence* for purposes of protecting citizens, keeping the peace, upholding the law, and defending against external threats. They may, however, employ *force,* impose other forms of *coercion*, or even resort to *war*. To extend Arendt's thought, such collective actions are entirely political: they are subject to public deliberation and accountability; limited by domestic and international law, including rules of deadly force; and embedded in moral vocabularies such as "just war" reasoning as well as religious beliefs, political traditions, and social conventions. With such limits in place, force that is proportional and discriminate (i.e. does not target bystanders and noncombatants) should be distinguished from violence, no matter how lethal both may be. So, too, is punishment a political act that, unlike violence, is carried out by a designated authority on behalf of the collective it serves and represents. When it fails to respect the values of citizens – all or even significant parts of them – punishment's legitimacy wanes. The extent to which citizens object to or disagree about the justice of law enforcement and

criminal punishment – police tactics, capital punishment, criminal sentencing, solitary confinement – hastens the erosion of power, turning force and punishment into violence.

A final implication of the relation between power and violence pertains to uprising and revolt . There are occasions when citizens – as individuals or groups – might themselves justifiably resort to extralegal violence. "Under certain circumstances," Arendt contends, "violence – acting without argument or speech and without counting the consequences – is the only way to set the scales of justice right again" (1970, 64). She invokes the classic example of Billy Budd's homicidal reprisal against a man who bears false witness against him. His violence is justifiable and rational given the offense against him. But it is also antipolitical, for he takes the action in his capacity as a private individual. By contrast, the punitive response undertaken by the ship's captain is political – authorized and permitted by law. Budd's action is violent. His punishment is not.

How might such an analogy apply to a crowd of protesters or a mob? A crowd that expresses its outrage at a police officer's use of excessive force against an unarmed man – itself a form of individual violence – by burning down a police precinct building resorts to a form of mob violence. The crowd's rage is emotionally appropriate and also quite rational, while still remaining violent. Righteous indignation notwithstanding, such acts "in which men take the law into their own hands for justice's sake are in conflict with the constitutions of civilized communities." To act "without argument or speech and without counting the consequences" is antipolitical and violent. Moreover, protesters who turn to rioting, looting, and destruction against "substitutes" such as private property have allowed their rage and violence to become irrational – no longer connected to the righteous cause inciting their rage (1970, 64). Just as the use of force requires proportionality and moral commensurability between means and ends, so, too, does a crowd's actions. Violence, then, correlates to the extent that actions are disproportionate, individually undertaken (not in concert), irrationally misdirected, spontaneous and unstrategic, and unaccompanied by justificatory argumentation.

A revolutionary movement or militia will heed these concerns if it hopes to gain power and persuade others of its legitimacy. The case of revolution differs fundamentally from mob violence in that it constitutes a *political* movement whereby citizens act in concert to alter or replace a government that lacks power and legitimacy. On Arendt's logic, as the pursuit of power through collective action grows and garners legitimacy – from protest to rebellion to revolution – *violence* declines inversely. Successful democratic movements in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa often have followed this approach.

Imperiled governments, which lack power and seek to establish or retain control through violence, aim to discredit opposing forces by pointing to their violence – often labeling them "terrorists." Such has been the strategy of President Trump who blamed "terrorists" for violence that broke out at protest sites. Trump benefited directly from such violence, which allowed him to adopt the mantle of "law and order" and to ignore the demands of nonviolent protesters calling for an end to police violence (Oprysko 2020).

Brutal authoritarians such as Bashar al-Assad and Moammar Ghaddafi in Syria and Libya respectively also classified their citizens as "terrorists," in their cases to justify ruthless forms of repression and retaliation. Of course, rebels and militias also are capable of employing violence, as when Libyan rebels apprehended Ghaddafi and viciously executed him on the spot. Their grievances may have been legitimate, but the tortuous violence they perpetrated against his body served no political end or purpose. Unlike the lengthy trial and execution of Saddam Hussein, the revenge killing of Ghaddafi was *antipolitical* violence, not punishment.

In short, Arendt's political reckoning with power and violence provides an inchoate moral framework for forming judgments about the actions that different governments and their citizens have taken. Tyranny, she reasons, invoking Montesquieu, is the "most violent and least powerful of forms of government" (1970, 41). On such logic, democracy, wherein authority is vested in the people (*potestas in populo*), should be the least violent and most powerful form of government. Yet the turbulence of 1968 that preceded Arendt's treatise was itself a sign that Western democracy – the United States especially – was fraying: "our power has become impotent," she lamented. Such power cannot be restored quickly by resorting to violence but, rather, takes painstaking work to address the deeply held grievances that undermine power.

Some fifty years after Arendt's treatise, Americans stared out onto a national landscape blighted by a deadly pandemic responsible for snuffing out over 500,000 American lives over the course of a year. The urban vistas of dozens of cities glowed with fires set during street protests, while citizens gasped under the smoke of tear gas unleashed by riot police. Americans endured a president whose divisive, despotic, and disordered personality took form in an adolescent embrace of violence that sought to compensate for his weak popular support. One symbol of democracy's impotence occurred when members of a free press – having been denounced "enemy of the people" – were among those arrested and attacked with pepper spray, flashbang grenades, and rubber bullets while covering protesters who peacefully demonstrated against police brutality. Another was the mob insurrection at the Capitol, which forced Congress to evacuate. On the Arendtian view, democracy's power was largely restored when, following the siege, Congress resumed its duties to certify the election results.

A Moral Account of Violence

Arendt's political analysis unpacks vital contexts, cases, and dynamics of violence. She also provides an inchoate moral framework that helps distinguish legitimate actions involving coercion and force from those that are not. Arendt defines violence by its implements and instrumentality; by what it lacks (speech, argumentation and foresight); and by its inverse relationship to power. Violence is not defined in moral terms of its own. It is actually power – activities and concerns of people working in concert together – that receives the preponderance of her consideration. Violence in this account is parasitic on power, much as, for Augustine, evil is parasitic of the good. The ethical dimensions of *On Violence* are not spelled as explicitly or precisely as they could be. Why, for example, does Arendt invoke "violence in self-defense" when *force* is employed in lawful and morally justifiable ways? Surely Arendt appreciated the absurdity of saying that someone violently defended herself or her children against an attacker (provided excessive force was not used).

To recall Elshtain's caution, when we label "any deployment of coercive physical force 'violence,' we put our thumbs on the scale and short-circuit moral reflection before it can even begin" (2012, 275). Without greater clarity about legitimate force, we cannot consider when it becomes excessive and unjustifiable – in other words, violence. Any implement – a stick, gun, hammer, car, fist, or even a microphone – may become a tool of violence, depending upon how it is used. But the empirical dimension of force or violence only provides a partial account; we need a sharper ethical gauge to call something violence. Building on Arendt's view of violence as antipolitical action that lacks power, we can conceive violence on its own moral terms.

We might, then, define violence *as a transgressive act involving physical force, often vehemently or excessively employed, with the intent to inflict injury, harm, or damage*. This account identifies explicitly the empirical, ethical, and emotional dimensions of violence, drawing on an etymological examination of the term (*violentia*) and the meanings of three related cognates. First, at its simplest level, violence generally entails physical energy or force (*vis*), often causing damage or destruction, whether to persons, property, or other environs (possibly including nature and elements of the natural world). Political acts involving physical force – whether called coercion, war, terrorism, protest, revolution, or insurgency – all have violent dimensions in this descriptive sense. A person caught up in a tornado, like someone barraged by bombs, rightly speaks of the violence and destruction of such experiences. *Vis* or force, then, captures the *empirical* and effectual meaning of violence, including observable or subjective experiences of it. This is the realm of facts, not values. Limiting violence to physical force provides what some scholars call a "minimalist" definition of violence. Despite its nomenclature, though, this account permits all sorts of examples under its definitional umbrella.

A second dimension of violence, denoted by the word *violate* or violation (*violo*), reveals the ethically *normative* meaning of violence. Violence not only causes harm or destruction; unlike a storm, it does so through some moral violation against a person or entity. For this reason, argues Elshtain, "*Violence* is and should be a strongly pejorative term." The capacity for human agency enables us to make critical moral distinctions. One can shake a fist against Mother Nature when a bolt of lightning ignites and burns one's home to the ground. But there is a clear moral transgression involved when the same effect is produced by an arson's match. Society and its laws could scarcely exist if we failed to render such moral distinctions. We do not indict the driver whose car loses control on the ice and accidentally hits someone in the same way we would indict a driver who intentionally mows down a person with his car. In both cases, victims experienced violent collisions. While the former experienced harm, the latter is also the victim of a grave moral transgression.

Violence involves injustice – a violation of that to which one has a moral claim or right. The word *injury* (*injuria*) stems from Latin roots *jur* or *ius*, from which ethical terms as *justice* and *right* derive. For our purposes, we might simplify as follows: while all violence (*vis*) may cause damage or destruction, only violence from transgression (*violo*) also entails injury and injustice in this ethical sense. Violence denotes that moral values have been transgressed. Put simply, human beings do not commit violence in ethically neutral ways.

When decoupled from the empirical dimension of violence as *vis,* this normative account of violence offers what some call a "comprehensive" or broad account of violence whereby any claim of injustice or violation (conceivably even trivial grievances) can constitute violence, even when force is not involved. Coupling the empirical and normative meanings provides a sharper and more useful conception of violence in which fact and value converge. Such an approach enables us to clarify the distinction between force and violence: to enforce or use force can be justifiable, legitimate, even morally apposite, in a way that to violate or do violence to another can never be (Wade 1975). On this reading, violence is always immoral and cannot be justified in ways that physical force can be. Such an account distinguishes legitimate self-defense from the violence initiated by an attack or assault. One does not *violently* defend oneself, one's family, or one's nation by using force against an attacker – certainly not in the ethical sense of the term. Self-defense does not involve a moral violation but, rather, a justifiable effort to prevent such violation and injury.

Crucially, this ethical provision also provides standards by which force, whether used by individuals, authorities, institutions, or even insurgents and revolutionaries can be evaluated. Ethical reasoning allows us to make judgments about excessive force – violence that violates some status or protection to which even the subject of force has a claim. Examples include police officers who use excessive force or who in other ways violate their trust with fellow citizens whom they are charged to serve and protect. Such moral and legal distinctions also are reflected in laws of armed conflict, according to which members of the military may be prosecuted if they target noncombatants. Moreover, those who betray their duty to protect others – by employing violence against them – are themselves culpable in a special, additional way: not simply for the transgression at issue but also for violating the mandate of their office and authority to use force. It also should be noted that legal adherence to the rules of war does not always prevent excessive damage from occurring, complicating distinctions between force and violence (Gopal 2020).

The ethical component of violence even invites consideration of subtler forms of moral transgression, such as moral claims that pertain to the natural world. Human actions that induce climate change, one might argue, entail moral violation – a form of violence against nature, including the seas, skies, and landscapes as well as the creatures dependent on them.

A final tenet of violence stems from the cognate *violentus*, meaning vehemence, impetuosity, or excess. Excessive force and other acts of violence are often manifestations of violent emotions and disordered personalities. This emotional-dispositional dimension reinforces the ethical dimension that presumes human agency and moral accountability. From a different direction, those who are outraged by violence – whether inflicted by criminals, terrorists, soldiers, police, or oppressive regimes – are justified in their righteous anger. Such emotions are instructive as well as rational, Arendt reminds us. Most victims channel their outrage into constructive rational forms. For example, the majority of protesters against police brutality or racial inequality – like Civil Rights activists in earlier eras – engaged in peaceful marches, protests, boycotts, demonstrations, and forms of nonviolent direct action. Those who partake in rioting, looting, arson, and assault to express their rage undermine the legitimacy of their grievances. Such violence cannot be rationally defended or publicly argued for, while efforts to quell such violence, using properly delimited force, can be. For citizens and officials alike, force belongs to the logic of reason and human action – as the term *ultima ratio*, in its proper sense, suggests. The emotional component of violence allows us to distinguish the passions animating peaceful protest and lawful use of force, on one hand, from riotous looting and vicious police brutality, on the other. Reason and emotion work together to regulate moral congruity between just ends and just means.

In sum, an account of violence that addresses the empirical, ethical, and emotional dimensions of violence provides a sturdy framework for evaluating the kinds of violence that Hannah Arendt engaged in her day as well as new forms that have emerged half a century later. Whether assessing authoritarian repression, police brutality, or rioting mobs and insurrectionists, an ethico-political approach provides not only greater moral clarity and precision about the resort to violence but also a guide to the effective use of power and political action in response.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the helpful research assistance of Olena Melnyk and Sumaita Mulk.

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Part II

Systems

1 Structures and Conditions

CHAPTER 124

Nations

Jean Bethke Elshtain[†]

Nations and States

When moderns in the West think of peoples as a collective or communal entity, they think of states, or nation-states. Ours is a post-Westphalian world, dominated by state formations. More sovereign states have come into being in the last forty years than in any comparable period in human history. Peoples who have some sort of collective identity but have not yet been recognized as states, meaning they are not sovereign in a juridical sense, view themselves, and are seen by others, as second-class citizens in the international sphere. Sovereignty attached to state is the ticket that gives a people entry into the community of states. The "nation" designation attached to "state" suggests that a particular people, having a particular sense of nationhood or national identity, is mapped more or less precisely onto that territorial entity known as "the state." In the late modern Western world, this mapping is bound to be imprecise, for few "nations" composed primarily if not exclusively of the historic, linguistic, and, frequently enough, ethnic markers of a single nationality, any longer exist.

Nations are more diffuse than states. They do not entail the hard edges, or borders, that states by definition do, unless or until a political ideology dictates that any "mixing" of the people of one nation with those of another is strictly forbidden. Tests may be devised whereby an ostensibly pure nationhood can be distilled and separated from a tainted, hence inauthentic, national identity. Less defined, nations are more flexible and open ended. They can spread out, as in the case of the diasporic nation of Israel, so much so that the collective identity of a nation may come to be that of "exile" or "in exile." Also, this spreading out may be less diasporic or exilic than aggressive, as one people overruns another and seeks to dominate it. If this occurs, the identity of a particular nation may become that of the "enslaved," or "oppressed," or "colonized."

As soon as nations become nation-states, borders congeal. But borders are not eternal. Some nations are content with historic borders. They are content to confine their collective identity as a nation within received borders, particularly so if the borders seem to correspond to their understanding of who comprises their nation. Other states aspire to extend their borders outwards, perhaps in order to encompass all the members of their "nation" within one political body or "state." Here one thinks of the National Socialist regime's claim that it and it alone was the legitimate container of German identity, a concept that then expanded biologically to incorporate all "Aryans." Under such circumstances nationhood becomes a fighting word and serves as the occasion for a search for *Lebensraum*.

[†] Deceased.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Remarkably, considering historic exiles, diasporas, and colonizations, the aspiration to meld "nation" and "state" has never disappeared. All one has to do is to consider the genocides of the twentieth century, a phenomenon that shows little sign of abating in the twenty-first century, to be disabused of that illusion.

If the state is an early modern, Western phenomenon, emerging from the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, itself preceded by the Peace of Augsburg, 1555, what is the derivation of nation? Does the nation have any moral standing? If so, from what sources does the moral valuation of nations arise? These are complex and by no means easily answered questions, in large part because "nation" is an inherently ambiguous term. If a nation is, as the dictionary insists, an aggregate of persons who are closely associated by common descent, language, or history, so much so as to form a distinct race or people, there is no immediate and stirring valuation of ethical import that attaches *a priori* to such an entity or concept. Nations are worldly entities. Can they in any way be said to partake of the sacral, the holy, the divine? In other words, how does "ethics" get attached to "nation" or "nations"? In order to explain this basic question in religious ethics and also the current challenge of "nations," this chapter explores resources in Jewish and Christian thought. This seems appropriate given the "Western" context of the "nations," but analogies could be found in other traditions as well. Within the Muslim tradition, however, scholars of Islam tell us, the dividing line occurs less between nations than between the "house of Islam" (dar al-Islam) and the non-Muslim world, the "house of war" (dar al-harb). As such, within this tradition, war that is waged to extend "the house of Islam" is legitimate (Tibi 2002). Whereas, we shall see, Jesus of Nazareth rejected earthly dominion, Muḥammad founded a "religiously conceived polity ... and his successors confronted the realities of the state and, before very long, of a vast and expanding empire. At no time did they create any institution corresponding to, or even remotely resembling, the church in Christendom" (Lewis 2002, 98–99). Exploring the theme of "nations," the task of this chapter is to examine this idea from a distinctly religious ethical perspective in order to demonstrate the contribution of religious ethics to political philosophy.

Nations in Biblical Narratives

In the Hebraic Bible, the God of the Israelites ordains Abraham as the father of nations. In this way it can be said that God is generative of people and of peoples (see Genesis 12:1–3). By contrast to "country" or "land" as a place that identifies a region of origin, "nation" in the biblical imagination is far less prosaic, connoting promise, potential, hope, something not yet realized and perhaps not fully realizable on earth. "States" are unknown to scripture. Instead, there are lands, there are kingdoms, and there is Caesar or Rome once one arrives at the Christian New Testament. The world of the Hebraic Bible or Christian Old Testament is a world of peoples and nations. Nations need rulers. Rulers are elders and kings, established in the first instance by divine authority.

If the Old Testament can be said to constitute a political tradition, that tradition is one of kingship and patriarchal rule. The role of elders – of judges, prophets, and kings – is normative. Such elders are personifications of the nation's identity and its fundamental (or first) principles. "Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation," we are told (Gen. 18:17). In the contemporary world, by contrast, patriarchy is a term of derision and virtually synonymous with "the oppression of women," as it is routinely put.

Such a judgment in the context of the Hebrew texts is, at best, anachronistic. Patriarchal authority in scripture helps to bring "the nation" into being and sustain it. The authority lodged in the rule of patriarchs over nations, certainly the nation of Israel, is not derived from our own wills – as we think of political legitimacy in modernity – but, rather, from what Oliver O'Donovan (1996) calls a "theology of divine judgments."

Israel's sense of nationhood or political identity is inseparable from Yahweh's divine kingship and the covenant of God with Israel, a covenant that brings collective identity itself into being. The constitutive role of divinely authorized kingship is central to nationhood. The story of the origination of nations is precisely that – a powerful narrative, so much so that "nations" and "nation" have ever since been imbricated with tales of the coming into being of peoples. The "state," by contrast, is a juridical concept, more abstract, less contextual and storied. It is important to note that nations are *not* voluntaristic entities brought into being by a specific act of human will as in much modern political theory (Hobbes 1998; Locke 1980; Rousseau 1997). Nations are elect and elected: God chooses Abraham. From this moment of election flows the idea that nations embody and carry out the will of God (e.g. John Winthrop's famous "city on a hill" image of the Puritan covenant to be realized on the shores of the new world) (Winthrop 1996).

The coming into being of nations is not presented in exclusively patriarchal terms. The restoration of Jerusalem after exile, for example, is compared to a woman laboring and giving birth. This restoration or "rebirth" is a miracle. Even as a mother nurtures her infant, so God nurtures Jerusalem. Lands and peoples are born and, like a human pregnancy, this takes time to develop and to be made manifest (see Is. 66:7–11). Thus begins a long tradition of thinking of nations in feminine terms. Nations are "she's" that give birth to, and nurture, a people. In many European languages, one speaks a "mother tongue." The potent intermingling of male and female imagery in the iconography, mythology, and political theology of nations helps to account for how and why "the nation" remains so compelling an idea. Nations are sources of uniqueness and particularity. They help to make us distinct. Nation captures our difference, just as familial identity does.

God Governs and Judges the Nations

If, in the biblical "world," Abraham is the Father of Nations, then Moses continues the covenant of nations.

> The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I have commanded them ... Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation. (Ex. 32:7–10)

The story of nations is often troubled, as this powerful passage indicates. The God of nations makes demands. The people of Israel fail to measure up. God subjects them to severe judgment. Moses pleads with God, following God's articulation of his wrath in the passage cited, and compels God to soften his judgment so as not to bring disaster upon his people. Moses does this, in part, by evoking the Abrahamic founding. An object lesson for the normative evaluation of nations is embodied herein: God judges the

nations. This helps to make sense of Thomas Jefferson's pronouncement that he trembled for his nation when he remembered that God was just: the reference point is slavery. It recalls, in the context of the United States, Abraham Lincoln's extraordinary evocation of the inscrutability of divine judgment in his magnificent Second Inaugural:

> The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to him? (Lincoln 1990, 333)

Lincoln is securely in the Old Testament tradition as he reflects that God may punish those nations by whom offenses come. This theme has been repeated elsewhere: in the struggle against fascism; the movements against and overthrowing apartheid in South Africa; and the denunciation of oppression in many lands. Through the prophet Amos, we see that nations are subject to judgment, scrutiny, and claims upon their collective conscience. Amos is charged by God with bringing to the Israelites a message they do not want to hear, namely, that they as a nation have abandoned God's ways. Amos links true nationhood with justice and righteousness and calls the nation of Israel back to its founding, even as Martin Luther King, centuries later, called upon Amos' words in simultaneously condemning and lifting-up his nation, charging America to be faithful to her biblically inspired principles (King 1991, 297). The normative thrust of "nation" comes through in such circumstances as an attempt to bring fallen practices into closer harmony with God-sanctioned principles present at the founding, so to speak, when God called the nation into being in the first instance.

This falling away and being recalled is a familiar theme in the narrative of nations. When Amos cries out to the people of Israel; when Dr. King cries out to the would-be "beloved community" of his own nation, it is a call for political righteousness that is unattainable absent divine favor or rectification. Embedded in such prophetic moments in the narrative of nations is the claim that God not only judges between the nations, he also is the governor of nations. It is God who sits on the ultimate throne. Earthly kings can aspire only to the penultimate. "For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm. God is king over the nations: God sits on his holy throne" (Ps. 47:8). Only those nations whose God is the Lord are said to be happy.

How does God adjudicate between nations? Israel is the covenanted people and finds favor, and frequently severe judgment, in God's eyes. The story of the rising and falling of Israel's political kingships in God's eyes tells us a great deal about what happens when God's kingship is forgotten or abandoned and earthly kingship becomes idolatrous. Although the promise of being within the Lord's house is lifted up for all nations (Is. 2:2; Mk. 11:17), this condition of universal comity is not attained in biblical history. Indeed, the passage favored by those who seek earthly peace as a possible accomplishment in history (Is. 2:4) is a possibility linked to certain conditions that are never attained. The condition of eschatological peace is one in which the Lord's house has been established everywhere. Human sin, pride, selfishness, and political idolatry stand in the way of such an achievement.

Nations: The Dangers of Political Idolatry, the Requirements of Servitude

The biblical tradition knows little of citizenship in the modern sense. Unlike modern social contract theories, a people is constituted by divine election rather than an act of the will by potential citizens (see Rawls 1999). Loyalty to the nation is thereby more likely thought of as a form of divinely ordained servitude. The patriarch serves God and his people. The people serves God and keeps faith with its tradition. Nations themselves are collective servants, playing a part in God's providential plan. It is God's servant who brings justice to the nations (see Is. 42:1–4) and servants of the nation must seek favor with God through obedience. Human beings cannot help but play a part in a collectivity. They are members of nations by virtue of the fact that they are born. The ethical question is what sort of collectivity is our nation? Does it follow the Lord God in all things? Or has it gone down an idolatrous path? This is the biblical way to think about nation – as that which individuals perpetrate to good or to ill ends. It is a concept with a long history of effects in Western political thought.

If the nation faithfully serves its divinely ordained mandate, if it is governed with justice and righteousness, individual loyalty to nation is enjoined, even required. But a nation that becomes idolatrous is one that should be repudiated, even at risk to the self. The Bible is replete with narratives of dangerous overreach, mostly notably the Tower of Babel that figures so centrally in St. Augustine's *The City of God* (1998). Nations that came together to seek greatness and to reach to God, having succumbed to those temptations of pride that bedevil all nations, are smote by God and the peoples are dispersed and become unintelligible to one another. To become like God is idolatry; to strive to do God's will is the faithful obedience of the good servant, a servant of God, a servant of the nation. Such narratives of the dangers of hubristic striving have been drawn upon by theologians and ethicists historically as they strive to articulate limits to national loyalty and its demands. It has led, for instance, to distinctly Christian conceptions of the "two kingdoms," one religious and one political, and thereby a separation of powers. This idea has been basic to Christian political thought.

So, if a key political concept emerging from the narrative of the people of Israel is that of "nation" and of an identity called into being through covenant, a key political concept deeded to subsequent generations by Jesus of Nazareth is the need to articulate limits to political identity, loyalty, and definition. There was that fateful moment when Jesus examined a coin and told his followers to render unto Caesar what was Caesar's; unto God, what was God's (Luke 20:24–25). Over time, this evolved into a strong view of the relative autonomy of the governmental order for it, too, is mandated by God and it, too, makes legitimate claims on persons.

Where the line is to be drawn, where "Caesar" illegitimately usurps what is God's varies from one religious tradition and denomination to another. And usurpation might come from the side of religion. Faith may usurp what is properly within the legitimate mandate of government. However, given the power and reach of the modern state, the encroachment by one into the mandate of the other is more likely to flow from structures of governmental power, at least in the West, which has never been hospitable to theocracy. (Close alliances between throne and altar are not the same thing.) The ethical upshot is that, if God is the Father of nations and calls them into being, God, especially through the figure of the second person of the Trinity, separates God and Caesar in such a way that "nations" and "national identity" become inherently ambiguous categories in the ethical sense. The believer as

citizen is obliged at each and every point to evaluate what claims are being made on him or her, in whose name, and to what end.

The eschatological transformation of all politics by the Kingship of Christ is a difficult concept for late moderns mindful of global political realities and the diversity of religions. We can make sense of it only as an "end-time" idea. But if Christ's kingship is removed too far beyond the here and now, what one is called to render to God becomes more abstract, more pallid, than does the far more intrusive immediacy of what we are called to render to "Caesar." Christian ethics is dedicated to making sense of the relationship of the Messianic age to life in what St. Augustine called the *saeculum*, the historic *now* in which we are pinioned during our earthly sojourn. Human self-governance after Christ remains a form of servanthood even as it is tinged by an ever-present temptation toward political idolatry. Jesus, after all, *resists* the temptation to become ruler of worldly kingdoms, as Satan displays the kingdoms before him. His kingdom, Jesus tells his followers, is not of this earth. But we are. And we remain peoples whose earthly sojourn is marked by an ethically promising and problematic immersion in nations. A crucial task of religious ethics in our time is to mine the resources of the religious tradition in order to orient political existence within and among the "nations." But this is just to suggest that one requirement now facing any religious ethics is to provide cultural purchase on political realities rather than simply accepting the terms of debate set by the "nations."

H. Richard Niebuhr, in his modern theological classic *Christ and Culture*, tackles the complex relationship between religious belief and worldly matters as an "enduring problem" for Christians precisely because Jesus articulated a distinction between what is God's and what is Caesar's. For some Christian thinkers, "the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount concerning anger and resistance to evil, oaths and marriage, anxiety and property, are found incompatible with the duties of life in society," writes Niebuhr (1959, 9). Can the teachings of Jesus serve as the basis for citizenship duties and responsibilities?

Niebuhr delineates five prototypical responses within the Christian community historically: the Christ against culture; the Christ of culture; the Christ above culture; Christ and culture in paradox; and Christ as transformer of culture. Most of the time, these positions do not exist in pure form as Christians struggle with their life in "the nations," both past and present. An example Niebuhr offers is that of St. Thomas Aquinas, who was faithful as a monk to his vows "against" the culture – poverty, celibacy, and obedience – "even as he belonged to a church that had achieved or accepted full social responsibility for all great institutions" and that had "become the guardian of culture, the fosterer of learning, the judge of nations, the protector of the family, the governor of social religion." For Aquinas, Christianity is, among other things, a structure of practical wisdom "planted among the streets and marketplaces, the houses, palaces, and universities that represent human culture" (Niebuhr 1959, 128–130).

In the matter of "the nations" such a stance commits Christians to taking up political vocations like soldiering, judging, and governing. Such vocations highlight, often in stark ways, the demands of religious faith and the demands of political responsibility. For St. Augustine, for Martin Luther, and for the anti-Nazi martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the harsh demands of civic necessity as well as the command of love require that one may have to commit oneself to the use of force under certain limited conditions, and with certain intentions. There are dangers in taking up worldly vocations. Those who commit themselves to the care of cultural institutions must remain fully aware of just how fragile these institutions are. But to become wholly immersed in social institutions courts a form of presentism and an overly strong commitment to that which is mutable by contrast to that which alone is immutable, namely, God and his Kingdom. The Christ and Caesar distinction sets up a critical tension that simply is the life of the believer-citizen in modernity.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge the vital contributions of John D. Carlson in researching and conceptualizing this chapter.

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CHAPTER 125

Economics

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Throughout history, religion has been related to economic life. While every religion has its own constituting framework of moral meaning, religious ideals are modulated by their contextual applications when they encounter other possibilities of thought and worship or find it necessary to address new situations. Although anthropological understandings in the past tended to see each culture as a self-contained system with its own religion, code of conduct, social institutions, and economic strategies, broader studies suggest that cultures change by outside influences, most rapidly when economic and technical exchanges make old ways obsolete and religion legitimates new possibilities. How these change, and whether innovation is tolerated, resisted, or embraced, has to do with the inner character of the religion. Each religion will tend to see some changes as fundamentally immoral, and others as compatible with core values. Such factors indicate whether a society is stable and adaptable, or in decline and ready for collapse or conversion.

The Old Silk Road

Ancient examples of such changes can be found in recent studies of the Old Silk Road. Along its several branches and paths, early interchanges anticipated what we now identify as globalization. Intercultural and interreligious exchanges were facilitated by expansive economic trade that had episodic parallels in Africa and Pre-Columbian America. After the domestication of the camel in Asia, many trade routes developed among previously isolated regions – none more extensive and exemplary for our questions than the routes from the Mediterranean Sea, across Central Asia to China, with lesser extensions by sea to Korea and Japan in the East, to India and Arabia to the South, and into Europe and North Africa in the West. Along these routes, Jewish and Zoroastrian (and, after Alexander, Hellenistic) traders found their way east and Chinese traders found their way west. They met Hindu and Buddhist as well as animist tribal traditions along the routes. Each established enclaves along the way, but they usually represented traditions that were ethnically bound – Hebrew, Persian, Greek, Han, or Indo-Aryan. The exchange of religious and philosophical ideas led to some highly syncretistic spiritualities, but little changed the basic ethos. Still, patterns of "fair dealing" and "not stealing" were sufficiently recognized by all to sustain the exchanges and justly punish violators.

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Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

The economic practices of India and of China, legitimated by quite stable religious and ethical systems with differentiated trading and craft classes, are in certain ways similar and in other ways quite different. Both formed agricultural, feudal-peasant societies. The hierarchical structure of India was based on the dominance of the brahminic priests, supported by a vast array of local and regional maharajas and princes who, together with the brahmans, enforced quite strict caste distinctions on the ethnically pluralistic, endogamous population. Each caste and princely state had, in fact, subdivisions, each with its own deities and each with an assigned role in the economy – a pattern applied to outcaste peoples as well. This massive complexity fixed groups in their status and functions and even dramatic religious and political incursions – as when the Moguls or British arrived – were largely absorbed into the system.

The imperial structure of China, by contrast, had an integrated political regime supported by a subordinate Mandarin literati who both administered the regional offices of the emperor and propagated an ethic of virtue, duty, and obedience to patriarchal–imperial authority at every level of the society, from the emperor to the family. This unified structure was often less in harmony with nature and heaven than classic theory imagined, but it entailed the consequence that a change of dynasty could change a frightening amount. Stability demanded social as well as cosmic harmony. Centralized authority also allowed greater control of dissent, of the land (as massive irrigation projects or defense walls reveal), and of technology and trade, the fruits of which were enjoyed by elites. The people worked hard, consumed little, and depended on emperors, literati, and local patriarchs to establish the fabric of duties and live in learned leisure.

When the proselytizing religions arose – first Buddhists, then Christians, and later Muslims – they sent missionaries to non-converted regions along the Silk Road. Buddhists bore Indian ideas to the East and West; Christians took the Gospel and Greco-Roman ideas to the East. A rather ample tolerance seems to have been the rule, and each had success in tribal areas where religion served as a link to the wider world. But both Buddhists and Christians of that period were monastic. They thought that the exemplary life required the renunciation of wealth, of politics, and indeed of marriage. Thus, they had little effect on economic ethics except in presenting a basic alternative to it.

When Islam spread along the road, it established a new hegemony from Istanbul to central Asia, with links to the Arab world. And it brought quite another model of religion and economic life. For one thing, Muḥammed, the prophet of Islam, was himself a caravan trader. The lore of the tradition and the laws in the Qur'an and the sharīʻa reflected an ethos congenial to trade. For another, Muḥammed was a warrior, and there was as little doubt about the spreading of the faith, and economic opportunity for believers, by conquest as there was about the morality of trade. A theocratic political economy given to trade was seen as morally and spiritually quite legitimate.

This attitude differed from the Hindu and Confucian traditions, and, for that matter, most Greek, Roman, and medieval Christian traditions. Although all of these had a place for tradesmen and merchants in society, these activities were not held in high esteem. Not only were they always trying to make a profit, which made them at least appear to be greedy, they also did not stay at home in settled moral systems and often acted immorally on the road – or were thought to. They did not produce as did the settled peasants, they did not provide defense from invaders as did rulers, and they did not cultivate the spiritual, moral, or intellectual virtues to keep the sacred traditions as did the priests and literati.

Still, the ancient Silk Road provided a set of complex channels by which the world became more closely bound together. Arts and technologies, pieties and philosophies, myths and worldviews were more widely

disseminated, as goods, money, and produce became increasingly accessible. Many of the crafts and spiritual practices of Asia passed into the West and were adapted to new conditions. Time-keeping devices, gun power, printing techniques, and navigational instruments were adopted by the legacies of Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Hebrew prophecy in reformed Christian theologies, generating a new complex, dynamic civilization on the Occidental end of that road. These, and confrontations with Islam which also was spreading to the West, jarred primitive Europe out of its lethargic feudalism and gradually prompted new religious, ethical, and social changes that we now call Reformation, Renaissance, and the Age of Exploration. The result was a new relationship between economics and religious ethics.

These changes induced a second period of proto-globalization. When the technology of transport changed from caravan to clipper ships, and the new burst of religious zeal invited the faithful to advance world-transforming convictions, entrepreneurs and missionaries took to the seas. There are many causes of these developments, including a rising nationalism in Europe, a development that generated the "Wars of Religion" contained only by the "Peace of Westphalia." But if nations could not expand the range of their rule at home, they could send merchants and missionaries abroad. To protect their investments from expropriation and their faiths from attack, soldiers were soon to follow.

Modern Developments

Of course, indigenous rulers and elders resisted. Still, resentments could no more contain the hunger for goods carried in both directions by traders than control the religio-cultural insights taken abroad or brought home by missionaries. This second period of proto-globalization served the Industrial Revolution, and it, in turn, altered both the religio-cultural and the techno-economic life in much of the world. This is the period of "modernization" – a process that, in many places, is still very much underway and among some peoples is just getting started.

In modernity, however, much of economic activity and theory seemed to be entirely cut off from religious and ethical norms, at least in traditional terms. Many see modern economic developments as entirely secular. In this context two great modern hypotheses about the relation of economics and religion in modernity were developed. These hypotheses were developed respectively by Karl Marx and Max Weber. The long geo-economic war between statist "socialism" and libertarian "capitalism," both usually understood in nineteenth-century terms and neither ever fully made actual, has resolved into a democratic capitalism with some welfare provisions for the very poor and moral qualms for the rest about living in a consumerist society.

Both efforts to understand modern economic systems see them as developments that surpassed traditional and feudal economies in ways that disrupted older communities, alienated workers from traditional relationships, and formed new classes in society. But one view opposes these developments. It generated not only several romantic communitarian movements, but also efforts to form a scientific economics that superseded all traces of tradition, religion, or idealistic moralism. Monumental efforts were made to construct an economic system beyond capitalism, using modes of central planning that would bring liberation, equality, and a new solidarity. Today, these efforts seem universally to have collapsed, but their impact on thought and political policy around the world should not be underestimated. Many religious leaders think about the relationship of religious ethics and economic life in precisely these terms.

What has been increasingly argued, however, is a contrary view that capitalism brings more freedom and works better in producing and distributing goods and services. Further, it is increasingly doubted that capitalism creates the polarization of the classes. The best evidence indicates that it in fact tends to create larger and more inclusive middle classes, even if it also involves greater temporary gaps between those at the top of the economic bell-shaped curve and those newly included at the bottom of that curve. Thus, more poor people seek to migrate to capitalist lands and out of socialist ones. Moreover, most theories today hold that economies work best in a constitutional democracy that also regulates business activities so as to constrain fraud, exploitation, and corruption. They recognize the necessity of legally controlled market exchange and the wisdom of encouraging multiple corporations in it. Indeed, the number of corporations per 100,000 people is a key indicator of economic well-being – an argument for wide access to incorporation procedures and against monopolies by state or industrial collusion.

To be sure, cultures where people are not encouraged to form or sustain viable corporations are left behind economically and become most vulnerable. Some scholars argue that the habits of mind, traditions of trust and trustworthiness, and skills in forming and managing viable institutions for cooperative ventures in modern complex societies depend historically on religious orientations that encourage participation in organizations distinct from state and patriarchal domination. Thus, marginal groups find not only spiritual consolation and moral guidance, but also networks of contacts and the resources of social capital by active participation in church, mosque, or temple. If these are vibrant, the social order becomes more favorable to both religious and corporate development, and to economic well-being.

Two Great Hypotheses

Still, the persistence of the two great hypotheses forces us to inquire further into the nature and character of ethics and religion in relation to economic life. The first hypothesis, associated with Marx, was actually explored long ago by materialist philosophers both in the West and the East. It is, ironically, held in new forms today by some procapitalist economists who link their theory to evolutionary psychology in a fresh version of social Darwinism. This view holds that human motivations are obviously and decisively material interests, that the control of the means of production determines the basic contours of economic life, and that the fittest will and should survive. Religion, in this view, is a survival strategy of earlier stages of evolution that today is propagated by interested parties and blindly inhaled by the branches of the population who remain backward – a kind of opiate for the intellectually incompetent. This view finds forceful contemporary expression, ironically, in the socialist-rooted "world systems theories" of Immanuel M. Wallerstein and the polemics of David C. Korten, as well as capitalist-oriented Nobel Prize winners Gary Becker and, in part, Amartya Sen. In none of these does religion play a role in shaping economic life.

The second hypothesis is associated with the legacy of Max Weber. He claims that the religious convictions of people are among the primary factors that not only influence personal character and behavior, but also the destiny and prosperity of peoples and nations. This view acknowledges, of course, that humans have strong economic interests; but it also holds that humans have ideal interests, ever sensing that there is more to life than material motivations and the struggle to gain control of the means to satisfy them. Indeed, that "more" shapes and selects between various possible interests as well as the kinds of means that are developed to meet these two kinds of interests. This "more" is given historical expression

in religion which shapes the moral life and forms civil society in ways that are determinative for human flourishing. Because work is seen as a calling from God, some religious orientations predispose people to develop disciplined personal habits to form corporations to create wealth for the commonwealth, to seek more efficient means of production through technology, and to develop universalistic principles of morality that can regulate open societies.

In this second perspective, religion and religious ethics are not seen essentially as the byproducts of exploitative myth-making, but can best be seen as primary factors in the social dynamics of history. The question, then, is what kind and quality of religion best meets the tests of social justice and civilizational effectiveness. In some ways it appears that some religions encourage, and some inhibit, economic productivity accordingly as they promote the cultivation of trust, the rationalization of the economy, the formation of pluralistic social organizations, the honoring of human rights, and the rewarding of risk and technological innovation. Moreover, advocates of this view argue that modern capitalist societies are not, as some say, more acquisitive than traditional ones, but argue instead that they are in fact rooted in the constraint of immediate desires and interests, the postponement of gratification, and a cultivation of long-term, even trans-historical spiritual and moral concerns that are taken as guides to business life. Versions of this view today are held by such social scientists as David Landes, Peter Berger, Lawrence Harrison, and Roland Robertson.

Ironically, the chief theorists of these two hypotheses shared one major assumption for most of the past century. They believed that the rational study of these phenomena would, over time, bring increased secularization in all areas of society. More recently, many have reversed that expectation as, in fact, the world's cultures have not secularized. If anything, the religions have adopted and adapted aspects of contemporary technology and social organization, altered the ways in which particular groups control the means of production, and modulated parts of their own traditions to appropriate selectively aspects of socialism and increasingly of capitalism. In the meantime, they continue to generate habits of personal discipline and economic rationalization, complex modes of social organization outside the family and the state, and more universalistic views of moral and positive law. The most interesting fact in this regard, however, is that the criteria by which peoples are making this selection are based on the convergence of practical results and the resurgent, often conservative religious consciousness. Not only is Christianity experiencing what some call a new "great awakening" in the Americas, and in parts of Africa and Asia; but renewal is also seen in the other great, historic religions – Islam, Hinduism, parts of Buddhism and, in some ways, Confucianism. They are all expanding rapidly, reforming their traditions, and generating fresh religiously driven ethical approaches to contemporary issues – and in the process modifying their economic ethic in a procapitalist way. So, most remarkably, is Maoism, the last great representative of a thoroughly secular religion!

Current Challenges?

When one looks at matters historically and cross-culturally, we can say that the second hypothesis has basically displaced the first one – or better, has incorporated aspects of the first one into the second's more holistic view. Indeed, one can find a rather massive resurgence of efforts to make the connection between religion and economics. Not only have Catholic encyclicals and Protestant statements been issued by official church bodies in the last two decades, business practitioners are also seeking to connect

their faith to practical business life, often without the aid of clergy whom they sometimes see as mired in obsolete socialist prejudices.

However, economic life is presently based in increasingly common standards of accounting, management, finance, marketing, communication technology, and the treatment of workers – standards not universally observed. More complex economic systems leave spaces for new criminal activities internal to high profile corporations, and new normative guides as well as regulative means are being developed to inhibit the new forms of corruption. These factors invite the various religious and cultural traditions of ethics to press in a common direction, even if other motifs from these traditions seek to preserve distinctive contours for their host societies.

Yet the infrastructure of something approximating a global civilization is on the virtual horizon, and a critical question is what patterns of ethics will guide it. Although some are still left out of the new levels of productivity and wealth, and perils to ecological sustainability are obvious, quick solutions are not available. Issues of property rights, particularly of intellectual property, become decisive, for those without access to the resources that developed new technologies and modes of production cannot possibly develop alternatives on their own, and thus they fall further behind. Moreover, the great growth of international corporations and financial institutions displaces traditional political means of economic constraint while international law and legal institutions, even if developing rapidly, are too weak to solve fundamental issues.

We can summarize our situation briefly this way:

1 Every civilization requires a common morality to flourish – a basic definition of right and wrong and a fundamental sense of the good to be sought, tied to personal virtues and real contexts, and no such basic morality has ever become pervasive in a civilization without a religious basis.
2 The basic morality that has produced modern, Western culture and has been the mother of globalizing technology, communication, economic productivity, democratic politics, and corporate organization, is rooted in the Christian theological tradition – particularly as it has drawn on and tried to integrate Hebraic, Greco-Roman, and later Enlightenment resources.
3 It is not certain whether this heritage can today develop a generous religious ethic able to engage the world religions and philosophies and, with them, provide the key guidelines of justice and responsibility for a global era without turning to imperial, hierocratic, theocratic, or neocolonial patterns of authoritarianism.

To offer faithful, creative, and simultaneously philosophically, scientifically, and theologically coherent proposals on such issues is a key task of religious ethics today if it is to face the realities of contemporary economic life. It will have to offer a more comprehensive vision of civilizational ethics than even the best historic moments of tolerance and trade, the best studies of business ethics, and the best discussions of capitalism, socialism, and social policy have yet generated.

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CHAPTER 126

Human Rights

Simeon O. Ilesanmi

The contemporary international doctrine of human rights is principally an outgrowth of World War II, arising on the one hand from the statement of allied war aims in the Atlantic Charter (1941) and on the other from persistent pressure brought by individuals and groups outside of governments for a declaration of political principles or an "international bill of rights" for the postwar world. Since then, there has been a progressive evolution and codification of the idea of human rights, with the United Nations serving as the main vehicle through which human rights dreams have been expressed and their projects implemented. Beginning with its Charter of 1946, which affirms in its Preamble "faith in fundamental human rights," the United Nations successively adopted three key documents – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and two international covenants, one on Civil and Political Rights and the other on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (both 1966) – that today constitute an authoritative catalogue of internationally recognized human rights. Other human rights documents, both regionally inspired, such as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1986), and issues-directed, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981), are supplements to the earlier UN instruments.

The inspiration for the understanding of rights, however, antedated the birth of the United Nations. Among other notable sources of human rights ideas are religious traditions, philosophical ideas, legal theories, and revolutionary political and socialist movements, which have articulated moral and humanistic principles that either correspond to or have influenced modern conceptions of human rights. Buddhism and Islam, no less than Christianity, Judaism, and several indigenous religions, portray a vision of universal moral community, in which human beings exist under one transcendent Source, whose will they are to serve for the benefits of all. We find a similar cosmopolitan vision of human interdependence in Cicero's *De Legibus* (52 BCE), where he appeals to human rights laws that transcend customary and civil laws, and endorses the idea of "a citizen of the whole universe, as it were of a single city." Cicero rejected the view that distinctions of race, religion, and opinion are insurmountable barriers to forming an inclusive civic and moral community (see Griffin and Atkins 1991). Enlightenment thinkers bolstered this moral orientation to the world, requiring only that the emerging nation-state be seen as the natural forum for securing civil and political rights against religious establishments. As women entered the public sphere, militants and thinkers like Olympe de Gouge and Mary Wollstonecraft called for the equal natural rights of women.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

While few would dispute the importance of tracing the intellectual history of human rights, the controversy surrounding the use of the term today focuses on what it means to have rights, how they may be justified, and what rights we should have or recognize. For reasons that will become clear, issues of justification and scope of rights have been more contentious than the analytic task of defining human rights. This chapter explores all three.

The Meaning of Human Rights

Discussions of human rights come up in a variety of contexts, academic and otherwise, which indicate the prominence of the idea in contemporary international society. Accordingly, some scholars suggest that human rights have become a hegemonic political discourse or settled norms within the society of states. While there is much to celebrate in this trend, it can be argued that the global vernacularization of human rights has also contributed to the confusion about their meaning. Conceptually, the word "right" may designate *rectitude* by means of which we talk of something (for example, an action) as being right. This meaning is only tangentially related to what we usually have in mind when talking about human rights, a term that is broadly used to designate *entitlement*. In legal, political, and moral contexts, human rights refer to justifiable claims that individuals and groups can make upon others or upon society, including their governments. The claims may be negative, when they impose constraints upon the actions of others. They may also be positive, requiring active efforts on the part of those against whom they are made to meet the needs embodied in the claims. But are all claims entitled to recognition? What distinguishes "rights" claims from petty claims, and why should we be inclined to take the former seriously while having no qualms about laughing off the latter?

I will identify three different, albeit overlapping, ways of answering these questions. Each answer roughly corresponds to a separate meaning of human rights. First, human rights are taken seriously, or ought to be so taken, because they are expressions of moral identity. They provide normative clues to what a society and its citizens care about. When enacted into law by a democratically elected government, rights often become a means by which important moral values – dignity, respect, and justice – are legally protected. In short, human rights language calls our attention to what it means to be human. It testifies to the goodness of the human who understands himself or herself, and is regarded by others, as a valuable member of the community, and who not only has to be respected but upon whom others can also make similar claims.

Second, human rights function as a meaningful rhetoric for discussing society's response to basic human needs. "A basic need" is anything "in whose absence a person would be harmed in some crucial and fundamental way" (Feinberg 1973, 111). Needs are things required to survive with dignity; they are warrants for protection against potential harm. When someone has a need, that person is not merely entitled to compensation in the event that he or she happens to be deprived of the needed good; one also has a right to the satisfaction of that need even before harm befalls him or her. Rights, then, refer to important human interests, those interests that operate as "trumps" in the sense that they cannot be compromised by reference to collective policies or goals. They denote ultimate and weighty moral concerns that usually override other normative considerations and which persons have a moral duty to respect.

Thus, when we articulate human choices in rights language, we are attributing to those choices a certain peremptory force that is neither derived from, nor can be overridden by, the rules of any municipal

legal system. Human rights have a tangible existence and moral force in the world of actions, not because the law or a given received tradition says so (in fact, rights are often the casualties of law and tradition), but because they are the means by which we assess the worth of any tradition or legal system. The capacity of any legal or political order to create moral obligations depends on its conformity with human rights. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. There has been, in virtually every society, an immense abyss between normative theory and social practice, between constitutional doctrine and constitutive conduct. Slavery, colonialism, sexism, and religious intolerance are among the many indelible deviations from human rights. Thankfully, there have also been progressive efforts toward bridging the gap between our normative aspirations and actual conduct. These efforts are at the core of the rights revolution, in consequence of which many dictators have been tossed out of office and excluded groups enfranchised as bona fide members of their societies. From Africa to Asia, Latin America to Eastern Europe, and in some countries of the Middle East, the language and conceptuality of rights are being incorporated into national constitutions. At the international level, human rights norms and values are also becoming a fashionable subject of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, largely because of the lexical priority accorded to human rights over actual cultural beliefs and particular social arrangements. Third, these worldwide developments provide a basis for a conceptualization of the idea of human rights, as "an expression of a deep human ability to recognize the other as like oneself; to experience empathy for the other's needs and sufferings; to consent to, support, and rejoice in the fulfillment of the other's human capacities and well-being" (Cahill 1999–2000, 45).

It is conceivable to concede this moral power to rights language but nonetheless argue that its desired goals can be achieved by means of other normative languages. Some have argued that other ideas are more effective than human rights in serving as ethical templates for social and political ordering. A key substitute for human rights is the language of duty, defended by communitarians in the West and by those who ascribe uniqueness to Asian and African cultures. This is the position taken in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, which Makau Wa Mutua, a Kenya-born scholar, defends as being consistent with precolonial African emphasis on "communal ties and social cohesiveness," values purportedly undermined by the so-called Western notion of the "individual who is 'utterly free and utterly irresponsible and opposed to society'" (Mutua 1995, 368). Similarly, others decry what is caustically referred to as "American rights talk" that "tend[s] to be presented as absolute, individual, and independent of any necessary relation to responsibilities." The near-worship of the individual in the name of rights impoverishes political culture, "promotes unrealistic expectations, heightens social conflict, and inhibits dialogue that might lead towards consensus, accommodation, or at least the discovery of common ground" (Glendon 1991, 12, 14).

American society may be more fragmented than it should ideally be, but it is doubtful that the acceptance and domestication of human rights are the sole culprits. What is more, societies that profess allegiance to the "responsibility language" are no less fragile in their social and political composition than America or other countries of the West. Rather than erecting a false dichotomy between "rights" and "duty," what seems more reasonable is to affirm their correlativeness and mutual entailment. The presumed opposition between the two often arises from confusions and misconceptions, ignoring the fact that some rights have the characteristics claimed for them, and other rights have the features associated with duties or responsibilities. We need the language of duty to enable us to appreciate our sociality and interdependence, and we need rights language to ensure that individual uniqueness is not needlessly sacrificed at the altar of societal convenience.

For example, the right to freedom of speech may be owned by individuals, but it is a precondition for the highly social process of democratic deliberation. That right keeps open the channels of communication; it is emphatically communal in character. Everyone who owns a speech right does so partly so as to contribute to the collectivity; it is this fact that explains the government's inability to "buy" speech rights even when a speaker would like to sell it. So, too, the right to associational freedom is hardly individualistic. In addition to its instrumental value of furthering the rights of the individual – by enabling individual expression and participation in the political process – the right to association is also meant to protect collective action and sociality. Additionally, some rights, even of the most traditional sort, including property, may be necessary conditions for enabling a sense of collective responsibility, even though some understand these rights to be important primarily because they are central to economic growth and material well-being. Yet people without rights to their property may be so dependent on official will that they cannot exercise their responsibilities as citizens (Sunstein 1995; Tuck 1979).

The danger (and a serious one at that) of dropping the language of rights for other more seemingly attractive, perhaps less fractious and less centrifugal ones is that it would strip people of their *locus standi* for effective and meaningful participation in the deliberative life of their society. The instrumentality of rights is a basis on which the powerless and the marginalized may have some hope of commanding a share of the social and material benefits of their societies. Rights offer us a shield from being coerced or bullied into silence; they draw attention to our voices and our lives – formal attention, informal attention, and the attention of various communities, including attention to oneself (Baier 1993, 159; Feinberg 1973, 58). While no human right is absolute in the sense of being indefeasible, every legitimate claim requires that infringements be justified by morally acceptable reasons.

But should these rights be universally recognized or are they constrained by the dictates of cultures?

Justifying Human Rights

Central to the contemporary doctrine of international human rights is the principle of non-discrimination. "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (UN 1948, Art. 2). The non-discrimination principle has become an article of faith for those regarded as universalists in the human rights community, that is, those who argue that a commitment to human rights necessarily implies a rejection of all systems of inequality based upon extrinsic human traits such as age, race, gender, religion, and places of origin. Some proponents of moral universalism appeal to the structure of human action to justify the inclusiveness of the human rights vision (Gewirth 1982). Other proponents ground human rights in the notion of an *a priori* human nature, preexisting any form of social and political organization (Wiredu 1990, 243). "The whole point of human rights is that they are taken to be binding and available, regardless of any particular identity or conviction" (Little 1999, 157). On this view, rights are the inescapable entailment of the moral status of human beings. The status itself could be predicated on either the value of biological life (Singer 1993, 55–217) or on universal rational agency, the uniquely human capacity for self-consciousness (Korsgaard 1996, 104).

The important question to raise at this juncture is whether religious sensitivities contribute to or undermine the aspirations for a universal recognition of human rights. One stream of scholars believes that it is religion that needs human rights for its preservation, not the other way round. They contend

that the morality of historical religious traditions is totalizing and exclusivist (Okin 1999, 9–24). Others argue "human rights are, in substantial part, the modern political fruits of ancient religious beliefs and practices" (Witte 1998, 258). By evoking "a basic sense of fellow humanity, respect for human dignity, and mutual responsibility," religious symbols and beliefs provide a motivational rationale for universalizing and domesticating human rights (Cahill 1999–2000, 47–48). More fundamentally, "the idea of human rights is ... ineliminably religious" (Perry 1998, 13). The idea of human rights, on this view, requires affirming that each person is "sacred" in relation to a holistic view of the world and its meaning, so that there are certain things that should not be done to and that should be done for any person.

Despite the disagreement between secular (rationalist) universalists and their religious counterparts, both camps agree on the normative understanding of humanity and the defense of human dignity as the primary object of human rights. Neither camp is also completely free of the potential evils that it identifies in the other. Historical religious traditions have perpetrated gruesome atrocities in the name of defending "absolute and universal" truths. Secular philosophical theories are no less sullied by their attribution of "rationality" to some segments of humanity while denying it to others.

The potential for discrimination on both religious and secular grounds has prompted two kinds of skeptical responses. First, cultural relativists see all assertions of universalism as smokescreens for an imperialist moral agenda and contend that morality is a product of historically bound cultures and specific epistemological contexts. They adjudge every society or culture to be a self-contained system that defines its own standard of rationality. Any pretension to the possibility of a transhistorical or universal moral code, applicable to all societies, without regard to time and place, is nothing short of moral dogmatism or idolatry, either of which is both irrational and reactionary. The other response comes from the proponents of "intercultural dialogue," premised on the conviction that the world's religious and philosophical traditions share much in common to enable them overcome their inherited superiority–inferiority complexes. Rather than engaging in a futile pursuit of the "ideal" human, the moral codes found in various societies might produce "a set of standards to which all societies can be held – negative injunctions, most likely, rules against murder, deceit, torture, oppression, and tyranny." These standards would constitute "the moral minimum," not a complete moral code, but rather "reiterated features of particular thick or maximal moralities" (Walzer 1994, 9–10).

Notable contributions to human rights debates in religious ethics seem to share an affirmation of pluralism as the context within which to seek legitimacy and justification for human rights. One historical misjudgment that many people continue to make is the view that contemporary international human rights instruments were produced by a single, principally Western, philosophical ideology. To the contrary, it was in the context of pragmatic, intercultural dialogue that international human rights secure their legitimacy. The concerns to which human rights were addressed are the conditions necessary for personal and communal flourishing (Twiss 1998, 272). Against this historical backdrop, it is moot to be asking whether religion can or ought to be part of the conversations about human rights. These conversations are necessarily *public*. As such, religious and secular voices must engage one another as components of a comprehensive cultural milieu.

Scope of Human Rights

The continuing multiplication of human rights instruments at the international and various regional levels shows the ideological fissures to which the human rights community is perennially prone. The

dispute about whether the international community should recognize any priorities, either moral or pragmatic, among categories of rights began with adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It resulted in the ratification of two different international covenants, one on Civil and Political Rights and the other on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights representing, respectively, the now moribund ideological blinkers of East and West. Two sub-issues define this debate: how to classify human rights and whether (or how) to rank them. On classification, it was John Warwick Montgomery who first categorized rights in terms of "generations," by which he meant the chronological appearance and development of rights theory.

For some time, Montgomery's "three generations of rights" provided a structure for discussions of international human rights. Broadly understood, the first generation refers to civil and political rights, the second to social and economic rights, and the third generation designates the right to development insisted upon by the formerly colonized countries of Africa and Asia (Montgomery 1986, 69–70). This classification now has a limited utility. It does not take account of the contemporary concern for "group rights". It is thus useful to think of internationally recognized human rights as falling roughly into five categories:

1 Rights of the person (e.g. life, liberty, and security of the person; privacy and freedom of movement; ownership of property; freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including freedom of religious teaching and practice "in public and private"; prohibition of slavery, torture, and cruel or degrading punishment).
2 Rights associated with the rule of law (equal recognition before the law and equal protection of the law; right to an effective legal remedy for violation of legal rights; impartial hearing and trial; presumption of innocence; prohibition of arbitrary arrest).
3 Political rights (freedom of expression, assembly, and association; rights "to take part in the government of the country" and to "periodic and genuine elections ... by universal and equal suffrage ... by secret vote").
4 Economic and social rights (social security, adequate standard of living, free choice of employment, protection against unemployment, "just and favorable remuneration," right to join trade unions, "periodic holidays with pay," free elementary education, and "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health").
5 Rights of communities (self-determination; protection against genocide, slavery and forced labor, racial discrimination, apartheid; protection of minority cultures; and the rights of children).

There is no universal format by which to classify human rights. It is, admittedly, possible to develop a different scheme than the one suggested here.

A far more controversial question is whether we should give priority to some rights over others. The question is raised because rights do conflict, not only because of competing human interests but also because of finite human and societal resources to adequately satisfy all human rights. Up till the early 1990s the dominant orientation was toward prioritization of rights, guided by such considerations as strategy (Hollenbach 1979, 187–202), moral weight (Shue 1980, 155–174), and judicial enforceability (Feinberg 1973). For example, some commonly argued that social, economic, and development rights were unjusticiable, with justiciability defined as the state's obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill a person's right. This characterization rests on the distinction between positive rights and negative rights that I alluded to earlier in the chapter. The former are said to require governmental action; to be resource

intensive and therefore expensive to protect; progressive and therefore requiring time to realize; vague in terms of the obligations they mandate; and involve complex, polycentric, and diffuse interests in collective goods (Scott and Macklem 1992, 24). On the other hand, civil and political rights are justifiable because they are, paradigmatically, negative rights and therefore cost-free, immediately satisfiable, precise in the obligations they generate, and comprehensible because they involve discrete clashes of identifiable individual interests (Nozick 1974, 26–53). All that is required to satisfy negative rights is an obligation not beyond the power of both individuals and governments to meet. This of course assumes the existence of propitious social conditions, especially "a set of institutional arrangements for securing legally binding guarantees beneficial to the individual" and "a secure and procedurally regularized legal system" (Claude 1977, 8–10).

The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action adopted on June 25, 1993 by the UN-sponsored World Conference on Human Rights challenges us to move beyond the prioritization paradigm by holding that "all human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent and interrelated." This is hardly a novel claim from the standpoint of many religious traditions, with their affirmation of the "fullness of life" as the organizing framework of moral discourse, as well as the belief in the all-encompassing Divine Reality who is related to all realms of life. There is little to celebrate about a society that promotes only one category of rights (e.g. civil/political rights) – that society merely projects an image of truncated humanity. Affirming the *interdependence* of rights is one normative and strategic way to avoid such a distortion of human life. Central to the principle of interdependence is the idea that "values seen as directly related to the full development of personhood cannot be protected and nurtured in isolation" (Scott 1989, 786). It advocates a full conception of human freedom and a full and integrated conception of the self. It thus rejects a related series of fundamental oppositions or dichotomies that can serve to privilege certain conceptions of the self, and to reinforce marginalization.

By affirming the normative unity of all rights, the principle of interdependence dissolves the false dichotomy between the so-called negative rights and positive rights, thereby refuting the attendant claim that only the former are justiciable. This distinction rests on a flawed assumption that for every human right there is only one correlative obligation, rather than seeing all human rights as entailing a complex, multilayered structure of obligations (Raz 1984, 194–200). Using the right to food as an example, Shue (2000) explains that there are four duties corresponding to it: (1) the obligation to respect; (2) the obligation to protect; (3) the obligation to ensure; and (4) the obligation to promote. The first is a classic negative obligation of non-interference, while the other three require varying degrees of positive action or state policy. This moral overlap underscores the need to promote in tandem both categories of rights.

Finally, the principle of interdependence takes into account the social realities of the people: its primary focus is the promotion of being human or of the capacity to be human. Full human flourishing requires material and political empowerment, enjoyed at individual and collective levels, and it is only within a vision of interrelated and interdependent rights that this inclusive ethical good can be secured. By shifting the argument from the *content* of rights per se and locating it at the center of the quest for an understanding of what it means to be human, the principle of interdependence brings a dynamic and sense of urgency to contemporary human rights debates. Amid the mounting global vicissitudes of civil wars, cultural oppression, political autocracy, economic stagnation, natural disasters, population explosion, and refugee crises, to name a few, we need a moral strategy that combines both the aspirations for political liberation with the imperatives of economic sustenance and empowerment. Anything short of this would make life more brutish and alienating.

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CHAPTER 127

Images and Things

Kenneth M. George

Companionable Objects, Companionable Conscience

How do images and things matter to our ethical sensibilities? How do they shape ethical life? As Hannah Arendt reminds us in *The Human Condition* (1958, 52), our world is a world suffused with things; its materiality is basic to our living together. From the moment we are thrown into the world, our being, our becoming is inseparable from – and thus vulnerable to – the materials that surround and embody us. Without things, and without our human capacity to objectify, we could not become subjects, persons, or societies. "Through making, using, exchanging, consuming, and living with things," writes Christopher Tilley, "people make themselves in the process" (Tilley 2006). Every social, cultural, or ideological order, every human encounter, every expression or exemplification of value, every gesture of language, and indeed the very nature of experience itself springs from and finds intelligibility in the vast but intimate presence of things. Images, of course, are but a certain kind of thing. Yet in this contemporary moment, when print and digital technologies have intensified the production, reproduction, and circulation of images, powerful visual economies have not only refigured our lifeworlds, but have expanded, too, the horizons and ethico-political stakes of seeing and being seen (Mitchell 2005; Pinney 2006).

What, then, should we make of conscience? Some describe conscience as an "inner voice" that we "hear" only within ourselves, and that "summons" us to this or that course of action. It is like a "command" that "tells" us what to do, or a "rebuke" about what we should have done. Understood in this way, conscience is an individuated and internalized scene of address and dialogue. It resembles, if in fragment only, the intersubjective speech acts and discursive practices that make up much of ordinary, everyday ethical life (Keane 2015; Lambek 2010; Lambek et al. 2015). We would be wrong to dismiss or take aim against the intersubjectivity and the ethical summons of language. All the same, depicting conscience as one's "inner voice" may be thought of as a metaphorical and ideological gesture shaped not just by Abrahamic religious traditions with their emphasis on the sincerity, intent, and individuality of the "believing subject," but possibly, too, so by a Protestant suspicion of materiality. Missing from this picture of conscience are the sensuous images and things that make up our world.

There are two ways in which we might bring visual and material things back into the picture. On the one hand, things and images may serve as affordances for the sorts of ethical reflexivity and action we associate with conscience (Keane 2015). Here, things act as vessel or scaffolding for moral comprehension, for making ethical judgments, and for imagining and committing to certain paths of action. Gazing

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

at a votive painting of St. Martin of Tours, for example, might remind one of charity or generosity toward others, or spur one to object to war. On the other hand, images and things are social beings that act and are acted upon by us. As we dwell together with objects, we become responsive to them, and they to us, as we can see when Hindu devotees and images of their gods come into possession of each other through *darshan*. Conscience is not indifferent to this encounter with materiality and visuality, to this experience of touching and being touched. There can be no ethics, no conscience, without images and things (George 2016). The conscience, after all, is a means for staying attached to the world and sustaining an ethical commitment to life and life's many forms. Ethics, in this sense, is not so much about right and wrong, or principles and norms, but about the sensibilities that guide our dwelling in a material world, in understanding our attachment and dwelling with things. How and whether we *align* with objects, how or whether we *respond* to their summons, or whether we acceptingly *yield* to their agency and alterity become paramount questions. Finding companionable objects in the world around us becomes a way of living with a companionable conscience.

Our relationships with things and images go far beyond our reflexive projects of self-discovery and self-making. They mark, too, the public reach and communal distribution of our ethico-political (and ethico-religious) sensibilities. As the work of Susan Gal (2002) and Jacques Rancière (2004) respectively and persuasively suggest, communal formations, social hierarchies, and public/private distinctions all may rest on the distribution of such sensibilities. In this light, communities are what Miguel Tamen (2001) calls "friends of interpretable objects" – groups of people who have recognizable ways for living with things and for determining which things will be recognized, made companionable, and put to cultural or political use, and which will be ignored, scorned, or destroyed in iconoclastic purge. We assemble around things. So much so, that Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (2005) have tried to conjure political and ethical possibilities for object-oriented public spheres. In contrast to Tamen's communal formations, grounded in shared (or normative, or even habitual) dispositions toward things, Latour and Weibel's broad, pluralistic commonwealth is marked by disagreement and "iconoclash" – moments when one does not know whether the purge or obliteration of an object is constructive or destructive (Latour and Weibel 2002, 14).

We seek, then, companionable alignments between our conscience and our material world (cf. Ahmed 2010), sometimes in broad accord with others, and sometimes in the heat of conflict and iconoclash. Material and visual forms are, of course, always undergoing cultural, historical, and ideological change, and are always subject to the weathering effects of nature and time. Then, too, images and things are always mobile and migrant, incessantly cast into motion and re-signification, and demanding fresh ethical engagement and judgment (Roberts 2010). It is the mobility of things and images – often on a global scale – that has led to some of the sharpest ethico-political crises and debates in recent times, even as it has opened up new possibilities of wonder, attachment, and companionable alignment (cf. Spyer and Steedly 2013). This is particularly true within spheres of life that have come to be called "religion" and "art."

Things and Images in Motion: Witnessing Miracles

A splendid example of how the circulation of images has led to wonder and anxiety may be found in the so-called "Hindu milk miracle" of September 21st, 1995, something I witnessed in televised accounts while traveling through Singapore that day. Around daybreak of the 21st, a worshipper at a New Delhi

temple offered a spoonful of milk to the trunk of a Ganesh *murti*, and watched in amazed awe as the stone idol drank it up. Word spread quickly across India. Within hours, countless images of Ganesh and other Hindu gods were seen drinking offerings of milk. Hindu temple societies and nationalist organizations declared it a miracle, and crowds of devotees poured into temples and depleted stores of their milk supplies. Television media, and telephones spread news of the marvel throughout the worldwide networks of the South Asian diaspora – to Singapore, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and the Caribbean – where the wondrous happening was repeated over and over. Offered sips of milk, the gods showed proof that they were touched and pleased at their devotees' solicitude. There were, of course, skeptics who felt ethically compelled and even eager to debunk the miracle (and religious conduct more generally). For them, this was not a transaction between devotees and their gods, but the capillary action that ensued from the surface tension of the milk when it came into contact with the stone or wood surfaces of the murtis – a miracle of everyday physics, but not of divine presence and blessing. The circulation of images and reports in the media, we see, led to the mimetic reproduction of a local "miracle" across globally dispersed communities of devotees who we might call "friends of murtis." As reproduction of the miracle intensified and spread, more and more devotees gathered to honor their companion-gods and to experience the astonishment, blessing, and gratification of having their gods answer back. Skeptics called it "mass hysteria," but others would have every reason to call it a "mass miracle."

A different miracle-in-motion involves wonder and anxiety over an oil-weeping portrait of the Virgin Mary in the sanctuary at the Coptic Church of St. Bishoi in Port Said, Egypt (Heo 2013). Sightings of the Virgin Mary in nature and on objects made for other purposes have routinely caught the interest of devout and searching Christians. She has been found beneath the Kennedy Expressway underpass in Chicago; in the windows of an office building in Clearwater, Florida; in clouds, tortillas, and rocks, and even in pretzels. Some earn the veneration of millions; many succumb to iconoclastic assault. The miracle of the Port Said icon begins in 1990 with the dream of a Coptic woman named Samia. In her dream, the Virgin appeared, touched Samia's right hand, and cured Samia of breast cancer. A few weeks later, Samia's right hand began to secrete fragrant holy oil. State security officers grew apprehensive as the Egyptian public – both Copts and Muslims – flocked to see the visible truth of the Marian miracle embodied by Samia and the oil seeping from her hand. Samia was placed under monastery arrest for five years to keep her out of sight and thus to preserve public order and maintain state regulation of religious truth. It was during her long arrest in the convent that Samia's hand stopped secreting oil. Inside her prayer cell, however, a print poster of the Virgin began to exude scented oil. It is the poster that has become the miracle icon of the Church of St. Bishoi in Port Said. The Marian apparition and miracle crossed from dream, to body, to print icon, but also threatened to move across religious communities and precincts. The response from the state and religious authorities was not to debunk the miracle but to contain and direct Marian companionability and power within the Coptic community.

Things and Images in Motion: Refiguring Traditions

The global circulation of things and images also has refigured local and regional religious traditions. The devotional worship of Mami Wata (literally the "Mother of Water") in West Africa and the West African diaspora provides a fascinating story of how chromolithographic images from Germany and India found new life in Africa as venerated icons of a beautiful, fearsome, and powerful water spirit associated with

wealth, prosperity, and healing. Traditional water-spirits in West Africa took the form of rainbows, fish, and snakes, but also of hybrids – half-human serpents and mermaids. Through decades of detective work, art historian Henry Drewal (2008) has uncovered the global history of today's Mami Wata, whom he regards as a seductive "capitalist deity par excellence."

The trail of chromolithographic prints begins with a poster of a late nineteenth-century German circus performer, Maladamatjaute. Former Hamburg fish merchant Carl C. G. Hagenbeck had begun running extravagant caravan shows of exotic animals and people from the far reaches of the European colonial expansion into Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. One of the roaming naturalists and hunters in Hagenbeck's hire brought back a wife from Southeast Asia or the Pacific. She took the stage name, Maladamatjaute, and performed as a "Hindoo" snake charmer in Hagenbeck's caravan. Hagenbeck arranged for lithographer Adolph Friedlander to make a poster of her in full costume and handling snakes in the late 1880s. As Maladamatjaute's fame grew, photographs and circus flyers of her spread around Europe and the United States, and Friedlander's chromolithograph print found its way to India and Africa in the hands of merchants, sailors, and others. For Africans, Maladamatjaute's skin color and hair, her garments, and her snakes made her a splendid icon of Mami Wata, and the print (and variations of it fashioned in other media) soared in popularity. In 1955, twelve thousand copies of the Friedlander print (or a later reproduction) were sent from Bombay to Ghana, testifying to the demand for images of Maladamatjaute-as-Mami Wata. By 2005, the image could be found in twenty countries in sub-Saharan Africa and usually linked to the pursuit of wealth, health, and economic advantage. By the 1930s and 1940s, images of Lakshmi (the Hindu goddess of wealth), Vishnu, Krishna, Dattatreya, Hanuman, Ganesh, and others were being brought to Africa by Indian traders and migrants; the flood of material and visual culture from South Asia began to have an impact on Mami Wata worship and icons. Many of the Hindu gods were incorporated as Papi Wata – male deities in association with Mami Wata – or in the case of Lakshmi, as Mami Wata herself or as a companion water spirit, Mami Titi.

Drewal writes that devotees used these prints as guides "for making icons in wood, clay, and other media; performing rituals; and preparing altars," and "expanded the pantheon of water spirits, fostering an ever growing complexity in Mami Wata worship, which includes elements of Christianity, Hinduism, astrology, European spiritualist and occult beliefs and practices, and so forth" (2008, 59). Citing the work of Dana Rush (1999, 62), Drewal argues that the prints were both outwardly mobile – "easily transported, copied, and reproduced" across space – and inwardly mobile as their "inherent forms and meanings [did] not remain stationary." That mobility hinges, nonetheless, on ethico-aesthetic and ethico-religious choices made by devotees in engaging their water spirits over the course of a century and a half. Picking up and reproducing new images meant abandoning, neglecting, or even destroying old ones, and being sure that the new images were efficacious. That this transformation in religious visual culture began during the late colonial period and then continued during the subsequent upheavals wrought by postcolonial state politics and globalized market forces suggests that the allure and meaning of the prints might be found in the practical efforts of devotees who aimed to test the efficacy of prints in securing wealth, health, and blessings in a time of acute uncertainty.

Another revealing story of change in religious material culture comes from the mountainous and once remote Toraja region of Sulawesi, Indonesia. Elites in Toraja society traditionally placed carved, wooden funerary effigies of the deceased beside ancestral burial chambers high up on the face of cliffs. Called *tau-tau*, these rather abstract effigies were considered spirit-doubles of those who had died. During funerary rites, the tau-tau were "awoken from sleep," clothed, and made to listen to chanted biographies

of their human double before being carried with the deceased to a grave site. In the months and years following, relatives of the deceased would bring ritual gifts to the tau-tau, seeking in return ancestral beneficence and favor for the living. Periodically the figures were ritually cleansed, repaired, and given new garments. Christian missionaries arrived in the region in the early twentieth century and actively discouraged ancestral practices; converts came to regard ritualized exchange with the tau-tau as idolatry. As the region went through a boom in conversion and opened up to tourism in the 1970s, relic tau-tau became broadly advertised emblems of Toraja culture and prized examples of "primitive art" (Adams 2006). The next twenty years saw the massive theft of tau-tau, most of which wound up in the hands of private collectors and museums in the West. Collectors and curators typically justified their possession of the tau-tau by claiming that because ancestral Toraja culture had "died" and left the effigies to decay, it was their ethical role to care for the figures.

Several things ensued. First, Toraja began to hide or lock up family tau-tau to protect them from theft or desecration. The empty graveside galleries shook the tourist industry, and so a cottage industry in knock-off and unconsecrated "replica" tau-tau gained traction as ancestral spirit-doubles were put into hiding in homes and caves. Some Christian Toraja, meanwhile, began to argue that the tau-tau were like photographs of the deceased and need not be shunned. This spurred a renascence in carved or concrete tau-tau for Christian elites who wanted to hold elaborate funerals as markers of wealth and social status. A striking feature of the renascence was the emphasis on realism – the new tau-tau were fashioned after actual photographs of the dead. We see at work, then, competing ideologies of the carved figures. What in traditional reckoning were companionable and ritually consecrated spirit-doubles were in the primitive art market orphaned art objects in need of care and preservation as emblems of human creativity and the world's art heritage. An ethics of ritual exchange that once sustained the communicative bonds between the living and the dead was supplanted by a memorializing and photographic realism on the part of Christian Toraja. The energies and capital of the tourist sector refigured a ritual object as an emblem of Torajan culture as a whole. "Religion" had become "art" and "culture."

Things and Images in Motion: Negotiating "Religion" and "Art"

The contemporary spheres of "religion" and "art" that had such an impact on Toraja society emerged from historical discourses related to the ones that gave rise to notions of culture and secularity (cf. Asad 2003). The terms "religion" and "art" serve as a modern means of cross-cultural translation and categorization – ways of sorting out practices and objects and for making ethico-political judgments with respect to global networks and institutions, on the one hand, and to fashioning and governing citizen-selves, on the other. Most devotees of Mami Wati were likely indifferent (and perhaps continue to be indifferent) to what counts as "art" and what counts as "religion." Elsewhere, however, the boundaries of these fields are debated and policed; authorities, experts, and believers are on the alert for transgressions and entanglements (George 2009, 2012). James Elkins (2004) remarks on the apparent estrangement of art and religion; and Jeffrey Kosky (2013) speaks of an impasse between them. The fields seem to presume different ethical stances regarding attachment, irony, critique, and the expressive purposes to which the material and the visual may be put.

The first generation of modern artists in postcolonial Asia sought ways to display their immersive and ethical attachment to their new nations. A cohort of Indian artists, for example, were very committed to

Nehruvian secularism and religious pluralism, and to these ends reworked images of Hindu gods and goddesses as "secular icons" (Zitzewitz 2014). But nearly all of them suffered attacks from the religious right, as with the late M. F. Husain, internationally celebrated as the "Picasso of India," but also so harassed for his paintings of a nude Hindu goddess, Saraswati, and a naked "Bharat Mata ("Mother India") that he renounced his Indian citizenship in his nineties and took up residence in London, Qatar, and Dubai.

Debates about Islam and art in Indonesia since the 1970s have revealed profound anxieties about the artistic use of Arabic calligraphy. The Indonesian painter A. D. Pirous is famous for canvases featuring his signature blend of qur'anic verse, abstraction, and bright color (George 2010). His painterly aim is to afford viewers "aesthetic and ethical pleasure," a sort of visual spirituality or piety intended to bring viewers closer to God; and through such purposeful work he strives to adhere to a Muslim ethic of *ihsan*, "showing goodness and responsibility to others." Good intentions, and dazzling paintings, however, did not shield him from a variety of accusations: exploiting or selling the Qur'an; proselytizing (*da'wah*), a practice better and properly left to clerics and teachers; and introducing errors into painted qur'anic verse. The feminist Indonesian artist Arahmaiani ran into different but related problems. Some of her early installation work involved placing bound and published Qur'ans beside highly sexualized objects (such as condoms and pantyhose). For her performance of "Breaking Words" she wrote "Allah" on white ceramic plates in Arabic, invited audience members to write on them as well, and then smashed the plates against a wall (Langenbach 2007). In both cases she was subject to death threats and arrest for blasphemy. Both Pirous and Arahmaiani are artists of conscience, and their different use of qur'anic verse reminds us of a point made by Sara Ahmed that "different people are made happy by different things [and so] object choices are not equivalent" (2010, 44). Pirous might point to the happy effects of the Qur'an, and Arahmaiani to unhappy ones. Yet both ran up against religious authorities who saw these works as challenges to their custodianship of the Qur'an. As a former Indonesian minister of religious affairs once bellowed, "The Qur'an should not be sacrificed for art!"

Things and Images in Motion: Forming Transnational Public Spheres

The global movement of images and things (especially ones with religious significance) has also played a part in shaping transnational public spheres. "Friends of interpretable objects" gather not only as local communities or as nationwide publics and counter-publics, but in transnational networks, too, as we saw in the instance of the "Hindu milk miracle." In many cases, these object-oriented transnational publics come into view when there are sharp conflicts over offending images or instances of iconoclastic violence (cf. Mitchell 2005, 128). News reports in mass media and through digital social media extend popular concern and alarm, especially when conveying the ostensive truth of the news through video clips and photos. The Taliban's 2001 destruction of the towering sixth-century statues of the Buddha at Bamiyan, Afghanistan, summoned international outcry in defense of "world heritage," as did the 2015 looting and destruction of archaeological treasures at Palmyra, Syria, at the hands of Islamic State (Daesh). The controversies and reprisals surrounding the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* (2005), and in the French satirical weekly, *Charlie Hebdo* (2006, 2011, 2015) are prominent examples in which offending images find framing with transnational discussion about blasphemy and freedom of expression. Saba Mahmood in her discussion

of the Danish cartoon scandal (2009) helpfully points out that these terms and principles – blasphemy, freedom of expression – circumscribe such controversies in a way that obscures not just the problem of moral injury, but what she calls "attachment and cohabitation" between religious subjects and material objects of exemplarity and veneration. Things matter, not just principles.

Crossings of objects and images from the domain of "art" to the field of "religion" (and vice versa) also figure in the ethico-political and ethico-aesthetic debates that animate these transnational spheres. The "Lagerfeld Bustier" scandal of 1994 offers an example (George 2009). In January of that year, Karl Lagerfeld unveiled his spring couture collection for the Paris fashion house Chanel. The show featured supermodel Claudia Schiffer in a cleavage-enhancing black bustier decorated with a panel of *thuluth*-style Arabic script in pearl embroidery. The script turned out to be a phrase from the 36th sura of the Qur'an (Ya Sin:21), a sura traditionally recited in *tahlil* rites for the dead or dying. Shown photographs, Muslim clerics in Indonesia were the first to notice that the bustier displayed part of a verse from the Qur'an, and called for a global protest and boycott against Lagerfeld and Chanel for their offensive handling of divine revelation. Outraged Muslim clerics and organizations in France, Egypt, Australia, and other parts of the world joined in the outcry. Lagerfeld claimed not to know that the Arabic was from the Qur'an; he had lifted it from a book showing calligraphic ornamentation on the south arch of the Taj Mahal. (The arch is inscribed with Qur'an Sura 36.) A spokesperson for Chanel explained that "the designer had no idea what the original meaning was. He was just interested in the design *from an aesthetic point of view*" (emphasis added). Chanel apologized to the world Islamic community, burned the bustier, and asked that all photographs and videos of the bustier be destroyed (though no Muslim called for the destruction of the bustier or the photos and videos.) What the controversy especially highlights is the way members of a global religious community – here Muslims – do not restrict their interests to the works and projects of Muslim artists alone, but take it upon themselves to weigh in on the visual arts whenever they impinge on religious or ethical concerns. Further, the particular role of Indonesian clerics in the controversy shows that individual Muslims belonging to different nations may not only view themselves as part of a global Islamic community, but also seek a platform to speak for its interests or to act on behalf of the common good of Muslims everywhere.

To sum up, pictorial-material space and substance are no less fundamental to the field of ethics than ideas, principles, or interior states of belief, sincerity, and aspiration. Brigit Myer and Dick Houtman have written that a "materialized study of religion begins with the assumption that things, their use, their valuation, and their appeal are not something added to religion, but rather inextricable from it" (2012, 7). Their remarks apply to the study of ethics as well. We find ourselves in the ever-present company of images and things. The horizons of our sociality and our dwelling in the world include them. As friends of images and things, we owe them our receptivity and earnest care.

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CHAPTER 128

Corporations

Rebecca Todd Peters

A corporation is a specific type of business firm possessing a legal status independent of its owners or shareholders. As an independent legal entity, corporations have the authority to engage in functions traditionally reserved for individuals, like the ability to buy and sell property, enter into contracts, and sue or be sued. Incorporation also offers the ability for businesses to exist in perpetuity and limits the liability of investors/stakeholders to the amount of their investment in a particular corporation. In 2015, sixty-nine out of the top one hundred largest economic entities were corporations and the other thirty-one were nation-states (Global Justice Now, n.d.). In 2018, the five hundred largest corporations in the world generated $32.7 trillion in revenues (Fortune n.d.), representing over one-third of the global GDP of $85 trillion (World Bank 2019). These five hundred corporations represented thirty-four countries and employed over sixty-nine million (Fortune n.d.) of the almost 3.5 billion people who participate in the global paid labor force (World Bank 2019). Given their economic power, corporations are powerful political as well as economic players on the global stage.

Moral questions related to corporations are often approached from two related but distinct directions – applied ethics and normative ethics. The field of applied ethics or business ethics is primarily focused on the behavior of individual stakeholders – CEOs, managers, workers, investors, and so forth. Normative ethical approaches to economics and corporations are primarily focused on developing moral arguments about the role and function of corporations in society. This entry will largely focus on normative ethical questions related to the social role of corporations. As human institutions, corporations are tools for achieving social ends. However, as a social instrument, the corporation as tool can be (and has been) used in a variety of ways and for a variety of ends. This entry will trace the historical development of corporations with an eye toward how corporations have been used historically as tools for particular social ends and will identify particular contemporary moral questions associated with corporations.

Historical Development of Corporations

Modern corporations trace their origins to the sixteenth century and the era of European exploration and trade. At the time, debt was inheritable and the risks of weather and piracy involved in exploring and establishing new trade routes threatened the economic potential of the burgeoning sea trade. Monarchs and governing bodies began to grant charters to joint-stock companies that limited the economic liability of investors to the amount of their personal investment in the company.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

These proto-corporations became the primary tool for exploration and trade in the seventeenth century. The Dutch quickly established themselves as the leading power in this new arena, largely due to the Amsterdam stock market or bourse that funded Dutch exploration and trade ventures. Italian sociologist, Giovanni Arrighi notes that the Dutch emphasis on mercantilist accumulation over territorial accumulation cemented their political and economic hegemony in Europe in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Dutch wealth filled the Amsterdam bourse with ready capital to fund further joint-stock company ventures. As trade routes expanded to the Atlantic, the Dutch no longer possessed the territorial or demographic base to compete with other European powers. Recognizing their inability to continue to compete successfully through trade, the Dutch concentrated instead on expanding their power in high finance in order to continue to benefit from the spread of mercantilism.

As the Dutch shifted from trade to finance, the political and economic power of the British empire grew. By the eighteenth century, England's economic, military, and political power surpassed, not only Holland, but all the European states, making it the most powerful force in Europe. Britain's ascendancy heralded a new age for the chartered joint-stock company or the emerging corporation. England became symbolic of the new age of expansion that joined territorialism and capitalism into a new form of political control known as colonialism.

Joint-stock companies, like the English East India Company, were not simply merchants and traders but also functioned as the imperial governing bodies in many colonial states. With the authority to build forts, maintain military forces, engage in battle, levy taxes, make and enforce laws, the joint-stock companies combined business and governmental functions as they both monopolized trade in and with the colonies and governed them as administrators of the British crown. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these corporations invested mainly in extractive industries which drew wealth out of Africa, India, and other colonial outposts to the economic benefit of the colonial capital owners and the colonial states. Often, these raw materials were turned into manufactured goods in the imperial country and returned as expensive imports to their countries of origin. The strategy of these corporations to promote high profit margins enabled corporations and imperial governments of the period to amass great wealth.

The introduction of steam and machinery into the world of production in the nineteenth century transformed the role of the corporation within the political economy of nation-states. Rather than promoting exploration and trade as corporations did in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, or pursuing the colonizing functions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the corporations that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were strictly business ventures that served the primary purpose of concentrating and organizing the new forms of industrialization that steam and machinery made possible. In the mid-nineteenth century the emergence of Fordism and factory production as well as the nature of the industrial revolution transformed the face of business in the United States. Railroad companies, steel, copper, and oil producers, and the mass production of consumer goods were all industries that were more profitably served by large business corporations rather than the traditional small business enterprises of early America.

The post-Civil War years in the United States saw an increase in the consolidation of these industries as wealthy individuals and corporations aggressively sought to buyout their smaller competitors and monopolize various industrial sectors. This was known as the first great merger wave. The remarkable growth of corporate strength and power in the United States during this time was also due to extensive lobbying on the part of business to encourage states to increase their willingness to grant charters for corporations as well as the friendliness of the courts in expanding the legal rights of corporations.

The enormous growth potential represented by the North American continent and the openness of a largely immigrant population to innovation and change represented a unique set of historical conditions within which the development of the modern corporation proceeded. It did not take long for successful US corporations to begin to move beyond their own markets to actively pursue trade abroad and by 1902 Europeans were already speaking of an "American invasion."

By the end of the World War II and a half century of war and occupation, many European countries had fallen far behind the industrial and technological advances that had propelled US business forward. Furthermore, the infrastructure and productive capabilities of Germany, France, Britain, and Italy had been severely compromised by the bombing campaigns. In the postwar period, world leaders developed significant financial plans to guide the process of European and Japanese recovery. A postwar conference at Bretton-Woods in New Hampshire created a new set of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) with the intention to aid in postwar reconstruction. However, when the US Marshall Plan infused nearly $12 billion in grants and low-interest loans into war-torn Western European countries, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) had to find a new purpose. As the war-torn countries rebuilt their economies and their infrastructures, the attention of Western world leaders who effectively ran the World Bank and IMF turned their attention toward the poverty of formerly colonized countries, many of which had only recently achieved their formal independence in the 1940s and 1950s. The poverty in these countries was determined to be a result of "underdevelopment" and a new era of "third-world development" began.

Focused largely on building an infrastructure for industrialization, the IFIs provided funding and legitimation for projects in the Global South that transformed many postcolonial nation-states into industrial economies. However, much of this infrastructure development was driven by foreign direct investment (FDI) from Western corporations, many of which were part of the military–industrial complex that provided the technology, equipment, and knowledge to build the highways, dams, and power plants that were meant to "modernize" the developing world. The money from the IFIs to fund these infrastructure projects went largely to the first world corporations that had the technological capacity to execute the infrastructure development.

By the 1970s, increased competition from European and Asian business and industry began to challenge American economic hegemony and rates of profit. European countries became stronger after their initial postwar recovery and reconstruction phase and newly industrializing countries of southeast Asia introduced lower priced goods into markets where US companies had traditionally had a stronghold. The oil crisis of the 1970s almost tripled oil prices and generated an enormous amount of "petrodollars," leaving unprecedented capital reserves in banks the world over. As commercial banks sought investment opportunities for their rapidly increasing bank deposits from the oil crisis, interest rates fell and credit ratings for countries in the Global South improved. These factors coincided with a new mandate at the World Bank to increase their funding ten-fold, making the World Bank a driving force of international finance as billions of dollars were lent to countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to assist them in becoming more like Western economies. The postwar infrastructure development of these countries literally paved the way for the development of industries in the Global South. Corporations based in the first world began to take advantage of drastically reduced wages and the excess of petrodollars that were flowing through the Global South. These newly developing countries provided the additional benefit of untapped market potential to replace decreased consumer spending practices in the "first" world. According to Arrighi, the accumulated value of US direct foreign investment more than doubled between 1970 and 1978 and that of

non-US foreign direct investment more than tripled. While European and American companies had cooperated over shared interests throughout the early and mid-century, the second half of the twentieth century marked the beginning of the "multinationalization" of many large corporations, a move that presaged a radical shift in the role that corporations played within the political economy.

Moral Issues Associated with Corporations

Corporations are a human institution created to perform certain tasks and functions in society. Corporations can thus be understood as tools that people use to accomplish social goals. Tools, in and of themselves are amoral, but tools do not exist independently of the humans who create them and use them, and human actions, ideas, and beliefs reflect a variety of moral perspectives. These various moral perspectives often offer different visions and understandings of how society should be ordered and how we understand the moral principle of justice. Corporations have always been used in different ways by different people in different eras to achieve a variety of purposes. In their earliest days, the trading companies were tools to limit the liability of investors and thus encourage increased intercontinental trade. Later, these companies became the tools of colonization in an early form of public–private partnership that was part military, part administrative, and part commerce. In the twentieth century, corporations functioned as tools to make war, tools to industrialize and produce goods, and tools to feed the world. By the early twenty-first century, transnational corporations are primarily regarded as tools for wealth creation. With sixty-nine of the largest world economies belonging to transnational corporations, their economic and political power present a host of moral questions and concerns that mark contemporary ethical debates about corporations. In order to think critically about these moral questions, it is necessary to examine the changing way that corporations have been used in recent decades.

Prior to the multinationalization of corporations in the twentieth century, businesses functioned in many ways as informal and formal agents of the government. The charters offered by governments were originally intended to enable the private sector to perform necessary economic and productive tasks that were impractical for the government to pursue – building railroads, smelting iron ore, processing food. Additionally, corporations provided jobs for a large number of workers and supplied the population with necessary goods and services. For centuries, there was a mutually reinforcing interdependence between governments and the economic institutions that they chartered. While these corporations were not social welfare organizations and the private sector interests in these enterprises were always motivated by profit, the move toward multinationalization marked a transformation of the corporation from the status of a partner of the state to an independent entity that was positioned as transcending the boundaries of traditional nation-states. This shift in status from corporations as agents or partners of the state to transcending the boundaries of nation-states is an early step in shifting public perceptions about the purpose and function of the corporation.

This attempt to shift our social understanding of the purpose and function of the corporation is an example of how corporations are used as tools to achieve human social goals. As national corporations began to establish enterprises in other countries, they initially identified themselves as "multinational" reflecting a changing identity in which corporate leaders positioned themselves as institutions embedded within host countries with civic responsibilities like paying taxes and following the laws of the countries in which they are located. Over the past thirty-five years, the multinational corporate

identity has been transformed into a transnational corporate identity in which transnational corporations are positioned as independent entities that transcend the nation-state. In the culture of transnational corporations, the principle of instrumental rationality focused on cost-saving and profit maximization replaced any recognition of the moral responsibility of corporations as entities embedded in local communities or nation-states that help contribute to a public or common good. This shift in focusing exclusively on maximizing efficiency and increasing profit margins reflects the economic ideas of Milton Friedman and the ideology of neoliberalism (also known as supply-side economics, "free market" theory, and the Washington Consensus) promoted by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. The neoliberal emphasis on deregulation, increased trade, and privatization is the ideological backdrop for the phenomenon of the leveraged buyouts of the 1980s that played a significant role in shifting the role of corporations in society.

In the 1980s publicly traded corporations that had low debt, fully funded pension plans, generous employee benefits, and decent profit margins were primary targets for "corporate raiders." Essentially, efficiently run and well managed corporations were viewed by these venture capitalists as gold mines. By leveraging substantial loans against the potential earnings made on the takeover or through junk-bonds or both, the purchasers were able to buy out a controlling interest of the stock at prices above its currently traded value. The corporate raiders would then transfer the debt that financed the buyout to the corporation itself, thus saving millions in taxes as operating profits were turned into deductible interest payments. These corporate raiders were also referred to as "vultures" because they were regarded as scavengers who did no productive work themselves but exploited the hard work and solid business strategies of brick and mortar corporations that produced goods and services. The vultures focused on strategies that would increase immediate profits while eschewing concern for the long-term health or stability of the corporation. Strategies with high profit returns included selling off parts of a corporation, liquidating pension funds, or laying off employees, with no focus on growing corporate value over the long-term or the role that corporations play in the larger health of economies. This strategy of extracting maximum value from corporations while disregarding the long-term economic consequences and the moral responsibility of corporations has been repackaged in recent years and labeled as "activist investors" in an attempt to shed the negative association of terms like "raiders" and "vultures."

By the end of the 1980s many of the most socially responsible corporations – the ones that had looked out for their workers interests or had environmentally sound business practices or had been the most fiscally responsible – had been taken over by venture capitalists and either sold off piecemeal for a profit or transformed through debt, layoffs, and a new business ideology based solely on the maximization of profit. The CEOs and managers who factored environmental or humanitarian concerns into their business decisions were replaced by people who were viewed as more "capable" of turning a profit, that is, those businesspeople who had adopted and internalized the new corporate ideology of profit-maximization. The moral indifference to the workers whose retirement funds were stolen, or the forests that were clear cut because they were considered more valuable to a company's profit if they were liquidated now, rather than over a period of twenty years – all of the decisions that were made on the basis of profits and without consideration of their social or humanitarian value – represented the emerging *amoral* self-perception of transnational corporations. From a corporate standpoint that views profit maximization as the primary/sole purpose of business, economic decisions made to maximize profit are neither moral nor immoral.

There was a second group of corporations who were also awash in capital assets but avoided takeover by venture capitalists. These corporations were led by CEOs and senior managers who recognized the shifts that were beginning to transform the corporate self-understanding and developed aggressive plans to invest surplus capital and increase corporate debt load in order to deter the interest of venture capitalists. This diversification contributed to the increasing growth and economic power of transnational corporations. But these CEOs were the prescient ones in the business community. They knew that buying up smaller corporations around the world would not only forestall their own leveraged buyout, but that this would increase the parent corporation's access to other markets, an essential prerequisite for any viable transnational corporation in an era of economic globalization. Either way, whether through leveraged buyouts or diversification, the corporate culture at the end of the 1980s had shifted radically from that of twenty years earlier. While business has always been about turning a profit, the ideological shift that occurred during this period created a corporate self-understanding that business was *only* about turning a profit and then maximizing that profit.

By the time the 1990s rolled around, corporate management was looking for new and innovative ways to continue to increase profits. Now that the leveraged buyouts had run their course, management developed a new strategy that took hold in the 1990s – downsizing and the externalization of costs. While neither of these strategies was new to the business world, what was new was a concentration on developing what economist Bennett Harrison has termed the "lean and mean" corporation. In this new paradigm, the concentration of power and authority is still vested in the transnational corporation itself, but the transnational corporations are moving toward organizational decentralization through downsizing and outsourcing. Downsizing refers to the process of dividing permanent or "core" jobs from contingent or "peripheral" jobs. Corporations focus on securing the jobs that represent their primary source of economic power; jobs like finance, marketing, and proprietary technology are consolidated as the center of corporate power and peripheral work is subcontracted out to the lowest bidder, often in low-wage countries in the Global South in a process known as outsourcing. Harrison makes note of this "dark side of flexible production" which produces a two-tiered labor system and provides stable employment and handsome salary and benefits for the few while adding to the problem of "working poverty" for a large number of former corporate employees. This combination of downsizing and outsourcing not only further increased the profitability of transnational corporations, it is the most recent step in the transformation of how corporations can be used in society.

Corporate Economic and Political Power

As transnational corporations increase in size and economic resources, their political power increases accordingly. This increase in political power, however, is not simply related to the economic power but also to how corporations are able to use their economic power for political gain. The final factor in assessing the morality of corporations requires attention to the evolution of the legal standing of corporations.

As early as 1816, US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall noted that corporations possessed the characteristics of immortality and individuality, thus endowing the corporation with the same legal standing as a "natural person." He also described the corporation as "an artificial being, invisible, intangible, and existing only in contemplation of the law" (Bowman 1996, 44). While the 14th Amendment

was passed in 1868 to protect the civil rights of American Blacks, for decades most court decisions based on the 14th Amendment involved corporations. Building on Justice Marshall's rulings in the 1810s and the testimony of Representative Roscoe Conkling that the original framers had intentionally used the term "person" rather than "citizen" in order to include corporations within the 14th Amendment, corporations acquired the status of "personhood" under the law. Due process has since been used to invalidate state regulatory legislation that attempted to curb the excesses of corporations.

In the late 1970s two US Supreme Court decisions greatly expanded the "rights" of corporations to include the protection of corporate free speech under the First Amendment. The first decision expanded the First Amendment's freedom of speech protections to include *financial* contributions to candidates or parties and in the second decision the court extended these protections to cover corporate political speech. In addition to protecting the corporation's right to exercise its influence in the political arena through *political speech* the Supreme Court also moved to protect *commercial speech* in the late 1970s by extending First Amendment protection to a variety of forms of commercial speech including advertising. In 2000, the US Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (558 US 310, 2010) eliminated controls on corporate political speech, making it legal for corporations to advocate for or against the election of individual candidates, further increasing the political power of corporations in US elections.

In considering moral issues associated with corporations, it is necessary to think carefully about the moral implications and consequences of how corporations are being used as tools in society. As transnational corporations transcended allegiance to individual nation-states, they not only circumvented their responsibilities as corporate citizens, they also sought to transform any understanding of corporations as either subservient to the state or partner of the state into an understanding of corporations as independent of the state and oriented primarily toward self-interest and profit maximization. This positioning of transnational corporations as self-interested individuals has coincided not only with their divestment of any social responsibility to the well-being of the state but also from any social responsibility or accountability to the majority of the workers whose productive labor creates their profits and the communities within which they have built their productive enterprises. The elevation of profit-maximization as the sole purpose of the corporation has reduced their ability to recognize any stakeholder beyond the investor/shareholder – to the larger detriment of the health and well-being of the planet and the human community.

As social institutions, corporations can also be shaped in different ways that reflect a different moral understanding of the role of business/corporations in society. Religious communities and religious leaders have long been at the forefront of calling for more just visions for the role of businesses and corporations in society and the movement to ground corporate accountability in the triple-bottom line (people, planet, profit). The UN Global Compact also represents a major coordinated global effort toward justice and social responsibility for transnational corporations.

Considering the moral questions related to corporations is an ever evolving task that changes as quickly as humans can create new ways to use corporations as tools to achieve their goals. That said, there are often particular ideological trends or positions in different eras that shape new social roles for corporations, for example, limited liability, colonization, industrialization, militarization/war, neoliberalism. Careful moral assessment of these social roles for corporations must pay careful attention to the ideological arguments that support such roles and must attend to the moral question of how these corporate roles contribute to the common good of the human community and the natural world.

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CHAPTER 129

Education

Joshua Daniel

In this entry, I articulate a trajectory of progressive education theory as a heuristic tool for examining the relationship between religious ethics and education. The point is not to defend this particular theory against its critics, which would take us far afield of religious ethics, but rather to use it as a theoretical lens that discloses characteristics of education relevant to religious ethics. There are two reasons why progressive education theory is particularly fitting in the context of religious ethics. First, progressive education theory is *fundamental and reflexive:* fundamental, because it interrogates the nature of education with reference to basic claims about human nature; and reflexive, because it involves a critical view on education practices in order to assess the extent to which they fulfill what education's own nature demands. In these respects, progressive education theory helpfully prevents us from perceiving education as one human activity or profession among others with straightforwardly distinguishable characteristics. All religions undertake the explicit education of current and potential members, but focusing on this may leave unexamined how religions understand why they bother educating at all. Second, progressive education theory is *ethical*. Insofar as it entails basic claims about human nature which serve as a critical perspective on actual education practices, this theory is an ethical endeavor in making the educational process responsible to the realities of human life. Religions themselves can be understood as ethical realities insofar as they make claims about human nature that provide critical leverage on surrounding, if not competing, human activities. In this respect, religions in their more prophetic modes and progressive education theory often occupy the same place in their social worlds.

This last comment reveals a limit to my approach. Progressive education theory may align with religions in their more prophetic, or socially critical, modes – but religions also have socially established modes, modes implicated in the maintenance of their religions' surrounding social worlds, and even religions at their most prophetic may not brook criticism within their own walls. Indeed, progressive education theory often opposes itself to forms of religious education, particularly any didactic form of instruction. Yet, this theory illumines pedagogical realities that prevailing, accepted education practices may not reflexively recognize, and so remains useful for examining how religions, as ethical realities, educate. The trajectory of progressive education theory I will articulate has three moments, aligned to three pedagogical thinkers: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, and Paulo Freire. The conceit is that the theory as a whole discloses education to be a three-fold responsive endeavor. For Rousseau education is *student-responsive*, in that it presumes or intends persons with particular attributes and dispositions as

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

its students. For Dewey education is *world-responsive*, in that it presumes or intends a particular picture of the world which students inhabit during (and after) their education, and to which their education does or does not intend to fit them. Finally, for Freire education is *power-responsive*, in that it occupies a particular place within the world's power relations even as it presumes or intends its own power dynamics. Now, aligning each thinker with a particular form of responsiveness is not meant to suggest that such alignments are mutually exclusive. Rousseau's pedagogy is also world-and power-responsive, and so on. Still, these alignments imply what I understand each thinker's particular contribution to progressive education theory to be.

What follows is merely an introduction to these thinkers' pedagogical theories, focused on their particular contributions, but the endgame is to suggest how these provide conceptual tools for organizing inquiry into the relationship between religious ethics and education. The claim here is not that education within and around the religions needs to become student-, world- and power-responsive, but rather that it already is, and that progressive education theory may help clarify this. At each step, brief connections will be drawn to the Christian traditions because that is the author's particular training.

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In a claim essential to the notion of student-responsiveness, Rousseau insists, "Childhood has its ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling which are proper to it." That is, there is such a reality as a child sufficiently different from an adult to warrant a form of education that focuses on what children *are* rather than on what adults want them to become. Pre-adult humans and the distinct developmental stages that compose pre-adulthood, have an integrity which demands recognition and respect if education is going to succeed. Rather than inculcate ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling proper to adulthood, thereby treating children as little adults, Rousseau would have the tutor monitor and follow the students' own ways of engaging the world so as to cultivate their natural development. Hence, Rousseau's pedagogical magnum opus, *Émile, or On Education*, is structured in five books each paired with a stage of human development – infancy, childhood, prepubescence, puberty, and sexual maturity – where each stage is dependent on the pedagogical gains of the prior stage. To take one significant example salient for religious ethics: Rousseau argues that humans are first and foremost self-regarding physical beings, motivated by the satisfaction of natural needs. In this respect, he understands infants and children to be entirely non-moral, because our specifically moral capacities develop after other capacities. The result is that education focuses on the strengthening of our physical capacities to satisfy our own needs – e.g. strategic exposure to risk in infancy, exercise of the senses in childhood, learning a manual trade in prepubescence – while at first eschewing, and then gradually and indirectly introducing, moral ideas. By the time of sexual maturity, students have the requisite capacities to be moral, and they need them in order to master rather than be mastered by their sexual desires. At this stage, students' physical strength transmutes into the moral strength (Rousseau's understanding of virtue) that enables students to master themselves. The point I want to highlight here is that moral development follows and *depends on* physical development. The aim of education may be the cultivation of virtuous adults, but it demands recognizing and respecting the non-moral physicality of children.

This may sound straightforward, but it's complicated by Rousseau's basic philosophical claim, as expressed in *Émile's* first sentence: "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man" (Rousseau 1979, 37). Apparently a secularized version of

Christian accounts of original sin, the claim is that humans are naturally good – *not* naturally *virtuous*, just naturally *nonwicked* – but corrupted into wickedness by the institutions of human civilization. Insofar as it remains a human institution among others, education will corrupt students. Hence, Rousseau's student-responsive education requires a dialectical mode whereby it opposes corrupting pedagogies and the institutions they inevitably serve. Such a mode requires the provision of a protective and nourishing space where the student can develop their natural capacities unhindered by social conventions. Practically, this demands the pairing of students with their own personal tutor, who's responsible for their natural development from infancy to marriage, and a relocation to the country where life is less corrupted. By restricting education to a single isolated dialogical relationship, Rousseau hopes to preserve and cultivate students' natural goodness, as well as to set up the ideal conditions for the discernment of their natural development. The problem with human institutions is that they replace our natural needs with social desires, the satisfaction of which constitutively require others and so incites us to dominate them. Moreover, the kind of moral education Rousseau eschews, the sheer positing of particular virtues and obligations as though students are already moral, plays into and abets the economy of social domination: since moral demands are meaningless to children, they are simply perceived as the demands of socially powerful others contravening children's own desires, motivating them to desire becoming socially dominant in turn. Rousseau's approach keeps students out of this dynamic. Of course, the point is not "to make a savage and to relegate him to the depths of the woods," but rather to ensure that, "enclosed in a social whirlpool, [the student] not let himself get carried away by the passions or the opinions of men" (Rousseau 1979, 255). Eventually, students will enter the social world and get married, so the cultivation of their natural goodness must serve social living. It does so by transforming into the moral strength of virtue, which enables students to remain self-possessed within the whirlpool.

Insofar as religions educate their members, they imply claims about human capacities, particular our moral capacities, and then respond to their members as so capacitated. One fault line within the Christian traditions involves the extent to which original sin is understood to distort our moral capacities. If, as in standard natural law positions, basic moral capacities remain intact, such that divine grace completes or elevates our moral achievements, then it makes sense to teach morality in a positive sense, cultivating particular virtues and inculcating particular obligations. If our moral capacities are corrupted all the way down to their roots, such that grace is basically responsible for any moral achievement, then it might make sense to forego positive moral education and focus on cultivating the recognition of our moral incapacitation, relegating morality to the restraint of our inevitable wickedness. A related fault line in Christian traditions regards the relationship between Christian communities and the wider social world. If basic moral capacities remain intact and are thereby shared outside our religious community, then education within the community doesn't need to be dialectically opposed to education without; possibilities are open for inter-educational exchange, whether Aristotelian thought for Thomas Aquinas or classical rhetoric for Augustine. If we're morally incapacitated, an incapacity shared outside our religious community, then education within the community will tend to be more anxious about surrounding forms of education insofar as they fail to recognize and emphasize our incapacities, while remaining tolerant of social forms that confine themselves to external constraint – hence Luther's resistance to scholastic philosophy, coupled with an endorsement of general social relations like marriage and principates. The point is, regardless of the extent to which they understand humans to be morally capacitated, religions necessarily respond to their members as so capacitated by way of educating them. Scholars need to

attend both to what religions *claim* about moral capacities and to how, socially-materially speaking, they *treat* their members in educational practices.

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While Dewey endorses Rousseau's emphasis on the natural development of students' actual capacities, he rejects the latter's characterization of the social as necessarily corrupting. For Dewey, education fails not when it integrates students into some social environment, but when it integrates students into a social environment that fails to exercise their capacities meaningfully; and social environments fail to do this when their character is inappropriate to the broader world that students inhabit. Hence, successful education demands that schools be meaningfully world-responsive. In other words, education must prepare students for social life by exercising their capacities to be answerable to the realities of that life. For Dewey in twentieth-century America, this meant preparing students for democratic life, which he understands to be a life of "(r)esponsibility for the conduct of society and government" exercised by all citizens (Dewey 2008b, 398–399). Educational forms that emphasize the impartation of knowledge to passive students fail in this regard, as do forms that segregate training in useful labor from the liberal arts. In both cases, social class divisions persist pedagogically, whether hierarchically between teacher and students, or culturally between two tracks of students. Democracy demands a public-school system emphasizing active learning that is simultaneously socially useful and humanistic. In light of this, Dewey contends that school work should concentrate around *occupations*, cooperative activities that combine elements of both play and work. Properly done, occupations, rather than imparting knowledge, pose an engaging problem the difficulty of which students can experience, and thereby be motivated actively to solve. Occupations accomplish this insofar as they are organically related to social life, drawing their problems from the interaction between fundamental human concerns (food, shelter, etc.) and local industries and businesses. Ultimately, occupations effect the combination of social control and freedom requisite for democratic living. On the one hand, social control is intrinsic to occupations because their cooperative-active character entails norms of behavior for participants. At the same time, this social control evokes individual freedom, understood as the exercise of intelligence for the purpose of making one's distinct contribution to a shared endeavor – stated otherwise, freedom means taking responsibility for one's social participation. In this way, schools should be microcosms of their democratic communities, socializing students into occupations that will exercise the capacities requisite for democratic responsibility.

Obviously, Dewey's pedagogy is more institution-based than Rousseau's. This is partly a function of their positions in their respective sociohistorical contexts, but also essential is the influence of Darwinian evolutionary theory on Dewey. Because he understands dualisms in thought to derive from undemocratic social divisions, Dewey needs a non-dualistic form of thinking. Darwin's account of organismal change as occurring through the interaction between organism and environment provides this, leading Dewey to articulate a notion of *experience* central to his educational thought: experience is the temporal interaction between individual students and whatever constitutes their environment at particular times. In turn, education is the "intelligently directed development of the possibilities inherent in ordinary experience," which is, "the actual life-experience of some individual" (Dewey 2008a, 61) The environment that students interact with outside of school and will interact with after schooling is an institutional environment; this is why truly educational occupations engage students presently while preparing

them for future social responsibilities. The teacher's role is to aid the intelligent development of students' experiential capacities, ensuring that the "trial-and-error" character of ordinary experience becomes reflectively sophisticated into rational thought, the exercise of which, as noted above, renders students free. This demands that the teacher's role be that of participant-guide: she leads the occupations because of her own wider experience, but internally so by arranging the school environment – that is, by planning the occupations – to be conducive for the development of student experience. This is complex, because the teacher is responsible not merely for the class's experience, but for the experience of each individual student; in order for occupations to evoke the *distinct* contribution of each student, the teacher must know each student's particular experience and then find a social form that engages them all, together. Dewey's pedagogical ideal here is the experimental cooperation that characterizes scientific inquiry: "Science is experience becoming rational" (Dewey 2008c, 233). The idea is not that the sciences become the preeminent bodies of knowledge, but rather that the process of utilizing past experience to solve novel problems be deployed in all disciplines. Hence, the school serves as a microcosm of the democratic community, rendering students responsible citizens, through participation in the process of scientific inquiry.

For Dewey, education is world-responsive by fitting students into the social world that is the broader environment containing their school environment. Insofar as religions educate their members within a broader social environment, they must make decisions about how to fit within that environment. Within the Christian traditions, this concern connects to the fault line mentioned above, that between Christian communities and the surrounding world. Early apologists like Justin Martyr claimed the same intellectual and ethical heritage as his non-Christian Roman interlocutors as part of a larger argument that Christians make exemplary imperial citizens. More recently, Rudolf Bultmann proposes a method of biblical interpretation – demythologization – that makes the biblical text amenable to a scientific worldview, by shearing it of its primitive improbabilities (e.g. virgin birth, Jesus's miracle-working) so that it's a better medium for the reader's existential encounter with God. While these are two examples of more positive connections between religious communities and their broader social environments, and to that extent rather Deweyan, world-responsiveness as a category is neutral between world-rejection than world-acceptance. The history of Christian traditions is replete with communities that sought somehow to withdraw or clearly differentiate themselves from the broader social environment; at the same time, insofar as broader social environments are complex phenomena, such communities often remain connected in hidden ways. While monastic communities separated themselves from ancient urban life, their spiritual life betrays sympathies with Stoic and Epicurean schools of thought that also took issue with such life. And while Stanley Hauerwas has formed a generation of Christian ethicists to focus on the distinctive narratives and social lives of particular Christian communities rather than make the sort of concession Bultmann does, Hauerwas' theoretical articulation of this stance betrays sympathies with certain postmodern and social constructionist forms of thought which are part of the common sense of our times. Ultimately, world-responsiveness is a complex affair for religious communities, and the ethical education undertaken by them is likely to bear multiple forms of world-responsiveness, based on the perspective scholars' take on them.

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Parallel to what Rousseau claims about children, Freire argues that cultural groups have their own ways of engaging the world, which education must respect. Freire's context is adult education in Brazil,

particularly literacy programs in which members of a socially and economically privileged class taught students from much poorer communities. This class disparity is exacerbated by a form of education that Freire calls *banking education:* students are understood as passive, empty containers that teachers fill with deposits of knowledge. Banking education is fundamentally oppressive as a form of sociocultural imposition: because it denies that students have a worthwhile way of engaging the world, inevitably the teacher will "deposit knowledge" according to his own way of engaging the world, and thereby "deposit" that way too. Once we recognize that students *do* have their own way of engaging the world, even if they can't read and write, and appreciate that the point of education is to help students articulate *their* way, then pedagogy changes in essence. The teacher's first task should be to join the students in a "quest for the curriculum" (Freire 2005, 139); instead of focusing on the teacher's deposits, together they articulate a critical representation of what's significant to the students, which Freire calls their *meaningful thematics*, the structure of themes through which they engage the world. This is quite involved, including a dialogical form of anthropological fieldwork, whose results are tested in student study groups, and then analyzed once again: "The thematics which have come from the people return to them – not as contents to be deposited, but as problems to be solved" (Freire 2000, 123). We could say that now the plan for education is set, but notice that the focus is on the students' way of engaging the world, understood as something inherently problematic. The idea is that the quest for the curriculum has provided the students a more critical perspective on their way of engaging the world, which enables them to see that that way is transformable. In this sense, planning education around the students' way of engaging the world isn't a matter of cultural celebration, but rather cultural discovery and investigation. Such education is about empowering students, by helping them recognize and exercise the power inherent in engaging the world in a particular way, in taking a critical stance on that way, and in transforming it. Freire calls this empowerment *conscientization* (Freire 1985a, b), the becoming-critical of students' consciousness.

Buoying Freire's pedagogy of empowerment is an anthropology focused on praxis and dialogue. According to this, all humans have an ontological-historical vocation to humanize themselves and their worlds. Unlike animals, who are submerged within the natural world and thereby unable to know it, humans emerge from the world, which enables us to discern it objectively as a totality and then intervene with consequence. We humanize the world insofar as we transform the natural world into so many cultural ways of engaging it. Language is key: when humans name, or linguistically express, the world, we present it as a problematic reality that requires transformation. What this reveals is that humans are creatures of *praxis*, by which Freire means that our reflective knowledge and transformative action are interactively entangled: to know something is the beginning of the process of changing it.

Just as fundamentally, we're creatures of *dialogue*. Because our ontological-historical vocation is to humanize the world, we each have the "primordial" right to exercise praxis. Hence, humanization demands that dialogue – "the encounter between men [*sic*], meditated by the world, in order to name [and therefore, *change*] the world" – be the paradigmatically human relation (Freire 2000, 88). Notice that the function of the world is to mediate dialogue, to be the shared reality upon which humans are exercising praxis together. This means that the world is less an object of settled knowledge than of constant transformation: once we transform the natural world into so many cultural ways of engaging it, those ways become the world we inhabit and thus the shared reality that incites transformation. In this respect, humanization means the dialogical sharing of the human power of praxis for the purpose of ceaseless cultural transformation. In light of this anthropology, the fundamental problem with banking

education is that it dehumanizes both students and teachers, by denying both the dialogical exercise of praxis; which is to say, it disempowers us by denying us our properly human power. Abetting this dynamic is an approach to the world – to our various cultural ways of engaging reality – as static, fixed entities, immune to changes wrought by human power. Thus, in the face of the sociocultural oppression that attends banking education, an education of empowerment means the recovery of our vocation of humanization.

At its starkest level, as expressed in Freire, power-responsiveness means either recognizing and cultivating others' power, or denying it; though these are extremes between which may occur various forms of power-distribution. Insofar as religious communities have their own internal power dynamics – between clergy and laity, as well as among the clergy and among the laity – and occupy power dynamics within the wider social world in which they participate, they find themselves as both the agents and patients of power dynamics, wittingly and not. Freire's own work is connected to the rise of liberation theology in base religious communities throughout South America. Liberation theology arises from the religious perspective of poor communities marginalized in both society and official religious institutions, insisting on the authority of this perspective and thereby critiquing those power dynamics that silence this perspective. This entails not only a pedagogy of empowerment within poor communities, but also social-analytic attention to the church's complicity in wider sociohistorical oppressive power dynamics, which often leads to alliances with non-religious forms of thought and social movements that also combat oppression (e.g. Marxism, for early liberation theology). Once again, we see the importance of the fault line between Christian communities and the surrounding world. The Protestant Reformation, perhaps the best known historical fracture within the history of Christian traditions, centered on disputes about internal power dynamics – in particular, the kinds and extent of power that clergy exercised over laity – but was also implicated in the wider power dynamics of the emerging nation states insofar as particular reformers were supported by princes. Meanwhile, resonant with Freire's literacy work, the reformers depended on the printing press and vernacular translations of the Bible as a way of supporting the educational empowerment of the laity as they disputed what they understood to be overreaching by church authority. Both of these movements within the history of Christian traditions appealed to scripture and early Christian history as providing authentically Christian models of empowerment and power-distribution, meant to work as critical leverage against contemporary power dynamics. Scholars ought to attend to how the internal and external power dynamics of religious communities are entangled, both from a social analysis perspective and from the various perspectives of those within the religious communities caught up with their power struggles.

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Hopefully, the above has whetted an appetite for progressive education theory among scholars interested in the intersection of education and religious ethics. To reiterate, while this theory is admittedly normative and so likely entails certain ethical criticisms of religious forms of education, its fundamental and reflexive character means that it illumines pedagogical realities that all forms of education respond to: students with their capacities and dispositions; the surrounding social world that impinges on educational practices; and the power dynamics both within and without such practices. The task for scholars of religious ethics is to map their particular traditions and topics amidst these realities.

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CHAPTER 130

Law

M. Christian Green

Law exists in intricate connection with systems of religious ethics in many ways. Both fields are normative and axiological, seeking prescriptively and proscriptively to channel divine norms and human values into actions and practices. Both fields embrace complex hermeneutics, using literary, historical, social scientific, and other methods to determine and shape notions of the good life in both philosophical, theological, and political terms. But perhaps even more than in texts and traditions, symbols and rituals, ethics is where religion becomes most powerful – and most controversial – especially where it intersects with law and morality around issues such as life, death, sex, war, money, religious freedom, human rights, and other moral issues. The fundamental concern, in both law and religion, to justify, witness, and attest to the grounding of human values and to certain truths about the human condition, especially in relation to the divine, also makes law an important terrain for comparative religious ethics inquiries in our time of many truths and "many worlds" (Schweiker 2004).

The Thomistic Synthesis, Natural Law, and Virtue Ethics

Concerns for law have an ancient pedigree in Western philosophical, theological, and political ethics, extending at least as far back as Plato's reflections on justice in the *Republic* and its more authoritarian transmutation in the *Laws*, two of his best-known dialogues on these themes (Plato, trans. Bloom 2016; Plato, trans. Saunders 2005). Plato's reflections on the lessons of his teacher Socrates in the dialogues would be transformed again by his own student Aristotle, who provided a more sociological and political set of reflections on legal and ethical themes (Aristotle, trans. Ross 1954; Aristotle, trans. Jowett 2000). Perhaps the earliest systematic exposition of the role of law in the Christian tradition of theological ethics is that offered by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica* (Aquinas, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province 1948). In fact, Aquinas was the leading translator of Aristotle into the Western philosophical tradition coming out of Europe's "Dark Ages," a time when Aristotle was being read primarily by Muslim and Jewish scholars (Menocal 2003), who were the main keepers and preservers of Western philosophy at the time.

In the *Summa Theologica*, having described human actions passions, habits, vices, and sins earlier in his argument, Aquinas makes important connections between the law and the possibilities for both human law and divine grace. In so doing, Aquinas highlights a number of distinctions that continue to serve as

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

evaluative and adjudicative criteria in law and ethics today. Is a human action voluntary or involuntary? What effects do intention, choice, consent, and will have in determining our actions? Are there degrees of vice or sin – concupiscible and irascible, venal and mortal, active and passive – that should guide our evaluations of human actions and moral frailties? All of these considerations are reflected in notions of law and ethics in Christianity and numerous other religious and legal systems around the world.

While distinctively Christian definition in nature and purpose, the Thomistic account of law shares many features with other religious systems, most obviously Judaism and Islam. Aquinas tells us that law is not merely a matter of divine command, but also an exercise in practical reason – since the law cannot command us without our reasonable comprehension through conscience and assent. With Aristotle, Aquinas maintained that law related human acts teleologically toward a last end of happiness, described as a "perfect community" of "universal happiness" in which "every law is ordained to the common good" (*Summa Theologica* I–II, Q 90, a 2). These observations would be especially evocative for the later Christian theological ethicist Martin Luther King, Jr., who drew upon Aquinas in drafting his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (King 1994) in which King called for civil rights under law and the creation of a "beloved community" in which the universality of the law's ordination toward happiness would, in fact, include all. Indeed, Aquinas's formulation of the law in this perfectible and common good-oriented way would be immensely important not only for theological ethics, but also for political ethics and social justice in the Christian tradition.

Another aspect of Aquinas's concept of law would leave an equally deep footprint in Christian theological ethics – namely, his division of law into four kinds: eternal, natural, human, and divine. Aquinas describes eternal law as the law that has always existed in God's rule of the world through divine providence and divine reason. The eternal law operates as a theological and metaphysical condition for the possibility of law itself. Natural law, in turn is a sort of human "partaking" or participation in the eternal law, reflecting the way in which the eternal law is "imprinted" in our natural inclinations in ways should that ideally and ultimately lead to justice. These natural inclinations are not all that different from the laws governing animal behavior – a connection that has at times drawn attention of sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists seeking the roots of human behavior, though often more reductively and deterministically than Christian doctrines of grace and free will might admit (Browning 2009, chs. 3 and 6). Even so, this biological dimension of the natural law can be the basis for constructive engagement of religious ethics with questions such as animal rights, environmental ethics, and justice toward the non-human world, all of which have become important concerns in law and ethics today as humanity confronts the effects and the limits of the Anthropocene era (Deane-Drummond, Bergman, and Vogt 2017).

Natural law has also been conceived in Western philosophy and Christian theology as an imprint or spark of the divine within the human person, an idea that dates back to the Greek and Roman Stoics, including the naturalistic Aristotelian philosophy to which Aquinas was drawn. For a concise discussion of natural law, the New Natural Law movement exemplified by Finnis and Grisez, and more recent developments (see Lloyd 2016b). This conception of natural law and its implications for human character and action is also the heart of the virtue ethics, an area that has been a particular focus of Catholic moral theology (Duke and George 2017; Finnis 1980; George 1998), but which is increasingly drawing the attention of Protestant ethicists, and ethics from other perspectives and religious traditions (Biggar and Black 2000; Boyd 2007; Emon, Levering, and Novak 2015; Lloyd 2016a, 2016b; Van Drunen 2014).

In light of Aquinas's overall project of reconciling law and virtue, it would appear that natural law and virtue ethics are importantly related, but they have also been distinguished from each other in various ways. Given the sometimes amoral or even immoral impulses of human nature, it rests with virtue to countermand these implications and their effects. Virtue ethics focuses on the cultivation of habits and virtues and their role in the formation of character as a means toward the moral life. There are, in turn, important connections to be made between virtue ethics and the "uses of law" that would later be articulated in robust form by Protestant Reformation theologians Martin Luther and John Calvin, particularly the third or pedagogical use of law (see also pt. I in Kaveny 2016a). In the early days of the Reformation, Protestant theologians were highly skeptical of the idea of natural law, finding human nature to be prone to deception, perhaps entirely depraved. But the three uses of law that would become a focus of Protestant theology – namely, (1) a *theological,* or spiritual, use for the forensic identification of sin, (2) a *civil* use for the reining in of sin through human laws, and particularly (3) a *pedagogical* use of guiding individuals and society to virtue (Witte and Arthur 1994) – suggest the potential for law and ethics to be harnessed in ways that might allow humans to overcome some of their more pernicious tendencies, though perhaps not the entirety of their depravity.

These important later Protestant extrapolations aside, when it comes to what the natural law entails or requires, Aquinas later specifies its primary precepts as being ordained toward: (1) *preservation* of life from forces that would take it prematurely or unjustly, (2) *perpetuation* of life, primarily through reproduction and the education of offspring, and (3) an inclination to "know the *truth* about God, and to live in *society*." The first two precepts have given rise to robust ethics of life and death in the Christian ethical tradition, involving such matters as abortion, euthanasia, sexuality, and procreation. These issues are often controversial, as they go to the heart of intimate choices and relations that individuals make in their embodied lives – and people tend to be quite concerned when people make decisions that affect the life, liberty, and treatment of their bodies. But the third precept is particularly significant for what it says about the larger body politic, particularly as it seems to embody an ethic of religious pluralism, or at least a sense that we must come up with some way in diverse and sometimes conflicted societies to reconcile the truth claims we make about religion with the importance of the common good. Catholic moral theologian and law and religion scholar Cathleen Kaveny has written eloquently of this problem in a series of articles, and now books, on the challenges posed by America's frequent "culture wars" (Kaveny 2012, 2016b, 2016c, 2017).

Human Law, the *Euthyphro* Dilemma, and the Problem of Legal Positivism

Human laws, or the laws that human leaders make to govern society, are a key means by which people are to be trained and their natural inclinations directed toward individual and common goods. But the human factor also carries the risk of straying too far from its eternal and natural law roots, because of the human tendency toward pride, self-deception, and other sins. The problem of relating human and divine law, Aquinas's third and fourth formulations, is reflected the Euthyphro dilemma set forth in the Platonic dialogues, as well as the more recent skepticism of the normative value of law reflected in Michel Foucault regarding the power of the law to discipline and normalize.

In the *Euthyphro* (Plato, trans. Grube and Cooper 2002), Socrates and Euthyphro address the nature of piety and the question: Is the pious is loved by the gods because it is pious, or whether it is pious because it is loved by the gods? In theistic ethics, this can be seen as presenting a moral and legal question: Is what is good commanded by God because it is good, or is it good because God commands it? In more recent times, the Euthyphro dilemma also seems to be suggested in a key series of legal and jurisprudential debates over theories of natural law and legal positivism, as well as the later movement of legal realism, which hinged crucially on the relationship of law to morality and religion. The debates emerged in reaction to the nineteenth-century British legal theorist John Austin's theory of legal positivism, which opposed natural law approaches. Consistent with the tenor of the time to defend law as a scientific discipline and drawing heavily on the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, Austin argued against any connection between law and morality and argued for the empirical and value-free study of law. Law, in his view, consisted of commands of the sovereign over individuals, backed up with threats of punishment for noncompliance to the end of the greatest happiness of society (Austin 1998). In such a system, the will of the sovereign essentially substitutes for, or supplants, the will of the divine. At its worst, this version of human law risked becoming the rather dystopian and Benthamesque panopticon version of law to which Foucault would draw attention in the late twentieth century (Foucault 1977).

But before that, Austinian legal positivism would be perhaps most definitively critiqued by the notable twentieth-century legal theorist H. L. A. Hart. Hart was a legal positivist, but he challenged Austin's idea of law as the pure will of the sovereign. On the positivist side, the law was, in Hart's view, a historically contingent social construction of particular societies embodied and actualized in systematic forms of social control administered by institutions (Hart 2012). While not accepting the principles of Thomist natural law, Hart was more solicitous of the idea of some connections between law and morality. On the one hand, he argued that, "it cannot seriously be disputed that the development of law, at all times and places, has in fact been profoundly influenced by the conventional morality and the ideals of particular social groups, and also by forms of enlightened moral criticism urged by individuals, whose moral horizon has transcended the morality currently accepted" (Hart 2012, 185). On the other hand he also maintained that "it is possible to take this truth illicitly, as a warrant for a different proposition: namely that a legal system *must* exhibit some specific conformity with morality or justice, or *must* rest on a widely diffused convention that there is a moral obligation to obey it" (italics in original, 185). Legal positivism, as Hart defined it, meant the "simple contention that it is in no sense a necessary truth that law reproduce or satisfy certain demands of morality, though in fact they have often done so" (185–186).

Hart rejected the natural law conviction "that there are certain principles of human conduct, awaiting discovery by human reason, with which man-made law must conform if it is to be valid," but he was more solicitous of the idea that legal theory should take into account "the ways in which legal validity is connected with moral value" (186). Hart's rejection of the specific link between law and morality, especially as contemplated in the natural law framework, was evident in his famous debate with British jurist, Lord Devlin, over the Wolfenden Report recommending the decriminalization of homosexuality in Britain. In that debate, Lord Devlin challenged the report on grounds of the need to defend public morality under utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill's harm principle; while Hart defended the recommendations and argued against the use of the law to enforce morality. In another widely noted debate with legal philosopher Lon Fuller, Hart again defended the positivist separation of law and morality against Fuller's argument for morality as the source of the law's binding power (Fuller 1969). Again, in the Hart–Fuller debate there were shades of the Euthyphro dilemma in the question whether

law could compel action through sheer force of the perceived rightness, goodness, and justice, or whether the law needed the imprimatur or compulsory power of social convention or an even higher and more divine source (Cane 2010).

As an outgrowth of the nineteenth-century movement to redefine law as an objective and value-free science, the early twentieth century also brought the rise, particularly on the American jurisprudential scene, of legal realism, a theoretical movement that justified and validated the law and its systems (Fisher, Horwitz, and Reed 1993; Kalman 2011; Zaremby 2015). The value-free approach distinguished legal realism from natural law theory. Legal realism's movement away from linguistic interpretations of the law in the direction of a more sociological and anthropological approach, admitting a range of social, political, economic, and other non-legal factors to its analysis, set it apart from legal positivism. Although legal realism did consider the relation of law to religion and religious institutions, along with many other social, political, economic, and other factors, as part of the sociology of law field to which it gave rise, it still insisted, with legal positivism, on the autonomy of law from these other fields at the normative and axiological level. Indeed, among other main themes, legal realism is noted for its insistence on the instrumental use of the law to achieve social rather than moral ends and a sense that the legal and moral dimensions of law should be kept separate. Overall, the legal realist approach was a reaction against the formalist approach to law that dominated American jurisprudence in the nineteenth century, when judges were thought not to make law, but to deduce principles of law from formal principles that were clear, certain, and unchanging – in other words, nearly divine. Instead, legal realism advocated a wide-ranging inductive approach to law, such that the law could end up turning, as leading legal realist Judge Jerome Frank quipped, on "whatever the judge had for breakfast." With legal realism, in the terms of Plato's *Euthyphro*, the law became a lot more human and much less divine.

Legal and Religious Pluralism Today

Toward the end of the twentieth century, and particularly into the twenty-first century, when rapid global travel and even more rapid global communications have revealed the "many worlds" that inhabit our one world and made these worlds known to each other, there has also been a resurgence of religion around the world that has made itself felt in the fields of law and religious ethics. With greater attention to the relationship between law and religion in Islam, as well as in Hindu and Buddhist traditions in South and Southeast Asia and the Confucian and Daoist cultures of East Asia (e.g. Bell and Chaibong 2003; Katz 2009; Lubin, Davis, and Krishnan 2010; Redwood French and Nathan 2014), study of the relationship between law and religion has become globalized. New attention has also been given to the phenomenon of "legal pluralism," that is, the coexistence of religious and secular systems of law around the world (e.g. Emon 2014; Helfand 2015; Sandberg 2015). Some of these contexts of legal pluralism reflect the legacy of colonial practices that left the areas of marriage, family, inheritance, and other areas falling into the category of "personal law" in the hands of indigenous religious communities. Some of it has to do with diaspora and migratory populations to Europe and North America from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and other parts of the world bringing their legal and religious traditions with them. These systems of religious law sometimes pose a challenge to the secularism that prevails in much of the West, in which some systems have been able to accommodate religious legal norms and institutions more readily than others.

The challenge for law and religious ethics is to inquire into how systems of religious and secular law can coexist and what effect this has on the systems themselves. In parts of Africa, for example, where independence constitutions of the mid-twentieth century have recently given way to new constitutional formulations in many nations, principles of religious freedom have been enshrined in law. But given the way in which the power to *name* is the power to *norm*, issues and conflicts previously cast as ethnic, socioeconomic, or grounded in access to resources are in some cases being redefined as religious in nature, prompting calls for secularism of various sorts to quell the violence. Moreover, in Africa and other parts of the world, indigenous religions, with increased protection under international law, are demanding recognition and rights. So, despite the calls for separation of law from religion and morality in many legal theories of the twentieth century, the twenty-first century now sees law and religion increasingly intertwined in many parts of the world. The relationship between law and morality that was the theoretical focus of the twentieth century seems to be morphing into a global question of how to balance secularism and religion with both realism and globalism manifest in the new legal realism movement (Stewart Macaulay and Mitchell 2016; Klug and Engle Merry 2016).

The Significance of Law for Religious Ethics

In departing from Thomas Aquinas's four-part division of the law into eternal, natural, human, and divine law, this entry has focused significant attention on natural and human law, despite the metaphysical significance of the eternal law and the ritual significance of observance of divine law and its commands. From the perspective of a religious ethics that is not only philosophical and theological, but also grounded in the political and social dimensions, ethics is where the tenets and teachings of religious traditions are lived out through interpretation, application, and practice. This can be taken as indication of the centrality of ethics in religion and religious studies – but it can also be a source of controversy.

The Power of Normative Structures

This entry is situated in this volume under the category of structures and systems. Indeed, both law and religion play fundamental roles defining norms and values within their own fields and in the wider society. In our current context of postmodernity, there are real questions about whether amid the proliferation of truth claims there can be any common values that exert normative force. This kind of skepticism regarding the relationship between has also dominated legal realist movements in a way that has sometimes bolstered hard forms of legal positivism in which the law really does seem to be a matter of "whatever the judge had for lunch." And yet, the life-and-death questions of sex, death, war, and others that fall into the category of ethics demand adjudication through normative structures. The ongoing ethical challenge is to see that those structures do justice and are directed at the common good.

Hermeneutics and Horizons

Law and religion both require and provide norms in order to fulfill their axiological functions, but these are not "cookie cutter" commands that demand assent and obedience. Both law and religion

have developed sophisticated fields of interpretation, or hermeneutics, devoted to testing extant norms against the circumstances of today – reaffirming those values where possible, but also at times importantly modifying these norms in the face of current events and what justice demands in response. Hermeneutical interpretation is also a key feature that keeps both law and religion in touch with literary, historical, social science, and other tools and methodologies – the great insight of the legal realism movement – for understanding society's ever-evolving norms and values, bringing classic traditions into dialogue with current realities and ones still emerging on the horizon (for two influential theories of hermeneutics and its value for moral and ethical inquiry, see Gadamer [1991] and Ricoeur [1981]).

Law is Neither Autonomous Nor Omnipotent

Finally, though law has great power in advanced, regulatory societies, it is not autonomous from other social sectors and forces – nor is it omnipotent. In other words, it is not divine. Religious groups and religious ethics have played important roles at home and abroad in shaping the law on marriage and family, crime and punishment, civil and human rights, and many other areas. Moreover, while law is often retrospective and retroactive in its response to social phenomena, religion and religious traditions often have greater latitude to be prospective and prophetic in their engagement with law and society. In contexts where the law is perceived as a living and almost organic system, as opposed to an originalist textual construction operating as the "dead hand of the past," this mutual engagement of law and religion around issues of ethics insures ongoing development along the arc of justice.

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CHAPTER 131

Religious Non-Governmental Organizations

Jeffrey Haynes

Today, there are numerous religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs). Many RNGOs have social, socioeconomic, and/or political concerns, and this means that they often engage with ethical and moral issues. Numbers of RNGOs have grown in recent years and many focus their activities at the United Nations (UN). The result is increased intra- and interreligious dialogue on many justice and human rights issues with ethical and moral dimensions, including: women's sexual and reproductive health rights, improving development outcomes for the poorest people in the Global South, and fighting religious defamation (Haynes 2014). At the same time, however, expanded involvement of faith in international relations can also serve to encourage interreligious competition or friction between "liberal" and "conservative" RNGOs (Bob 2013).

To explain the increasing involvement of RNGOs in international relations, this entry examines RNGOs at the UN. The UN is the world's foremost intergovernmental organization (IGO), with 193 member states. It is also the place where around 4,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have registered their involvement with the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and among them are circa 400 RNGOs, some 10 percent of the total. The context of RNGO involvement at the UN is the post-Cold War international environment, a novel, postsecular milieu, characterized by globalization and the significant "return" of religion to international relations. Globalization is the context for current debates and discussions at the UN, many with ethical and moral dimensions. The UN is the world's foremost forum where thousands of secular NGOs and hundreds of RNGOs have a place to be heard and an opportunity to try to influence global governance.

It is important to understand why growing numbers of RNGOs today have a significant presence at the UN. On the one hand, today there is now "more" religion in international relations compared to, for example, the Cold War decades. On the other hand, we can also see expansion of RNGO significance in the context of increasing presence and influence at the UN more generally for transnational non-state actors. Compared to secular NGOs, however, a significant RNGO presence at the UN is a recent occurrence, only developing since the 1990s. Secular NGOs, on the other hand, have built their presence at the UN since its founding in 1945. Their significance can be measured by the fact that today many "have access to intergovernmental meetings, present written statements, make speeches, and lobby for specific texts to be adopted" (Willets 2006, 305) Initially, however, growth in NGO numbers was slow: over the initial two-and-a-half decades, "fewer than 400 NGOs were registered with the UN, and at any particular meeting only a few of these were active, mainly behind the scenes" (Willets 2006, 305). It was not until

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

the 1970s, in the context of a series of major UN conferences – on trade and development, human rights, women, and the natural environment – that there was major growth in numbers of NGOs active at the UN. This not only led to more secular NGOs active at the UN, but also helped expand "the range of issues addressed, the types of activities undertaken, the amount of media coverage, and the extent of influence achieved" (Willets 2006, 305). In addition, Martens argues, institutionally the UN began to realize the benefits of working with NGOs and consequently sought to strengthen relations with them, opening up "for more interaction with NGOs and creat[ing] diverse ways to bring them into its system" (Martens 2006, 691–692). Yet, while NGOs are strongly linked to international UN-organized conferences and agencies, such as ECOSOC, like RNGOs they have no formal status within the General Assembly or the Security Council.

The 1990s and 2000s saw significant growth in numbers of RNGOs at the UN. Expansion in their numbers was consequential to increased awareness of global social, economic, and political issues, including: (1) changing international conditions linked to the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, (2) globalization, (3) emergence of postsecular international relations, and (4) demands for improved global governance, where pressing demands for improved human rights and justice could be addressed. Because such issues were also ethical and moral problems, RNGOs often became involved in connected debates at the UN.

Transnational networks are very often formed, in part, of RNGOs. What, if anything, is unique or puzzling about them compared to cross-border networks of secular NGOs? Of course, there is nothing new to the claim that transnational networks will try to use whatever influence they can to achieve their ends. Research into secular transnational networks consistently notes the importance of ideas, norms, and values in encouraging people to act in one way rather than another, which Nye (2004) conceptualizes as "soft power." Soft power is a crucial component of transnational non-state actors' attempts to influence international relations, including RNGOs. However, such influence wielding is not restricted to secular cross-border entities. Transnational RNGOs also attempt to use any soft power they may have to help them achieve their objectives. It is not hard to see why this should be the case: such actors typically lack hard (economic and/or military) power and so must rely on other means of wielding influence. In doing so, RNGOs are behaving precisely as the general literature on secular, transnational, non-state actors suggests.

Growth in RNGO numbers was connected to the holding of several high-profile UN conferences during the 1990s that collectively focused on justice and human rights concerns. This served to stimulate increasing numbers of RNGOs to engage regularly with each other and with an array of secular actors at the UN and elsewhere. Yet, although the publicity and sense of engagement channeled by these UN conferences were very important, they were not on their own sufficient to explain growing RNGO focus on the UN. We also need to take in account three further other factors. First, as already mentioned, expanded RNGO involvement at the UN was linked to post-Cold War globalization, which generally encouraged cross-border campaigns on various justice and human rights concerns (Haynes 2005). Second, there was growing concern in the UN with including "civil society" representatives in the UN's deliberations. Many governments and several UN agencies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, were anxious to dispel the notion that the UN was essentially a top-down, government- and elite-dominated entity, which exhibited scant concern with or had time for bottom-up initiatives and concerns. Third, the UN introduced and developed a growing number of procedures and arrangements with the aim of "officially integrat[ing] NGOs and their activities into the operations of the UN," including in the case of RNGOs' formal registration with ECOSOC (Martens 2006, 692). The overall result of these developments was that not only secular transnational actors and networks, but also

RNGOs registered with ECOSOC, found it possible to embed themselves in the structures of the UN, to become parts of debates and disputes and, overall, and, as a result, start to play important roles in global policy formation and dissemination, often as components of ideologically congruent coalitions, featuring both state and non-state entities with shared goals.

Secular NGOs have been part of some national delegations at the UN on globally important issues, such as the climate emergency. While RNGOs have not managed to achieve this level of involvement with states, some RNGOs, for example World Vision, have significant involvement in UN efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030. This suggests that some RNGOs, including World Vision, have recently become influential at the UN, albeit without the right to be involved in deliberations of the UN "big hitters:" the Security Council and the General Assembly. Beittinger-Lee (2017, 137) identifies three modes of interaction – "immersed," "integrated," and "initiating" – practiced by RNGOs at the UN in New York. What characterizes each is "the degree of distance or closeness" which an RNGO has with the official UN procedures and processes. First, "immersed" involvement occurs when the UN definitively sets the parameters of RNGO engagement and the latter has no effective ability to change the arrangement in their favor. As a result, when a RNGO becomes involved in the UN via formal sessions and meetings, they are totally "immersed" in that environment and, if they want to be part of the institutional arrangement, they must completely comply with extant rules and restrictions. Second, RNGOs may engage in an "integrated" context where they function as partners alongside other stakeholders such as UN agencies or member states and as a result have a certain amount of ability to mold the agenda. Third, "initiating" involvement comes about when RNGOs target what they do directly to the public, other non-state or state actors, such as UN member states, the UN secretariat, or other institutional entities or employees of UN agencies.

Overall, what we observe is a growing RNGO presence at the UN and in some cases increased willingness on the part of the UN to engage with issues of relevance to RNGOs, including ethical and moral issues connected to human rights and justice concerns. Yet, it is not clear overall how the UN regards RNGOs. On the one hand, the UN seeks to be neutral in relation to religion-based voices, arguments, and campaigns. What this implies is that the UN aims to provide a level playing field for religious actors, compared to secular ones, but does not favor them nor necessarily endorse their (religion-based) arguments and objectives. In his account of the recent clashes between the Christian right and liberal and left-leaning groups at the UN, Bob (2013, 194) maintains that "transnational processes in themselves are neutral" toward different ideologies and religions.

Another view disputes the claim of UN neutrality to faith-based voices. That is, while it is agreed that RNGOs have undeniably increased their presence within the UN system, this does not mean a level playing field; instead, faith-based agendas at the UN do not necessarily find increased success, not least because many governments are wary of or hostile to RNGOs and are unwilling to treat them as legitimate players at the UN. Banchoff (2008, 290) argues that RNGOs' failure to achieve their objectives in relation to a mooted anticloning ban at the UN "illustrate[s] both the importance of religious actors in world politics and the limits of their influence." Attributing this failure to state-centrism at the UN, Banchoff contends that "[t]he norm of national sovereignty, institutionalized within the United Nations itself, framed the terms of the debate and contributed to the outcome: a toothless and ambiguous declaration with no practical implications for the future worldwide trajectory of stem cell and cloning research" (Banchoff 2008, 290). What this means is that faith-based claims based on faith-based arguments are fundamentally at odds with the long-term adhesion of the UN to the superiority

of states and their associated sovereignty. However, as Kayaoglu (2014, 62) notes, while this theory is not inherently implausible, it is clear that "the norm of national sovereignty has not prevented the United Nations from pushing for other types of prohibition regimes or human rights norms." As result, "national sovereignty alone does not suffice to explain the ineffectiveness of religious voices within the UN system."

Types of RNGOs at the UN: The Roman Catholic Church, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the World Council of Churches

RNGOs are active in transnational civil society and involve themselves in various policy fields at the UN. However, at the UN RNGOs are not only focused on what might be called "religious concerns." In addition, many become *de facto* social and/or political actors, working with "pragmatic" policies which they believe are more likely to succeed than when only religion-based arguments are employed. In other words, in order to increase chances of success, an RNGO's faith-based principles may be pragmatically amended to include secular concerns and issues. As a result, the issue is *not* RNGOs versus the rest at the UN. Instead, it is to what extent and with what results do RNGOs find it expedient to work with non-faith actors, which share the former's ideological proclivities, including both states and secular NGOs?

While a numerically large RNGO presence at the UN is less than three decades old, the UN has been active in global policy formation and dissemination since its founding over seven decades ago. Some RNGOs, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the World Council of Churches (WCC), have been actively involved with the UN for decades. Since the UN's founding, however, its constituent structures and processes have been dominated by states, which are almost invariably secular actors, seeking to make and implement decisions based on individual and collective *material* preferences and values, rather than faith-based ones. In this secular and material context, how might RNGOs expect to influence global policy? The UN engages with selected RNGOs out of a determination to appear more open and approachable to a variety of actors from civil society, both religion-based and secular. It does not necessarily imply that the UN is becoming more attuned to religious concerns *per se*. Instead, the issue is about working – and being seen to engage regularly – with civil society organizations, including RNGOs, in the context of what is sometimes described as the UN's "democratic deficit" (Lehmann 2016).

At the UN, some RNGOs – including, the Roman Catholic Church, the OIC, and the WCC – claim to be the representatives of millions of people. The Holy See is the apostolic episcopal see of the bishop of Rome, known as the Pope. The Holy See is unique. It is both a RNGO and "the smallest sovereign state in the world; the see of the Pope (as the Bishop of Rome); home of the Pope and the central administration of the Roman Catholic Church; achieved independence from Italy in 1929" (Princeton University 2010). While the Holy See is not a RNGO *per se*, the Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church which claims 1.3 billion adherents. The Holy See has had permanent observer status at the UN since 1964, with the attendant right to attend all sessions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, and ECOSOC. In other words, the Holy See is not a "typical" RNGO but is instead a state overtly directed by religious principles. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, is the

inspiration of many NGOs at the UN, which uniformly claim to be inspired by the teachings of the church. The OIC brings together 57 mainly Muslim-majority countries, with a combined population of hundreds of millions of people, and claims to be Muslims' global voice. The OIC was founded in 1969 and its relations with the UN began soon after. Like the Holy See, the OIC has permanent observer status at the UN. Finally, the WCC, the umbrella organization for around 350 non-Catholic churches with tens of millions of members, was founded in 1948. The WCC established relations with the UN soon after, principally through the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. The WCC has maintained a constant and active presence at the UN for over fifty years, with UN headquarters liaison offices in New York and Geneva. In addition, consultative relations have further been established with virtually the whole family of UN-related agencies (including the UN Environment Program [UNEP], UN Development Program [UNDP], UN Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], World Bank, and the World Health Organization [WHO]), although not with the state-dominated General Assembly or Security Council.

However, most RNGOs at the UN are not like the Roman Catholic Church, the OIC, or WCC in terms of their size, influence, and membership. Many of the approximately four hundred RNGOs registered with ECOSOC are relatively small and comparatively insignificant, without much individual diplomatic, financial, or ideological leverage. Some, such as World Vision, have impressive annual incomes, numbered in the billions of US dollars, while many others have incomes which are significantly smaller. A small RNGO with a trifling income may find it quite possible to become registered at the UN and thus have the right to engage in lobbying and other activities but in this case small is not beautiful. Typically, small means insignificant. As a result, many small and middling RNGOs are faced with a stark choice: engage in coalition-building, organize and work with partners, whether religion-based or secular, non-state or state, in order potentially to increase the likelihood of influence in debates and discussions on issues of importance to them at the UN in the context of global policy.

Put another way, most RNGOs which organize and work at the UN are *necessarily* strategic, goal-orientated actors, similar to other kinds of comparable organizational structures, including many of the thousands of secular NGOs registered at the UN. This is because, as Hopgood and Vinjamuri (2012, 38) explain, like secular NGOs, RNGOs typically adopt two main strategies at the UN: *alliance formation* and *specialization*. They adopt these tactics as part of a strategy to try and achieve their objectives, as they must compete in an oligopolistic NGO "market." The point is that although RNGOs are strongly motivated by their religious beliefs, they still face the same challenges of earthly existence which confront secular NGOs: securing often limited resources and maintaining donor loyalty. It is crucial for RNGOs to achieve consultative status with the UN's ECOSOC. This is because this confers a key validity, a virtual currency necessary both to build alliances and "seek financial support from other organizations within the field" (Bush 2005, 16). Religion-based organizations denied such legitimacy will find it very hard, even impossible, either to obtain support from or enter into formal arrangements with other actors, including human rights NGOs, foundations, and states. "This explains why even groups like 'Watchtower,' whose theological doctrines declare the United Nations to be an instrument of Satan, or the World Sikh Organization, many of whose members opposes affiliation with the UN for political reasons, have nonetheless held or aggressively sought consultative status with the UN" (Bush 2005, 16).

In addition to serving as a forum for debate over various social, socioeconomic, and political issues, typically related to human rights and justice concerns, the UN is an arena where religious identities

are legitimated, challenged, or otherwise negotiated. This contention can be illustrated by focusing on the array of RNGOs which can be counted under the banner of the Roman Catholic Church. On the one hand, there are "liberal" Catholic RNGOs, such as "Catholics for Choice" (CFC, founded in 1973 as "Catholics for a Free Choice"), which seeks both to defend women's reproductive rights and to downgrade the Holy See's position at the UN from permanent observer to NGO. Catholics for Choice describes its mission as "to shape and advance sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well-being and respect and affirm the capacity of women and men to make moral decisions about their lives" (Catholics for Choice 2017, "About us"). Furthermore, an active voice is maintained by CFC both within the "United States and internationally to ensure that all people have access to safe and affordable reproductive health-care services and to infuse our core values into public policy, community life and Catholic social teaching and thinking," writing that they "are part of the great majority who believes that Catholic teachings on conscience mean that every individual must follow his or her own conscience – and respect others' right to do the same" (Catholics for Choice 2017, "About us"). Denounced by several Catholic bishops, CFC illustrates both a fundamental conflict and question over what it means to be Catholic, who gets to speak for Catholics, and how to define Catholic perspectives on human rights and justice issues. Some Catholic actors, for example the socially conservative Center for Family and Human Rights, have very different – albeit, "Catholic-inspired" – worldviews compared to CFC. Muslim RNGOs can also evince a conservative/liberal split. In this context, we can note the socially conservative Muslim World League, with close ties to the OIC, and the liberal and autonomous Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. These differing RNGOs highlight a more general truth among RNGOs: within most if not all extant faiths there are divisions between "liberal" and "conservative" viewpoints which are often captured in differing faith-based perspectives focused in competing RNGOs' concerns. As a result, it is difficult or impossible to identify key generic characteristics of a "typical" Christian (Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox), Islamic, or Jewish NGO. Similarly, it is very difficult to establish which – if any – RNGO is a definitive Christian, Islamic, or Jewish voice at the UN in relation to, *inter alia,* human rights and justice issues. In relation to the Roman Catholic Church, for example, Catholic identity is continually negotiated through competing claims from, on the one hand, the Holy See and, on the other, the various views articulated by Catholic NGOs, which are often focused at the UN. Negotiations over identity, beliefs, and goals are very important as they have the potential to influence relationships of power within as well as among religious groups. RNGOs with formal ties with the UN via accreditation with ECOSOC can have significant input into these types of negotiations. Those that lack ECOSOC-agreed access do not.

This emphasizes a wider point of great importance to the analysis presented in this entry. The issue is that there may well be more ideological variation among RNGOs which emanate from the same faith tradition than there is between faith-based and secular entities. RNGOs, even those from the same faith tradition, frequently compete with each other, at the UN and elsewhere, and individual RNGOs may push for policies from either liberal or conservative viewpoints. In other words, even when several RNGOs share a faith orientation it does not necessarily mean that they see the world as similar ideologically. The implications of this are profound, as differing ideological worldviews on, for example, justice and human rights issues, can mean that RNGOs from the same faith tradition actually perceive each other as ideological foes.

In order to pursue religious goals successfully at the UN, it makes sense for RNGOs to build alliances with a variety of actors, including other RNGOs, secular NGOs, and states. The main criterion for such liaisons is that of ideological compatibility: whether potential "coalition" partners share similar "liberal" or "conservative" worldviews in relation to issues focused upon at the UN, especially those linked to justice and human rights issues, with which RNGOs are typically concerned. Examining RNGOs at the UN highlights in many cases ideological polarization which supports the contention that "religion" is not a fixed category or value with consistent meanings and understandings attached to the term. For example, many "conservative" RNGOs would probably agree that the nature of the UN system – which to them may appear both "too" liberal and "too" secular – is to encourage values commensurate with a "secular global order" that conflicts or competes directly with what they see as "appropriate" "Christian" or "Muslim" (or other religious) values. RNGOs from various faith traditions with "liberal" views, on the other hand, will likely regard the UN as a very important environment where ideologically opposing forces, including other RNGOs, can be counteracted. This is necessary in order not only to advance what they see as for them *the* most appropriate faith view but also what is right in terms of an ideologically-generated approach to understanding and influencing outcomes at the UN and by extension global governance. In short, because there are often major ideological differences between "liberal" and "conservative" RNGOs, even from the same faith tradition, it is not helpful analytically to work from the premise of a clear cut, generalized, "secular" *versus* "religious" split at the UN between RNGOs and secular actors. The ethical and moral issues which RNGOs generally are concerned with at the UN, turn out to be controversial areas which are not easily divisible into generic "secular" and "religious" categories.

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CHAPTER 132

Religious Institutions

Gerard Mannion

Exploring Institutional Morality: What is It? Why Do It?

While the term institution can also be used to refer to a particular custom, practice, behavior, and so forth, in this entry we are concerned with examining the sense of a collective that brings together individuals in an organized fashion toward achieving specific shared aims, functions, purposes, and ends. Institutions can be founded toward achieving widely differing purposes and ends and many institutions are aimed toward *social* ends. An institution will share an organizational structure, with conventions, regulatory protocols and procedures, and common practices helping to shape its daily life and serving the fulfillment of its ends and purposes. In many institutions, what will emerge will be patterns of collective understanding, action, and being that help shape these other aspects of daily life. We may call these traditions and, with regard to religious institutions, traditions play especially significant roles in the life and activities of the institutions and the people who together constitute the institutional community.

The study of institutional morality is an undertaking premised upon the fact that moral principles and ethics are not simply of relevance for individuals or even for communities and societies. They are also of great importance to the daily life of institutions, including the collective institutions that religious and faith communities gather their religious lives around or which serve those communities.

While there have been multiple studies that have touched upon the morality of institutions across many disciplines stretching back long into history, including innumerable studies concerning corporate, public, and organizational ethics (the realms of "corporate social responsibility" and "business ethics" being two broad examples), institutional ethics *per se*, in terms of being a specific area of enquiry, particularly with close regard to how an institution is run and its daily life *ad intra*, that is, its internal day-to-day functioning (which naturally, in turn, will also affect its external relations and impact), is a relatively new addition to the field of ethics.

Can Institutions Possess a Moral Character?

One area of specific contention concerns exactly *how* we may be able to speak of an institution possessing a moral character. Some theorists believe that the only way in which we can make sense of institutional morality is by examining the ethics of those particular individuals that make up the body of the

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institution: in other words, their individual moral character, their values, virtues, and principles are somehow conceived to become combined or pooled in various ways (e.g. Seamus Miller).

However, the present author believes that this proves problematic in multiple ways and that, in fact, it can be seen that institutions can acquire or develop a moral character of their own *regardless* of the ethical character of its own members and, indeed, can sometimes display a moral character that can come into conflict with or even prove contrary to the ethics that particular individuals hold to – whether at leadership level or that of "rank and file" members. It is in relation to such areas of enquiry wherein some of the most significant and interesting questions concerning the morality of institutions lie.

The day-to-day life and activities carried out by and within institutions have moral implications, both internal and external to the institution. The foundational purposes and collective ends pursued by institutions have moral implications and the organizational structures, practices, protocols, and regulatory systems of an institution are also all aspects of institutional life that merit ethical discernment.

In a general sense, therefore, given that there are moral outcomes – both good and bad, positive and negative – that will follow from the collectives acts, ends, and purposes that institutions give rise to, we can therefore apply analogous ethical thinking to collectives in a similar fashion to how ethics explore the moral character and actions of individuals. Therefore, it can, indeed, be said that institutions have a moral character and can be analyzed in ethical terms in a multitude of ways.

Discerning the Moral Nature and Scope of Religious Institutions

In addition to the definition of an institution offered above, a *religious* institution will be characterized by further specific common features. Such will be linked to, shaped, and guided by the beliefs and practices of a given faith community. And, in turn, the institutions within a particular religion will have influence on the formation, refinement, interpretation, and implementation of those beliefs and practices. The sacred texts, traditions, and practices specific to that religion will usually therefore prove normative in multiple ways for the life of such institutions – in theory, if not always in practice. When there is a conflict between the two, distinctive moral problems result.

More specifically, the foundational *moral* traditions and guiding principles and practices of the faith community in question will also warrant scrutiny with regard to how the religion's moral framework(s) both shape and impact and, in turn, can be affected by the given institution's own activities and organization.

Religious institutions perform a wide variety of functions, with the social and political sciences largely (and correctly) indicating that a majority of such functions are social in nature. Insofar as an institution is religious oriented or linked in nature, then, one can also see much overlap with the wider social functionality (or otherwise) of the requisite faith in general. But, of course, functionalism is very far from being the only or even most widely accepted theory for explaining what religions are about and what they essentially do. And what can be said for a religion in general, can obviously be applied to the discernment of the morality (or otherwise) of institutions within that religion.

Among the key functions of religions, of course, is the facilitation of the major rites of passage in life. And, of course, religion nurtures and helps people and communities to develop in terms of moral character and ethical discernment themselves.

But, in taking together the most important functions of religion, collectively and perhaps above all, religions seek (or aspire) to offer adherents and converts a *way*, a path of life. And, naturally, religious

institutions are also part of the vital means and mechanisms by which such a way, such a path is communicated, facilitated, and maintained. However, religious institutions and norms can also work to stunt moral development or even to shape individuals and communities in a direction that runs counter to morality. Religious institutions can and do work contrary to morality and to the common good, as well as vice versa.

Religious institutions can be understood at the macro level – even, indeed, conceiving of the religion itself as one large-scale social institution when considered in its organizational and structural sense (e.g. the Roman Catholic Church, or the Church of England can both be spoken of as institutions, or, in a looser sense, one might also conceive of Shia or Sunnī Islam, or Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism in broad macro-institutional terms in terms of shared characteristics and patterns of belief and behavior within those traditions).

Then, within specific religious groups there are multiple forms of additional religious-linked institutions. These can range from leadership, moral, legal, and disciplinary oriented institutions, to institutions fulfilling other social ends – for example, educational, charitable, welfare, and healthcare purposes. Various religious ministries can be understood as institutions in and of their own right or ministers can be seen as serving the specific institutional ends of the religion at either the macro or micro level, or both. The same can be said for particular religious offices and functions – although sometimes there can be confusion between function office and/or ministries and those individuals charged with carrying them out, which can lead to multiple moral dilemmas in and of themselves, for example, confusing a function with the functionaries who perform it, thereby escalating the power and authority of the latter in a manner which can contradict the actual (morally) right performance of the function itself.

So, when it comes to religious institutions, the boundary lines between the religious *community* (whether at local or wider level) and a religious institution *per se* can become blurred and have considerable overlap. For example, the people that may gather, live, and minister in and in connection with a local Buddhist, Shinto, Daoist, or Hindu temple, a Sikh Gurdwara, Jewish synagogue, Christian parish, Muslim mosque, or a shrine in many religions collectively can constitute a community *and* a place of worship, veneration, and/or meditation, yet also a religious institution. Depending on their geographical location, there will also likely be differing laws and regulations they must comply with in relation to state norms. That is to say, the state will also perceive this local community as an institution in multiple ways and treat it accordingly.

And there may be several further sub-institutions in connection with the local religious community, such as those aforementioned educational, charitable, healthcare, and welfare sub-institutions (or indeed separate institutions in their own right) in connection with that community. The network and web of relationships in such faith communities, then, can be developed to differing degrees and can frequently become complex both in organizational and indeed moral terms. Whether or not these local religious institutions and their offshoots are also part of a wider constellation of institutions in connection with their faith beyond the local level (e.g. wider area institutional collectives – e.g. think of a church diocese or a specific faith's regional or national religious bodies) varies depending upon the religious group. In many instances, there may also be overlap with institutions and organizations connected with specific ethnic and cultural identities within religious communities at various differing levels of locality. Such ethnic aspects of institutional being can, in particular contexts, lead to tensions with co-religionists and those from beyond their faith community's confines alike. Some religions will have broader federal-like structures and organizational features to serve the institutions at more localized levels.

There are also pan-religious and interfaith institutions (e.g. the Parliament of the World's Religions), as well as intrafaith institutions (e.g. ecumenical institutions seeking to foster better understanding, relations, and cooperation between different Christian denominations such as the World Council of Churches or between Jewish communities via the World Zionist Organization). These can also exist at the local level, national, regional, and international levels alike. Such can be institutions that, in themselves are comprised of membership by other institutions.

Particular offices of leadership, governance, and ministry will likewise exist at both the local and wider levels. The degree of hierarchy in terms of organization and structure will also vary depending upon the religious tradition, branch, and location. Some will incorporate democratic and discursive bodies and practices to determine key decisions and matters of teaching, interpretation, organization, and discipline. Some will have a mixture of monarchical-style leadership and governance alongside democratic and other collective forms of discernment and decision-making at various levels of the religion from the universal to the local.

Sacred texts, teachings, and traditions will likewise play a significant role in such decision-making, leadership, and governance to differing degrees, depending upon the community. Educational institutions and the work of scholars in and experts on the particular religion can also have a significant bearing for many faith communities in such levels of institutional life.

Then, of course, in some religions there will be specific religious communities consisting of, for example, orders of monks, nuns, and other types of devotees (as well as analogous types) who commit themselves to a specific way of community life shaped by their faith. These, too, can take on the characteristics of both a community and institution. For example, an ashram, shrine, monastery, friary, nunnery, or convent. Some of these will be governed according to particular normative rules and traditions, some may be gathered around particular gurus, mystics, or charismatic leaders. They will vary in type with regard to whether they organize themselves along radically egalitarian lines to strictly hierarchical lines with many variations between both poles.

Other religious communities may embrace members of more than one faith or previously (or continuously) divided and differing branches of the one faith (e.g. Hindu-Christian interfaith ashrams, again, or Christian ecumenical communities). Forms, then, of "multiple religious belonging" would help shape and give purpose to such institutions.

All such institutions have ethical relevance in multiple ways. Some institutional activities may be committed to particular moral and social ends – toward increasing the common good, toward fostering the wider practice of social justice and virtues in their societies and the world. Others may be fostering exclusivistic and unjust ideologies and practices. Some institutions may paradoxically work toward both outcomes.

Some religious communities and institutions may blend religious with social and political aims, objectives, and traditions. Sometimes the politicization of the religious institutions may have serious negative consequences that run counter to the actual moral traditions of the religion in question. Not a few religious-linked institutions, both historically and in contemporary times, have blended and blurred their religious beliefs with extremist and violent aims and ideologies (most of the major world religions have experienced various forms of such institutions).

Many states, of course, have adopted specific religions as the state religion (either officially, even constitutionally or *de facto*) and this has had multiple subsequent impacts upon both the religious institutions thereafter and the state institutions as well. Indeed, the influence and impact of religious institutions upon the moral character and ethical resources of wider society, in general, is a further area of enquiry

where attention to the morality of institutions can prove fruitful. For any country dominated socially and politically by one faith, this has many ethical implications, particularly if the prevailing interpretation of that faith, moral or otherwise, impacts the freedoms of the citizens, especially of those living in the country who do not belong to that faith. Further ethical considerations that many studies have considered are the ethical implications for a society of the growth in secularization in specific communities.

Many religious communities will have spiritual leaders or guides, gurus, charismatic figures, prophets, and other figures around whom various institutional trappings and organizational features and practices may emerge. Again, these may vary from the most rigidly hierarchical to the most radically egalitarian. Some such figures and their followers or the traditions they give rise to can have a dramatic effect upon the religion, its teachings, the interpretation of these (and of sacred texts), and its institutional organization and life. This can also be so due to the traditions, interpretations, and practices such followers leave behind after their deaths – inspiring, exemplary, and holy persons, saints, and martyrs are further persons around whom institutional practices can develop.

With regard to these figures and indeed any religious leadership figures and decision-making and authoritative bodies, power and influence can be abused in ethically alarming ways to varying degrees (e.g. from financial corruption in a religious institution to the manipulative and fatally catastrophic leadership of the Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas). So, also, can power and authority be exercised in morally exemplary ways toward the promotion of the common good.

Studying Religious Institutions: Methods, Tools, and Resources

A profitable approach to the exploration of religion vis-à-vis the morality of institutions and organizations could engage in a comparative and interdisciplinary approach to the dimensions of religion and institutional morality in three distinct ways. First, the notion of institutional morality *per se*. Second, engaging in ethical analysis of religious institutions and related institutional issues pertaining to religion, religious belief, and religious communities. Third, considering examples of resources from religion, religious studies, and (where applicable) theology for better discerning and enhancing institutional morality.

There are many interdisciplinary research tools and findings that can help us explore how institutional morality is actually shaped and what factors might assist this, as well which factors prevent a positive institutional morality from flourishing.

Of especial relevance for exploring institutional morality in general, including pertaining to religious institutions, are the numerous developed theories, traditions, and additional resources in *social* ethics that are shaped *within* particular religious traditions. And, obviously a comparative religious studies, theological, and comparative ethical approach can help in such explorations.

But obviously resources from beyond religious traditions and those which are common to both religious and secular studies alike can and should be utilized. When exploring institutional morality, questions of metaethics (the nature and scope of morality and of ethics itself), as well as considerations pertaining to ethical method in particular are of specific value.

Most religions in shaping their ethical traditions and forms of moral discernment and regulation embrace a *mixture* of ethical approaches – with the most common such combination for many religious institutions being a mixture of deontological and virtue ethics (with the latter being one ethical approach that can furnish several especially helpful ways of analyzing institutional morality). Many will fluctuate

between emphasis upon one or the other approach at differing times, under differing leadership, and depending upon the particular moral questions and dilemmas under consideration.

General as well as specific theories from moral and social anthropology, social ethics, and organizational ethics, theories from philosophy, theology, and religious studies, among other disciplinary approaches all have much to offer the study of institutional morality. This also includes the various resources from forms of applied ethics and organizational ethics as they relate to institutions. Further fruitful levels of enquiry are forthcoming when we combine resources across different disciplines.

Notable approaches from the past that can be revisited to help inform studies of morality with regard to religious institutions include studies where the overlap between exploring religious communities and specific religious institutions will be especially prominent. Classical studies and typologies from the likes of Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber have influenced subsequent typologies and characterization of religious communities and institutions. Indeed, several of Max Weber's famous theories can and have been applied to a wide variety of religious institutions, particularly, for example, those concerning the routinization of charisma. So, also have Karl Marx's critical theories about the function and structures of religion, in a wide variety of forms, been applied to and thereby indicated ways in which religion may have both negative, as well as positive, moral effects. As indicated, differing functionalist perspectives on the nature and purpose of religion obviously have had much to say about the social functions of religion – and therefore there are moral implications to those functions too (e.g. Émile Durkheim's studies particularly with regard to the social cohesion that religion can offer societies). Classic theories of religious pluralism (e.g. John Hick, Ninian Smart) and postcolonialist and feminist critiques of religion (e.g. Edward Said, Timothy Fitzgerald, Talal Asad, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether), have respectively offered morally positive and negative assessments of religion and therefore of its institutional manifestations and operations alike. *De facto*, these critiques have ethical implications on multiple fronts.

In particular, one of the most fruitful avenues for exploring religious institutions from an ethical standpoint may be via an engagement with *theories of social being and social interaction*. Such can provide multiple resources to explain collective existence and collective action, for example, how we account for and understand shared aims, goals and ends, and social phenomena such as cooperation, social conflict, opposition, and antagonism. Moving toward more specifically ethical considerations, we might then begin to consider how to account for common norms/values/virtues/vices. Theories of social being can help us explain specific shared characteristics such as collective altruism, as well as institutional morality in general.

To take here but one example, if we take the notion of social constructionism from the social sciences and apply this in a comparative sense to religious institutions, we can better understand what shapes the moral life and practices of the institution in question, as well as of religious institutions in general. The social construction of reality essentially envelopes a set of theories about the various ways in which we collectively shape and give existence to our shared worlds, our ways and means of relating to one another, the processes and habits, the concepts and forms of knowledge that govern our interactions and how such become habituated through these processes and thereby become institutionalized over time. This in turn shapes the knowledge and beliefs about our social reality itself.

Indeed, applying theories of social constructionism helps demonstrate that institutions can and do possess moral character. Morality is essentially socially constructed *per se*, therefore institutions are one of the key mechanisms for facilitating such socially-constructed moral norms, values, virtues, practices,

ethical resources, and traditions. And religious institutions are preeminent at the forefront of the emergence of such socially-constructed moral frameworks and traditions. Obviously, some religions also hold beliefs about particular teachings and traditions being somehow "given," ordained, or "revealed" through prophetic, divine, or other superhuman mediums. But this does not challenge the essentially socially-constructed nature of their moral traditions for even traditions believed to have been divinely revealed or given to special charismatic figures within the religion through processes of enlightenment, meditation, or existential challenges require interpretation and hermeneutical practices are also socially-constructed.

Finally, the contributions of critical theorists such as Jürgen Habermas concerning the "system colonizing the life-world" also offer much potential for applying theories of social constructionism to institutions and especially so given the ways in which religious worldviews, and the organizational and institutional life of religious communities, are clearly constructed in multiple social ways.

Authoritative Religious Teachings: Institutional Interpretation and Implementation

As indicated, most religions develop a body of teachings and many (often a majority) of these teachings, in one way or another, are either directly pertaining to morality and ethics or have moral relevance. The major world religions also have recourse to those scriptural tradition(s) which influence the day-to-day life of their institutions and the conduct of their members in a wide variety of ways. So, also, may there be oral traditions that have been passed down which may or may not become written down and part of the textual pedagogical corpus.

But matters can become complicated with regard to the interpretation, development, and application of those teachings. Who determines what texts become part of the canon of sacred texts (and which do not)? Who is responsible, entitled, or qualified to interpret them and what happens when there are differing interpretations of the teachings? What is to be done with ancient or even modern and contemporary teachings (textual or otherwise) and interpretations that either the religious communities themselves or the wider society in which they live, or both, find morally questionable, even repugnant? What forums exist to determine when teachings need to be revisited and revised or, indeed, sometimes reversed and jettisoned altogether? These challenges obviously have multiple ethical implications.

Further issues arise when teachings, in part or in general, are believed to have been "revealed," "inspired," or informed by foundational and key figures in the faith or through some form of direct revelation from or via the (or a) deity or ultimate concern central to the religion. Forms of prophecy and witness add further intricacies to any given faith's body of teaching.

Then there can be clashes over what precisely counts as authoritative in a given faith community. For example, the clashes over the authority of scripture and tradition during and subsequent to the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reformation. Or, again, the disputed legacies over the authority and legacy of the teachings of Ali ibn Abi Talib between Shia and Sunnī Muslims and further disagreements over the nature and extent of the Caliphate.

Therefore, with regard to authoritative teaching and its interpretation and development, as well as application, additional religious institutions can emerge specifically to coordinate and regulate such interpretive and developmental processes.

Religions can therefore have recourse to a variety of hermeneutical processes and practices to help in the ongoing interpretation and development of their authoritative teachings and/or their sacred texts (e.g. midrash in Judaism). Some religions therefore have developed sophisticated theories, structures, systems, and processes for teaching that recognize and/or facilitate specific means and forms of teaching in the community as authoritative (e.g. magisterium in Roman Catholicism).

Some faiths even codify the outcome of many of these interpretive processes into the status of "law" that will guide and regulate their communitarian and institutional life (e.g. canon law in some Christian traditions, sharīʿa Law in relation to Islam, and Torah in Judaism). All in all, religious hermeneutics, then, is a moral issue in and of itself.

Religious institutions face a series of particular challenges of a moral nature when members of the religious community exercise dissent with regard to the teachings and norms of the faith themselves, or, more commonly, with regard to the interpretation and implementation of those teachings by the leadership at a given time. It is not infrequent that "dissenters" and their viewpoints become reassessed over time so that they are transformed into prophetic and ultimately authoritative voices for the faith communities concerned. Perceived orthodoxy and heresy in religions can be seen to have been routinely "flipped" or reversed over time.

Still wider bodies can be instituted to help the religious communities reach decisions of especial importance, to revise and update teachings and structures, to settle disputes, to implement programs of renewal and reform (e.g. a synod or council).

Questions of Leadership, Authority, and Accountability

Specific moral challenges can arise in relation to how leaders and people in decision-making positions and positions of authority are identified and appointed. So, also, in relation to how they comport themselves in discharging their leadership duties. Whether at the wider macro-institutional level or more regional and local level, religious institutions will vary and differ on the modes of appointment, term of office, and so on. Some positions will be decided upon via democratic processes, some via forms of succession, some by a mixture of the two.

All too often leaders and others in positions of decision-making and responsibility in institutions – whether secular or religious – can find it increasingly difficult to tally the values and norms either of their organization or institution or indeed their personal values and beliefs, with the day-to-day operations and reality of their responsibilities.

Specific problems arise when leaders resort to affirming the applicability of such values *ad extra*, but see no applicability necessary *within* the confines of the organization itself. Likewise, if they seek to portray the organization as holding fast to the very values and principles it flouts on a daily basis. Perhaps most ethically challenging of all, is when leaders and institutional bodies, for various reasons, seem to believe the enormity of the responsibilities of their leadership positions (or its attractiveness or both) requires them to place on hold ethical values and principles – be this suspension temporary or for the duration of their service and office. Furthermore, they may believe they are doing so in the better interests of the institution itself and/or for some "higher" ends that necessitate that ethical concerns are pushed into the background.

It is therefore vital that religious institutions encourage and facilitate the exploration of issues and questions of leadership, authority, power, governance, responsibility, and accountability on a periodic basis.

Concluding Remarks

Many instinctively presume – or at least expect – that the moral standards of religious institutions will be somewhat higher and more consistently ethical than those in secular institutions. However, historical and contemporary evidence makes clear that religious-linked institutions are seldom exempt from the same failings and moral corrosion and corruption as any other institutions. True, they usually have higher moral aspirations and, indeed, in many cases will strive to live up to those aspirations. Religious faith communities also utilize their moral and doctrinal traditions and resources to scrutinize, critique, and indeed reform secular institutions when they are deemed to be morally failing in the light of those moral and doctrinal traditions. At times, religious institutions can fall prey to consistent failings in living up to the moral principles, frameworks, and traditions that their faith claims to be shaped by.

All in all, it is, therefore, also vitally important to explore how and when institutional aims, goals, and ends, along with the practices that issue forth within and out of the institution might clash with morality and ethics. So there need to be means and resources for assessing the extent to which moral corrosion and corruption might develop within particular religious institutions and for how to go about rectifying and reversing such developments. Here, religious institutions can draw upon a vast array of ethical resources within their own traditions.

To close we list but a limited number of examples that can be found, in one form or another in many religions (admittedly described under various names and guises), that stand alongside numerous other empowering moral concepts, theories, virtues, values, and aspirations: the notion of community; the virtue of solidarity; love/charity; and, perhaps most relevant of all for ethical discernment of institutions, the concept of social or structural/institutionalized sin. These resources can prove enlightening for the study of the morality of institutions both within and beyond religious forms of such. Therefore, they are also proof that religious institutions can be part of the solution to institutional corruption and corrosion, as well as being part and examples of the extent of the prevalence of the same.

2 Challenges

CHAPTER 133

Science

Roger A. Willer

Introduction

Modern science as a body of knowledge and set of practices, as a mindset and social system is arguably the most significant "invention" of the Enlightenment. In its approach to knowledge of the natural world, it has demonstrated astounding success in identifying causal relations, predicting outcomes, and unleashing "miraculous" technology. That same knowledge poses for the human species unprecedented challenges and knotty problems, and it often leaves in its wake social anxiety and harm. Whatever one's estimate of the cost versus benefit, it is incontestable that the social system called science has emerged as a, if not *the,* primary source of global culture creation.

While forms and structures of religion, morality, government, economic exchange, etc. also are major players in culture creation, their continuities with human heritage stretch back thousands of years. Contemporary science as an approach to nature, a practice and a body of knowledge, however, represents a historical discontinuity from past mindsets and practices. Beginning around 1650 with the emergence of European modernity, it has become – in a historically short time – a global enterprise more far-reaching than any form of religion, morality, economy, or government. It is striking that a scientist from virtually anywhere can settle quickly into common work with local scientists because of universal commitments such as testability and verification. The scientific body of knowledge is historical in character and is expected to change through the contention of conflicting paradigms of research, theories and findings. At the same time, the singular goal of all who practice science is to contribute to a *single* body of causal explanation about nature that is expressed in statements of empirical regularities (law) and theories and that also can make highly accurate predictions.

Given science's dominant intellectual and social power and the knotty problems it raises, the minimally charted intersection of religious ethics and the sciences is startling. There is evidence of important new work entering this intersection, but it remains accurate to say the literature of the developing field of religious ethics has engaged only minimally with science *qua* science or with the individual sciences themselves as matters of moral and religious reflection.

The claim that religious ethics has not engaged science significantly may strike the reader as bogus given the extensive attention to ethical issues dominant in many fields, such as genetics. This claim, however, depends on a critical distinction between science as a passion for theoretical knowledge and technology as the application of that knowledge. Yes, ethicists devote significant attention to the

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technological application of scientific knowledge, but they have infrequently explored the moral aspects of science itself as a mindset, practice, and social system. The moral-laden character of *techne* has been long recognized, while the developing field of religious ethics is just beginning to identify the parameters by which it may bring resources into play for constructive critique and mutual contribution. Among the initial challenges are adequate descriptions of the domains involved and the question of the legitimacy of interaction between them.

The Domains and the Question of Mutual Dialogue

The Domain of Science in Search of Causal Explanation

What exactly is unique about the domain of science as a search for human knowledge? How does one mark what is a science versus what is not? Most people have a clear sense that there is something distinctive in the modern facility and practice called science as it seeks explanation of causal relationships in the natural world. At the same time, the contentions around what counts as science and what does not is evident to any reader in the philosophy of science. From the time of Western antiquity until approximately 1650, the ancient concept of *scientia* (knowledge) indicated the broad domain of theoretical knowledge over against *sapientia* (wisdom) and *techne* (the know-how of craft or application). It is a testimony to the power of the knowledge developed through modern practice of replicable observation stated into laws and theory that this domain of practice has claimed for itself alone the term science, the term that had designated any theoretical knowledge.

Even with such caveats, the question of what constitutes science remains. Is astrology science? Is medicine? Common parlance distinguishes the scientific from pseudoscience or from medical application by pointing to the inductive empirical method, to the practice of experiment and observation. Likewise, the common belief about science is that it collects a steady, cumulative acquisition of knowledge by that means. Dictionary definitions refer to these core elements. Both common parlance and dictionary definitions clearly fail, however, because such definition excludes the formal sciences of logic and mathematics as well as theoretical science! Moreover, most thinkers now accept some version of the argument that science proceeds by models and paradigms and exemplars (Kuhn 1996). Rather than linear advances in explanation dependent on rule-governed assessment of the data, it is now accepted by many that sudden small advances build pressure (new data and information dissonant with accepted theory) until the avalanche of a paradigm change occurs in theoretical ideas.

Significant debates about these matters continue within the philosophy of science, but the following description can be widely affirmed as a methodological description delineating the mindset and social practice of the sciences as they seek a congruent body of knowledge about the natural world (Klemke 1998). Science organizes:

- Statements that record and classify observations relevant for the solution of a problem in as accurate and definite a way as possible.
- General statements – laws or hypotheses – that assert regularities among certain classes of observed or measurable phenomena.
- Theoretical statements that connect and account for the largest possible number of laws.

- Other general or specific statements that are deducible from the initial descriptions and from laws and theories and which are confirmed by further observation and testing.
- Predictive statements drawn from the above indicating with reliability what outcomes can be expected given initial conditions and subsequent factors.

These five taken together describe what is unique to scientific practice while, and this is critical, leaving open the questions of the methods of obtaining data and the means to develop laws and theories. The methods may be deduction, induction, intuition, educated guess, or others. It distinguishes science, however, from pseudoscience and from technology and permits establishing useful categories in terms of precision: formal sciences (logic and mathematics), physical sciences (physics, chemistry), life sciences (biology and psychology) and social and behavioral sciences (sociology and economics). These may, then be usefully distinguished from the way knowledge and truth is sought in the disciplines of the humanities (philosophy, the study of religion, history, etc.) or the arts.

The Domain of Religious Ethics as the Search for Transcendent and Moral Meaning

How then should one describe the particular field of religious ethics in relation to science? What is different about its search for human understanding? In the broadest brush strokes, it is commonly held that science is about the facts of nature while religion is about transcendent meaning and ethics is about moral values and praxis. But as already seen in the investigation of the character of science above, such brush strokes provide, at their best, simply a useful start.

What exactly counts as "religious," the first term of "*religious* ethics?" It is more notoriously problematic to define what is religion than it is to define what is science. Whatever else may be said about the character of religion, however, it certainly indicates beliefs, practices, a community and institutional activity oriented to the transcendent dimension of being human and the search for meaning. The domain of religious understanding insists, over against a purely scientific domain, that the universe includes something real and identifiable that is a transcendent dimension with ultimate meaning. In short, there is something about the whole that is greater than nothing but the sum of the empirical parts. It is worth noting that many practitioners of science assert their belief that science points beyond itself, even so far as to believing that transcendence is a real horizon that cannot be measured, empirically observed, or comprehensively theorized. Religion is, then, usefully described in relation to science as the domain of human understanding attentive to the transcendent dimension and its meaning for human life.

The second term in "religious *ethics*" also must be delineated. It is commonly assumed that the discipline of ethics, whether religious or non-religious, is the reflective, systematic study of morality, consisting of two dimensions: (1) values or norms; and (2) practical reasoning or decision-making. Religious ethics demonstrates, however, that ethical reflection necessarily includes several additional dimensions; its practice depends upon more than just comparative values and comparative practical reasoning.

While debates continue about the nature of these dimensions, the idea is sustained that ethics entails – whether religious or non-religious – five broad dimensions: Foundational, Hermeneutic, Normative, Practical, and Meta-Ethical (Schweiker 1995). All five are needed in any ethical reflection that wishes to

be comprehensive, including at the intersection with the sciences. The foundational dimension explores claims about the fundamental character of reality and, specifically, the character and meaning of human agency. The hermeneutical dimension assesses how an ethic interprets the moral situation in all its complexity. The normative dimension asks, "What is good, right, or fitting?" The practical dimension investigates reasoning about moral action, how decisions and actions occur. The meta-ethical dimension explores theoretical or second-order questions, such as those of domain, description, and the legitimacy of some exchange between disciplines.

Is Dialogue Between Religious Ethics and Science Legitimate?

With these descriptions in place, it becomes possible to broach the primary reason that the intersection of moral questions about science qua science largely has been uncharted. The received philosophy of science stretching back through Immanuel Kant, René Descartes, and many others has contended that science is, when practiced correctly, value free and purely objective. In theory they placed a protective border around the sciences as a unique domain of human enterprise, a value-neutral pursuit of objective knowledge that therefore could not and should not be subject to moral investigation. These beliefs were widely shared by both philosophers of science and by the practitioners of science and can be considered the standard account until the late twentieth century. This line of thinking, generally designated as logical empiricism, remains in play today among some theoreticians as well as many practitioners.

Among others, both in the literature and in practice, a related if less imperialistic view has emerged that the sciences and the humanities are both salutary but belong in independent domains. These domains are happily (or antagonistically) isolated from each other behind encircling ramparts of distinction that make dialogue inappropriate. The prevalent code word for this view is descriptive: non-overlapping magisteria (NOMA) (Gould 1999). In both of the two views just described, dialogue is impossible practically or illegitimate theoretically.

Many contemporary thinkers – in philosophy of science and other fields including religious ethics – now hold, on the contrary, that it is both possible and legitimate to stipulate parameters honoring both the integrity of the sciences and that of the humanities in a way that enables exchange at multiple intersections. Many point out, further, that the human enterprise of culture creation is so powerful today that it now bears the moral burden for the very shape of nature's future and the existence of subsequent generations. They point to science as the engine enabling what could be called an anthropocentric eon. It seems compelling, then, that important questions from the distinct domains should be engaged mutually by sciences and religious ethics. Such two-way attention is necessary for the sake of wise and robust contributions to the intellectual, systematic, academic pursuit of human understanding and culture creation.

This approach avoids any "war" between science and religion in a dialogical exchange that recognizes (1) the unique commitments and search for causal explanation that science represents, without (2) accepting imperialistic claims that scientific commitments and causal explanations are the only true domain of *real* human knowledge. Founded on those commitments it is salutary to explore examples of mutual exchange through the various dimensions of ethics.

Dimensions of Intersection Between Religious Ethics and Science

Practical Reasoning: What Are the Necessary Occupational Values in the Practice of a Scientist?

While the logical empiricist view of science holds that science qua science is value free, even its most adamant proponents acknowledge that occupational values such as honesty, openness, diligence and integrity are essential in the pursuit of truth. In science it is expected that every reasonable precaution will be taken to avoid experimental error and that information – even that which contradicts one's own – will be handled fairly, and so on. The practice of science is inherently a communal work and simply cannot succeed without these moral commitments. Because these values are so widely assumed, however, little attention has been given to them and to the significance of the standards they actually entail.

It is a common assumption that moral failure on these matters is rare and does not threaten the integrity of the research enterprise generally. However, between 2000 and 2010 the number of published papers grew by 40 percent while the number of articles retracted due to research misconduct – the ultimate in academic take-backs – grew by 1000 percent (Oransky 2016). More troubling, there are well documented cases of "mercenary scientists" paid to manufacture uncertainty by questioning studies, muddying the evidence, and dissecting every conclusion (Oreskes and Conway 2010).

Besides the ensuing havoc for research, failures to foster these values contribute significantly to the loss of science's credibility among the public. While most of the intellectual reflection about such occupational values has occurred within the Western tradition, reflection from non-Western traditions could help open new insights. For instance, the virtue of "right livelihood" in Buddhist thinking applies. It holds that one's occupation must serve rather than harm humankind and that each person has an obligation to every other to perform one's job well.

The Normative: Are There Values at the Core of Science?

The claim that values operate normatively in scientific method and practice remains to many a sacrilege in the sanctuary of belief regarding the neutrality and objectivity of science. In such contested territory the short length of an entry on science cannot begin to do justice. However, this much can be supported: while the received tradition held that genuine science is utterly objective (valueless) and rule-governed, it has now been widely agreed that empirical data is *always* undetermined and must be appraised in relation to theory and to other commitments. Even if a data set contradicts a long-standing accepted theory, it must be appraised, ultimately, via an alternative theory or within a new paradigm. Such decisions are not solely rule-governed. This means there *necessarily* are values operative in the assessment of data, the choice of theory, and the establishment of paradigm and exemplars.

But what does it mean that scientific assessments are, in some respects, closer in structure to value judgment than to a valueless rule-governed inference that the classic tradition in philosophy of science claimed? In what sense should "value judgment" be understood? Does it imply that emotive-based, social, philosophical, or cultural-based values *should* be inserted? A few thinkers argue that it does or that it should. The more dominant view recognizes that the values operative in science qua science are epistemic ones; that is, the values for judgment are those that improve epistemic status, the conformity between theory and world.

There is a careful distinction at work here. Epistemic values may not be solely rule-governed nor somehow neutral in themselves. Yet, and this is the critical point, they are ancillary in scientific work and therefore do not mean that scientific method or knowledge is a sheer social construction, as some thinkers have argued. It is in this sense that the epistemic character of doing science and the moral values involved present intersections at which the field of religious ethics becomes relevant. For instance, since such values are needed to close the gap between theory and underdetermined evidence, there is a constant danger that philosophical, political, social, and religious values *will* be employed, wrongly. Likewise, it is possible for moral values to slip in, other than those that support epistemic clarity, honesty, fruitfulness, etc. Identifying clearly the epistemic from the non-epistemic (inappropriate) values is essential.

In mutual exchange with the sciences, religious ethicists can provide tools to spot and respond to these dangers. Two illustrations are readily at hand. (1) The claim of some Muslims that the Quranic account of creation must govern scientific research and the claim by some Christians that creation science should be given the same consideration as standard science should be identified as the insertion of elements from a religious world-view into data interpretation and theory choice. (2) Ethicists can help to identify when the choice and presentation of data seems to be influenced by financial gain, a growing danger because of the dramatic shift from public to profit-driven sources of funding research.

The Hermeneutical Dimension: In What Sense Is All Human Knowledge Necessarily Interpretive?

As an invention of the Enlightenment, science was conceived as an objective and presupposition-less enterprise through and through. As pointed out above, many still believe this is the case. By contrast, it is axiomatic in religious ethics that *all* human understanding and *all* human enterprises are hermeneutical, that is, require interpretation. To be human is to be an interpretive creature. Science is done by human beings using human tools, including language as the interpretive mediator of all observation and data. This fact belies the exceptionalist claim that science can, even in theory, operate without presupposition or prejudgments – except in a proscribed manner. For instance, it is necessary for scientific research to postulate the existence of mathematically perfect systems and models. While necessary, such prescriptions do not allow science to claim it is an enterprise entirely free of prejudgments or an exception to moral questions.

One of the more compelling examples is that the so-called objectivist assumption of logical empiricism has been shown, in fact, to weaken the practice of science. This is a feminist critique made in relation to certain practices of science and it has been sustained over time. The critique is not the claim there are feminine "ways of knowing," but that the cognitive rigidity of pretended objectivity and the exclusion of the gendered structure of theoretical labor has slowed the improvement of knowledge. The claim is that research attentive to feminist commitments "makes new explanatory models available, reframes old questions, exposes facts that undermine the plausibility of previously dominant theories, improves data-gathering techniques, and shifts the relations of cognitive authority among fields and theories" (Balashovzy 2002). This illustration from feminist work makes clear why many argue that religious ethics needs to engage science as science asking it questions of power analysis: What economic or power interests are being served by the practices of the sciences? This analysis applies to all of its practices from research grant writing to selection of theories to presentation of data.

The recognition of the hermeneutical character of science does not imply that science is just another social construction; a point linked to the epistemic value judgments noted above in the discussion of the normative dimension. While not without interpretive prejudgments, the successes of the sciences demonstrate they do remain the most sustained means of searching for the facts of nature. Science proffers an irreplaceable horizon of causal explanation that enriches human understanding for culture creation.

The strong claim here, though contested by some thinkers, is that the sciences are more effective at what they do when the hermeneutical aspects are acknowledged, and intersection occurs with horizons from other domains. In this view, dialogue becomes valuable to science itself in showing how research practices and projects with moral and political sensitivity to gender, race, and ethnicity, etc. can produce better knowledge if the highest epistemic standards of empirical adequacy and fruitfulness are maintained.

The Fundamental Dimension: What do Religious Ethicists Need to Rethink?

As in the previous dimensions, the fundamental dimension presents opportunities for two-way exchange, but the challenges come more heavily from the side of science. While each religion needs to host its own particular dialogue with science, the claim common to most religions is that the sciences should admit the possibility of domains of understanding beyond scientific facts and science's inherent limitations. Religious ethicists would, in addition, question claims that the practice of seeking knowledge bears *zero* moral responsibility, as has sometimes been claimed by scientists.

In a mutual exchange, the sciences insist that religious ethics must take into account the best-established scientific bodies of knowledge relevant to its work. The extensive and progressive research programs in sciences such as in the cognitive sciences, primatology, or complexity science challenge long established religious claims on ethical topics such as human agency, the human self, decision-making, character, conscience, reasoning, value commitments, and more. These pillars within the fundamental dimension of ethics now require critical rethinking in light of the findings of such fields as neuroethics and others that seek accurate explanations of the measurable universe.

The Fruitfulness of Dialogue?

Is it legitimate or possible for science and religious ethics to engage in mutual exchange? Dialogue, after all, implies a mutual give and take that inevitably introduces challenges and possible modification into each other's domain. One's answer depends on careful considerations of both the character of science and of what is at stake in each of the five dimensions of ethics. The question of legitimacy will continue to be debated, yet the question of possibility is being answered by new examples that demonstrate how scientific information intersects with the work of religious ethics to create improved knowledge for the benefit of humanity (Eisen and Konchok 2017; The Enhancing Life Project, 2017).

Should absolute boundaries be maintained? Could there be beneficial intersections? Should ethics guide science to explore certain areas based on likelihood of developing technology that improves social justice rather than exacerbating disparities? Should the sciences proscribe some areas of research, such as germline genetic engineering? Such questions and a multitude of others like those discussed above cannot be answered well without mutual exchange and shared attention. Since culture creation as a

human enterprise now bears the moral burden for the very shape of nature's future and the existence of subsequent generations, these questions cry out for attention from multiple domains. At stake is the success of the human enterprise of culture creation.

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CHAPTER 134

Ecology

William French

The first hint of gray appears over the river as birds begin to call from the far shore. Water buffalos stir in an alley by the temple, but the dogs sleep on. Doors open, and devout Hindus make their way to Varanasi's riverside *ghats*, down the steps and into the Ganges' waters to bathe and pray. Far to the north the sun's rays strike the peaks of the Himalayas, then the snowfields and glaciers below. Warming begins the day's melt that feeds the headwaters of the Ganges and the Yamuna, the other great sacred river of northern India. These rivers, in turn, sustain India's northern agricultural plains.

Dawn's sweep across the planet begins a grand ecological drama each day as plants, grasses, and plankton – the primary producers of the Earth's ecosystems – harness sunlight through photosynthesis to produce the foundations of the planetary food chains. The ecological sciences remind us that the global ecosystem is a vast superpower upon whose outpouring of energy all human communities, national economies, and living species depend. In the last century, however, surging growth in human numbers and powers of production along with globally rising expectations for higher consumption have come to pose significant threats to many long-stable natural ecosystems and the species that these ecosystems sustain.

No previous generation has faced the array of critical ecological concerns that now command attention and international response: climate change, habitat destruction, aquifer overuse, deforestation and erosion, species endangerment and extinction, air and water pollution, acid precipitation, and nuclear reactor vulnerability. Most biologists now warn that the widening expansion of farms, ranches and metropolitan sprawl pushes extensive destruction of natural habitats and that this coupled with the rising impacts of global climate change is ushering in the sixth extinction spasm of Earth's long history, the first for which humanity bears responsibilit (see Kolbert 2014). The concerns the scientific community had about climate change began to be communicated to the broader public by Bill McKibben in 1989 and Al Gore in 1992 (McKibben 1989; Gore 1992). In the last twenty years extreme weather events – powerful hurricanes, droughts, extreme rains, and rising storm surges – have drawn much broader attention to the harsh fact that climate change is real and it is here now and that it threatens to get worse (Klien 2014). Twenty sixteen stands as the hottest year since accurate measurements have been taken. Twenty fifteen stands next, with 2017 and 2018 next in line. Among the 10 hottest years on record 9 have occurred since the year 2000 (NOAA, 2019).

In response across the last three decades religious communities have begun to seek resources in their traditions that might help highlight the significance of ecological concerns and help mobilize responsible

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

action. The religions of the world sustain value commitments that often stand in stark contrast to the pro-growth and consumption-centered ethos that drives dominant governmental and economic agendas around the world. For this reason growing numbers of environmentalists view the world's religious communities as potentially important partners for energizing a global effort to mitigate global climate change and to protect the Earth's ecosystems (see Wilson 2006). But for the world's religious communities to live up to their ecological potential, they must overcome parts of their heritages that undercut ecological care and concern. This chapter examines Christian and Hindu resources for developing an ecological ethic as well as elements in these traditions that hinder this effort.

Christianity

Christianity shares with Judaism and Islam a common set of core beliefs stressing the transcendence and sovereignty of God, the goodness of God's creation, and the primacy of the human over the rest of creation. All three traditions hold that God has granted humanity "dominion" over the rest of nature. Creation is understood as fundamentally good, but generally not, in itself, sacred. Humanity enjoys rights to use animals, plants, and the rest of nature, but in return humans owe nature certain duties of care.

The ethical core of all three traditions came to emphasize an intense concern for human life and value. This ethical concentration on human value and interests made sense during the many centuries before the industrial revolution and the rise of modern medicine when human life was so threatened and shortened by disease and the nonhuman natural world by contrast seemed so vast and undamageable as to be viewed as a solid "given," a stable stage upon which the brief drama of human life was played out. Earth seemed really big then and solid. It was human vulnerability that focused moral concern. But historically these religious traditions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam-- balanced their stress on human primacy with an emphasis on how humanity is a participant in the broader community of God's creation.

The rise of modern science in Europe – advanced by Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and many others, however, enshrined a new mechanistic picture of nature that sharpened a sense of humanity's separation from, and superiority to, the rest of nature (see Merchant 1980). Christian theologians in the modern period came to understand history, culture, and language as the best frames for understanding the distinctiveness of human life and experience. The ancient and medieval pictures of humanity as part of the community of God's creation took a back seat to the new stress on human historical agency and freedom. As the stress on creation waned, the traditional ethic of dominion with its notion of stewardship duties tended to give way to an ethic justifying an unrestrained domination of nature. A domination agenda seemed unproblematic given the continued belief in the sheer vastness and fundamental givenness of Earth's ecosystems, seas, and species. With public concern rising in the last half century about ecological degradation and potential climate disruption, Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians have sought to reemphasize the doctrine of creation and to reflect on God's and humanity's relatedness to the natural world. Stung by Lynn White's famous critique in 1967 of Christianity as the most anthropocentric and ecologically-unfriendly of all religions, many Christians today are trying to recover a sense of nature's holiness so as to help inspire a greater commitment of care for the Earth. Protestants gain inspiration in reexamining the stress on the ordering of creation found in the writings of such giants as John Calvin

and Jonathan Edwards, while Orthodox thinkers turn to Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and other Patristic Fathers for insight. Like the Orthodox, many Catholics are recovering a sacramental understanding of the natural world and turning to the legacy of creation-oriented thinkers like Francis of Assisi and Hildegard of Bingen for inspiration. Likewise Catholics find Thomas Aquinas's emphasis on the priority of the "common good" of the "community of the universe" as a helpful guide for reflecting on our new ecological responsibilities (see Schaefer 2011).

In the last two decades many Catholic bishops' conferences in a number of countries have promulgated pastoral letters on a range of ecological concerns even as Pope Francis in 2015 promulgated a powerful encyclical *Laudato si'* (On Care for Our Common Home) stressing both the urgency of our responsibilities to mitigate climate change and ecological degradation and our obligation to respond to the needs of the world's poor (Pope Francis 2015). Francis's encyclical is the first ever to engage ecological and climate change concerns as a central priority of Catholic ethics. Happily Francis's encyclical sought to lend moral support to the United Nations Climate Summit process that was attempting at Paris to overcame twenty years of international stalemate. The Paris Summit was successful in forging a historic agreement in which all nations have pledged to impose caps on fossil fuel consumption and timetables for compliance. But this international effort is only beginning and it will demand much effort to overcome the political power of oil and coal interests that wish to protect their profits and business agendas. Many Christians accept the need to recover the stewardship ethic stressing our responsibilities of care owed to the rest of the non-human natural world. There are two distinct schools of stewardship thinking. Some espouse a creation-centered stewardship ethic that condemns anthropocentrism for its exclusive moral concentration on the value of the human and its reductionistic assessment of the rest of nature as a field of objects or resources for human use. In the creation-centered view, animals, plants, and ecosystems must be recognized as "ends-in themselves" possessing dignity and intrinsic value independent of their usefulness to humans. Others hold that the problem lies not so much in our human-centered traditional ethical scale of value but rather in our failure to incorporate an ecological understanding about humanity's dependency on nature into our accounting of human well-being and self-interest. If sufficiently informed by ecological data, traditional anthropocentrism, can quite directly ground robust moral arguments for environmental protection (see Brown 2009).

Some thinkers worry that the stewardship tradition, even in its creation-centered variant, places too much emphasis on human superiority and agency. They affirm an ecocentric ethic that embraces a more egalitarian view of humanity and the rest of nature as members of a common Earth community. However, the stewardship approach has important strengths and can be articulated so as to stand guard against arrogance. Today humanity, for better or worse, is, in fact, the dominant force shaping the destiny of the climate system and all ecosystems and wild species around the world. The creation-centered stewardship approach rightly emphasizes the powers of human agency that differentiate us from the rest of nature. It also acknowledges the responsibility that humanity now bears for restraining human practices that promote ecological degradation and climate disruption.

A number of Christian thinkers and activists find the notions of "animal rights" and "biotic rights" drawn from current debates in environmental ethics helpful for emphasizing the intrinsic value of non-human living species and our obligations of care owed to them. Increasing numbers of Christians are considering vegetarianism out of a desire to reduce the suffering of animals caused by the factory farming system and to mitigate the often heavy ecological toll that expanding cattle herds and pig farms entail

(Linzey 1994, 3–27, 125–137). Many believe that the intrinsic value and "rights" of all living things must be recognized even as we must acknowledge gradations of value existing across the range of living species due to markedly differing levels of capacities for experience, consciousness, and agency. Many reject anthropocentric ethics as deeply flawed, but accept that in forced-choice cases the life of a human or a primate may appropriately be given moral priority over that of "lower" animals (see Nash 1991, 181–183).

Many thinkers now are trying to ecologize the traditional Christian emphases on love and justice. The ethical stress on "love of the neighbor" has long been understood to push for direct concern and care beyond the narrow confines of self-concern or concern for one's family or group to all human beings, especially those in need. Today increasing numbers of Christians believe that neighbor love requires an ecologically-broadened sense of community with a widely expanded recognition of those "neighbors" who deserve our concern and care. Our neighbors, in this view, are not just humans of this generation, but animals, whole ecosystems and future human and nonhuman generations.

Many Christians with a commitment to social justice worried that the emerging environmental movement might pull attention away from the needs of the poor and oppressed. However, most social activists have come to see that ecological damage tends to hit the poor and oppressed hardest even as environmentalists have come to articulate more clearly a concern for human communities as well as for the natural world. In the 1970s and 1980s, the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches began to call for "eco-justice" to underscore the strong link between environmental sustainability and social justice (Hessel 1992). Eco-justice expands the range of the application of justice by considering obligations to future human and nonhuman generations. Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'* (On Care for Our Common Home) similarly stresses that it is urgent that Christians mobilize to protect the natural world and mitigate climate change and protect biodiversity even as all must step up efforts to help ease the suffering of humanity's poor and oppressed. The two concerns are intertwined in what he calls "integral ecology" (Pope Francis 2015).

Christian feminists and liberation thinkers have made important contributions by stressing linkages between social injustice and ecological degradation. Many feminists argue that sexism and anthropocentrism draw mutual support from an historically entrenched set of hierarchical value rankings that justify the domination of women and of the natural world itself. Many Christian feminists call for an "ecofeminism" that affirms both the full humanity of women and the intrinsic value of all of creation (see Ruether 1983). Likewise, liberation theologians in Latin America, Africa, India, and the Philippines are now incorporating a concern for ecological well-being into their social and political analysis.

At the grassroots level an impressive number of Christian organizations around the world are now committed to promoting ecological sustainability. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment, the North American Coalition for Christianity and Ecology, the Catholic Climate Covenant and the Evangelical Environmental Network are among a host of religious organizations in North America dedicated to promoting ecological responsibility. In Australia Catholic Earthcare works for ecological protection while in the Philippines Colombian priests and nuns have been active in promoting sustainable development and resisting deforestation. In Africa, the Association of African Earthkeeping Churches is made up of 150 churches who have joined to fight forest clearing and habitat destruction. A rich array of similar ecologically-oriented Christian organizations exists throughout Europe, Latin America, and in parts of Asia.

Hinduism

Bounded by the Indian Ocean, the Rajasthan Desert regions to the west, and the majestic Himalayan mountains to the north, the land of India has witnessed the development of a remarkable civilization and set of religious traditions. Sadly Hindu communities across India today face firsthand profound ecological challenges. Delhi's air pollution is among the very worst of all global cities. Rising population and intensive agriculture are drawing aquifers down rapidly across Northern India cutting the ability to irrigate fields and to sustain families. Himalayan glaciers are melting back and that threatens the irrigation capacities downstream in the decades ahead. The habitats of tigers and elephants have been severely reduced. And climate change threatens to destabilize the monsoon rains that have played such a huge role in sustaining the villages and cities across India down through the millennium.

Western scholars once tended to depict Hinduism as essentially otherworldly in orientation. More recent scholarship – both Indian and Western – has depicted Hinduism as essentially eco-friendly due to its affirmation of the divine presence in the world and the preponderance of devotional (*bhakti*) rituals and practices involving plants, natural elements – water, earth, fire – and animals. Both depictions oversimplify. Clearly the traditional Hindu emphasis on *dharma* and the tradition's numerous devotional practices offer elements that *can* support the development of a Hindu ecological ethic. However, Hinduism's stress on *moksha,* spiritual liberation, continues to pull attention away from the embodied world and its material problems. Furthermore, although rituals may employ natural elements or honor holy trees, plants, or locales, and certain passages in sacred scriptures may refer to the sacredness of embodied reality, we should not assume that such practices and texts necessarily relate to ecological concerns or promote a sense of ecological responsibility (Narayanan 2001, 202, 188).

Clearly some values present in Hinduism are quite compatible with an ecological ethical agenda. An emphasis on *ahimsa* or non-violence, for example, has ancient roots in South Asia and has influenced the development of Hindu sensibilities. Even though vegetarianism is strictly prescribed only for Brahmins, ascetics, pilgrims, or residents of sacred cities or regions, Hinduism sustains a general respect for vegetarianism that is lacking in most cultures around the world.

Hindu belief in reincarnation grounds an understanding of the self that is different from the stress on the individual that is so prominent in contemporary Western cultures. Reincarnation understands the self as existing in a fluid medium of life across countless modes and forms of being and existence, including animals. Hindus generally consider human life to be superior to animal life, but the greater suffering of animals can inspire compassion instead of arrogance or callousness. While Hinduism embraces diverse understandings of *karma*, most share the view that actions that purposefully cause harm to others brings negative consequences for oneself when one is reborn. This religious sensitivity to the chain of cause and effect can be directly ecologized to promote an ethical concern to anticipate the chain of effects from current actions and to seek to restrain practices that threaten future environmental degradation (Dwivedi 2000, 14–16; Coward 1998, 41–45).

Other traditional Hindu ideals and values offer potential support for ecological concern. The *Upanishads,* one of the oldest layers of Hindu scripture, emphasize the existence of an ultimate reality, Brahman, which underlies and infuses all that exists. Spiritual disciplines described in these texts promote the discovery that at one's core lies a spiritual essence or soul, Atman, and that Atman and Brahman are one. "Self-realization" means becoming aware that the true "self" is co-extensive with the entire

universe of being. This monistic vision places a "potential curb on the desire to oppress, manipulate or dominate other beings" (Kinsley 1995, 63). Others note parallels between the Hindu emphasis on *dharmic* order and environmentalists' stress on the need to promote ecological sustainability. Some point in particular to Hindu scriptures that condemn the needless cutting of flowers, plants and twigs, the harming or destroying of animals, or the polluting of rivers as evidence of a traditional linkage between notions of *dharma* and care for the natural world.

Vishnu is especially associated with maintaining *dharmic* order, and the Vaishnava tradition affirms a story rich with ecological implications. Vishnu is said to have saved the world when it was dragged beneath the ocean by a demon. Vishnu assumed the form of a great boar, battled the demon, and killed it. He then dove to the bottom of the ocean, raised the Earth up in his tusks, and laid it out as it is today. Some hold that Vishnu's devotees today must act as Vishnu did to save the Earth (Mumme 1998, 154). Indeed, all across India, the Earth is revered as a mother goddess, known variously as Bhu Devi, Bhumi, Prithivi, Vasudha, Vasundhara, and Avni.

Hindus believe that India constitutes a "sacred geography," with a profusion of sacred sites that are said to manifest the presence of the divine in the embodied world. Across India reverence is given to numerous sites, including cities, forests, and mountains. Certain natural places and cities, like Benares, are said to be *tirthas,* sacred fords or "crossings," where the Divine "crosses over" into the world. Some sites are revered as *dhams*, special divine abodes rendered sacred long ago by the actions of deities or by the contemplative energy of ascetic sages. Major *dhams* lie in India's north, south, east, and west marking the entire land as sacred (Eck 2012, 1–42).

Many rivers, like the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the Narmada, are revered as goddesses, but that does not stop cities, towns, and factories from daily dumping raw sewage and industrial waste into these sacred waters. A number of religiously based organizations have taken real leadership roles to address the problems of water pollution and the lack of sewage treatment. In 1982 in Benares, for example, Veer Bhadra Mishra, a *mahant* (a religious and administrative head) of one of Benares's major temples, the Sankat Mocan Temple, joined with others to launch the Clean Ganges Campaign. This effort helped inspire Rajiv Gandhi, India's prime minister, in 1986 to develop the Ganga Action Plan to initiate sewage treatment and pollution prevention along the length of the great river.

Hinduism likewise has historically affirmed the need for forest and tree protection. The laws of Manu condemned the cutting of trees and a number of sources emphasize that one of the important duties of kings is to protect the forests. Today a number of efforts draw inspiration from this heritage of tree protection. In Rajasthan, for example, one can visit villages of the Bishnois people and see how they continue to protect wildlife and trees in keeping with the religious tenets that their founder set down five centuries ago (Dwivedi 2000, 16–17). Likewise in South India, the administration of the Venkateswara ("Lord of Venkata Hills") Temple at Tirumala-Tirupati has embarked on a sustained effort to help educate people about the ecological benefits of planting and protecting trees. This temple is the most visited and richest temple in India and its educational efforts are widely noticed.

But India's most famous forest protection effort surely is the Chipko Movement, begun in Uttarakhand, a Himalayan district. Community groups in 1973 began to fight for their traditional rights of forest usage and to resist large scale lumbering projects. Inspired by a Gandhian activist, they adopted a stance of nonviolent resistance and employed the tactic of hugging trees to protect them from lumbermen's axes and saws. Chipko means to "hug" or "embrace." Success spread their message and the movement spread

across the region. Chipko efforts eventually forced the government to enact a moratorium on large-scale lumbering even as the movement came to promote appropriate development across the region (see Guha 1991).

Sunderlal Bahuguna, one of Chipko's leaders, connects the dangers of deforestation to an ancient story. In it the goddess Ganges tells that her fall from heaven will bring a pounding flood and massive destruction. But Shiva agrees to prevent this by breaking the falling rush of water by catching it in the matted locks of his hair. Shiva's action turns destructive floods into calm life-giving currents. Bahuguna and others believe the forests of Himalaya are Shiva's locks, slowing monsoon rain and snowmelt runoff, and thereby preventing flooding and securing valleys and villages. Deforestation, Bahuguna warns, cuts Shiva's hair and insures the destructive floods about which the ancient story gave warning (James 2000, 519–520).

While Hinduism's rich array of devotional practices and its emphasis on *dharma* clearly offer resources for inspiring care for the natural world, certain Hindu beliefs and practices tend to block a widespread emphasis on ecological responsibility. Three such obstacles are readily apparent. First, the stress on *moksha* in various streams of Hindu philosophy sustains an otherworldly orientation that holds the affairs of this world, such as ecological degradation, as ultimately unimportant. Second, while the reverence for the Earth Goddess, Bhu-Devi/Prithvi, is inspiring, she is outranked in the Hindu pantheon by Sri/Lakshmi, the first wife of Vishnu and the Goddess of "wealth and good fortune." In Hinduism, as Vasudha Narayanan puts it: "[T]he Earth Goddess faces some very stiff competition" (Narayanan 2001, 198). Like Christianity, Hinduism has many popular beliefs that encourage the pursuit of wealth and acquisition, not simple living, frugality, and conservation. Third, many assume that Hinduism's affirmation that parts of nature are sacred predisposes Hindus toward an ecological ethic. But it is far from clear that a sacralized understanding of nature by itself necessarily leads to such an ethical stance. The popular emphasis on the very greatness of the Earth Goddess, Bhu-Devi, or India's various river goddesses actually often appears to undercut a sense of responsibility for pollution control or environmental protection. As ecologists insist the rivers are vulnerable, polluted, and in need of human help, many Hindus respond that the rivers are divinely powerful, able to absorb and destroy all pollution, and that it is we humans who need the help of the sacred rivers (see Nagarajan 1998, 285–286). While environmental groups along the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers try to promote concern for the physical cleanliness of the waters as an act of religious respect, many Hindus continue to see little relationship between religious and environmentalist concerns (see Alley 2000, 357–359, 379–381).

Conclusion

Powerful forces of human production and consumption have been unleashed in the last century which are having alarming impacts on all ecosystems, all human communities and climate stability. We now have entered the sixth great extinction event and now face the potential threat of catastrophic climate change.

While many Christians try to recover a sense of the sacredness of nature, Hindu practice reminds us that an affirmation of nature's sacredness does not necessarily promote a sense of ecological responsibility. Hinduism's best potential for developing a vital ecological ethics appears to lie in linking ecologists' analyses about ecosystem degradation to the tradition's nature-oriented devotional practices and its

emphasis on sustaining the *dharmic* order. Christianity's main resource for ecological ethics appears to be the expansion of the requirements of love and justice expressed in an ethics of stewardship. While the critique of anthropocentrism is well founded, it is important to acknowledge that human-centered ethical appeal, when informed by ecological data, has in fact been a main force in the passage of environmentally oriented legislation and environmental protection policies. While anthropocentric and ecocentric ethical appeals are usually viewed as antagonists, they often function as allies in environmental policy debates. When one wants to save the planet, one should welcome any allies one can find. There is a festival every year in Puri on the east coast of India in which thousands of worshipers pull through the streets a giant wooden cart bearing an icon of the God Jagannath, the "Lord of the Universe." When the British colonized India they were appalled to see devotees throw themselves under the cart attempting to die in sight of their God. This festival gave birth to the English term "juggernaut," meaning the irresistible force of an immense body in motion with vast destructive power. Today rising human population coupled with the expanding power of the global economy and rising consumer expectations constitutes a true juggernaut that threatens many of Earth's species and ecosystems. The stakes involved in our emerging ecological drama are of such magnitude that the securing of Earth's ecosystems and climatic order must be recognized as one of our generation's top religious and moral priorities. As Thomas Berry rightly notes, each age is called to its "great work" (Berry 1999). Care for the Earth and its array of species – both human and nonhuman – is surely ours.

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CHAPTER 135

Global Dynamics

Sallie B. King

Globalization

Globalization is metaphorically explained as the "shrinking of the world." As a descriptive term, globalization refers to the ongoing development of ever more extensive and profound interdependence among the countries, economies, cultures, physical localities, and peoples of the world. Though humankind has seen other times of heightened interdependence (during exploratory, imperial, and colonial eras), the current period of globalization, in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is unique in three respects: (1) it is primarily propelled not by political and military power, but by economic and technological/communication forces; (2) the extent of its reach is virtually planet-wide, as opposed to regional; and (3) it undermines the power of the nation-state – even the most powerful states must accommodate themselves to the imperatives of international trade or suffer the consequences.

One of the problems posed by globalization has to do with concern over the potential "homogenization" of global culture. With the English language, blue jeans, McDonald's, and American movies almost everywhere, globalization seems to be a threat to cultural diversity. Non-dominant cultures seem similar to endangered species, and they have a consciousness of being so. Like an endangered species, the loss of an endangered culture, while worst for itself, would be a loss for humanity. From an instrumental perspective, a culture is a resource for humankind, with potentially valuable resources of wisdom, insight, perspective, lifeways, etc. From a global perspective, it is part of our human heritage. Clearly, some elements of the many cultures will not be of future value and some are reprehensible. However, in the case of cultures whose mores do not violate emerging global norms, contemporary ethical thought cannot justify their demise. Those who admire human cultural creativity and value its flourishing can only mourn the potential widespread and sudden demise of its creations, especially since this potential demise bears no relation to a given culture's inherent worth. What might be done to retard the loss of cultural diversity is an urgent but most difficult question.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Identifying Common Values

Despite the threat to diversity posed by globalization – and conscious of that threat – many people have come to believe that it is important to make a concerted effort to identify points of unity among the peoples of the world, in particular, points of unity on values. Inasmuch as globalization refers to the increasing interdependence among the countries and peoples of the world, it is clear that people share problems and opportunities with each other to a greater degree than was previously the case. Threats of nuclear holocaust, transnational terrorism, global climate change, and the AIDS epidemic, as well as opportunities with problematic implications such as international trade, cannot be resolved by countries working independently. Nor can we recognize and agree upon what *kind* of resolutions would be good without an explicit set of shared ethical values.

Are there absolute norms that transcend the views of particular cultures and religions? How would such a view be justified in an age in which we seem ever more pushed towards relativistic views? In the past, many a particular civilization has claimed its own values to be absolute and by virtue of its power imposed them on others. On the other hand, how is it that even those who generally deplore "cultural imperialism" celebrate the end of *sati* in India (prohibited by what was clearly an imperialistic act) and of apartheid in South Africa (to which globalization helped to bring an end)? Perhaps there are some culture-transcending, if not "absolute," norms. But even if that were the case, how could such culture-transcending norms be globally embraced without threatening the diversity of particular cultures?

Important advances have been made on these issues in the past two decades. In *Common Values* Sissela Bok argues for a "minimalist" set of values based upon the observation that certain behaviors are necessary in order for any society of people to survive. Specifically, all societies, in order to survive, have had to (a) require of its members some positive duties of mutual support: duties to care for children and the sick, the duty to honor and obey parents, and a general attitude of reciprocity within the group, expressed in a negative or positive form of the Golden Rule ("do unto others as you would have others do unto you"); (b) prohibit certain actions which, if allowed, would destroy society, especially violence, deceit, and theft within the community; and (c) establish fair procedures for resolving conflicts (Bok 1995). For Bok, these together establish a minimal set of common values found in virtually all cultures, by virtue of their necessity.

Other thinkers nuance the idea of shared values by distinguishing between the core area of ethical agreement, where cross-cultural unity is strongest, and the marginal area, where disagreement is common (see Adams 1993). Thus while the general principle that lying is wrong is found in virtually all cultures and virtually all cultures insist upon its importance in such core contexts as legal disputes, in the marginal area of the "white lie" there is neither agreement among cultures nor strong insistence within a culture on conforming behavior. Similarly, affirmation of the general principle that killing within the group is wrong is near universal, but on matters such as capital punishment and euthanasia there are disputes. We should bear in mind this clarification when considering lists of cross-culturally affirmed common values.

International Human Rights

The international community has been debating questions of common values, values shared by all humankind, quite intensively since the end of World War II. In these discussions, the United Nations, first, and the Parliament of World Religions, more recently, have played key roles.

The United Nations was created in an effort to help strengthen international understanding and cooperation. One of its early acts (1948) was to proclaim the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It has become the gold standard for internationally recognized and accepted (if not always acted upon) global norms of behavior. These are expressed in a set of specific "human rights and fundamental freedoms" that are to be respected by all peoples and all nations. The UDHR does not claim that its norms are metaphysically absolute. It states that respect of its norms is necessary for humankind to live together in something approaching a peaceful way. In its preamble, the UDHR declares these rights and freedoms for pragmatic purposes: to promote the development of friendly relations between nations; to avoid the violence to which people will sooner or later turn if their basic rights and freedoms are ignored; and, significantly, because to "enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people." Here an empirical claim is made that the people of the world want these protections.

The UDHR has been challenged as a form of cultural imperialism. The idea of a "right" is undeniably a product of Western culture; such an idea does not exist in traditional Asian thought, for example. It has been recognized that representatives of Western countries played the dominant roles in drawing up the UDHR. However, these have not proven to be fatal objections. Subsequent international documents drawn up under the auspices of the United Nations have emphasized social and economic rights and the group rights of entire peoples. The meetings that produced these subsequent documents emphasized the full participation of the greatest possible diversity of peoples and countries. The documents themselves reflect not only the interests of poorer countries, but also the worldviews of cultures with less stress on individualism.

Early in the 1990s Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia ignited debate with their claim that the idea of international human rights is a Western idea that emphasizes individualism and promotes adversarial relationships. Asian societies, they held, place greater emphasis on social harmony and communitarian values. As a response to this challenge, a number of Asian political and social activists denounced the claim that so-called "Asian values" are incompatible with international human rights.

Activists like Aung San Suu Kyi and many others dismiss claims that "Asian values" are incompatible with international human rights as no more than efforts by authoritarian rulers to reject challenges from the international community to their power. Most scholars agree. It remains true that the concept of a "right" is a culturally embedded concept that is alien to many cultures. However, different cultures can and do find ways in their own language and concepts to justify embracing the protections represented by international human rights, protections that those lacking them very much want. Thus, a popular song from the streets of Burma contains the lyric: "I am not among the rice-eating robots ... Everyone but everyone should be entitled to human rights" (Suu Kyi 1991, 174).

International human rights are quite narrow in scope. They prohibit certain egregious kinds of harm and urge certain specific acts of beneficence; beyond this, international human rights make no claims upon governments, cultures, or people. Thus a country that engaged in *sati* or apartheid would in those respects be in violation of international human rights and subject to possible sanctions from other countries. Simple variations in belief or practice that are non-violent and non-oppressive have nothing to fear from international human rights instruments. The latter represent no threat to cultural diversity, other than forms of diversity associated with violence and oppression.

Global Ethic

The Parliament of World Religions, like the United Nations, is both a product and an agent of globalization. Older than the United Nations, the Parliament of World Religions first met in Chicago in 1893, a milestone globalizing event in which, for the first time, representatives of each of the world religions spoke for themselves on an equally shared platform. In 1993 a centenary celebration and second gathering of the world's religions was held, again in Chicago, and at that time the Parliament was put on a regular footing, with meetings to be held once every five years, in different places around the globe.

In preparation for the 1993 Parliament meeting, Hans Küng was asked to oversee the preparation of a draft of a Global Ethic that could be endorsed by representatives of all the world's religions. The draft was based upon input from a great diversity of religious representatives and adjusted after extensive consultation with a separate set of diverse religious representatives. This draft was approved at the 1993 Parliament as a Declaration "toward" a Global Ethic.

There is significant overlap in content between the Global Ethic and ideas about common values. In the declaration of the Global Ethic, the Parliament affirmed general beneficence, referring to the ubiquity of the Golden Rule. The Global Ethic renders this as its "fundamental demand": "Every human being must be treated humanely." There follow four "irrevocable directives": from the many religions' ethical codes' prohibitions of killing comes "commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life"; from prohibitions of stealing comes "commitment to a ... just economic order"; from prohibitions of lying comes "commitment to a life of truthfulness"; and from prohibitions of sexual immorality, "commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women" (Küng 1996, 15–25). These principles should be understood as affirmations of core values, bearing in mind the distinction between core and marginal values mentioned above.

From the beginning, the Global Ethic was conceived not as an external ethical standard to be imposed upon the various religions, but simply as the identification and articulation of the area of moral agreement that already exists among them. It is recognized that it will need to be supplemented by the ethical codes of the religions, rich in narratives, symbols, and ideals. Even so, the Global Ethic is empirical evidence indicating a core area of norms in which the many religions agree with each other. This agreement is put forward by the promoters of the Global Ethic as evidence counting against ethical relativism. Of course, the fact that many religions seem to agree on certain norms of behavior is in fact no evidence that those norms are right in an absolute sense. However, such agreement does provide welcome counter-evidence to the widely held *popular* view (which, while poor philosophy, is nonetheless very influential) that holds that since religions (and cultures) espouse different ethical views, there are no ethical norms that transcend religion and culture and therefore all ethical norms are merely relative to one's religion and culture. Moreover, it demonstrates in a concrete way to members of one religion that members of other religions hold views in common with them, thereby undercutting absolutist tendencies to think of one's religion as entirely right and in sole possession of Truth, others as entirely wrong (King 1998).

The Global Ethic has had its critics. Some have questioned whether the process of its composition was sufficiently inclusive of diversity. Fundamentalists and exclusivists, though invited, did not participate in the deliberations. Among its four directives, the "commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women" has been most controversial. Such concerns as these are by no means fatal, but simply indicate that the Global Ethic needs to be subject to further discussion, as was the

UDHR. The result of further discussion in that case was the refinement of the original tenets and greater cross-cultural legitimacy. There is no reason to expect a different outcome for the Global Ethic.

These efforts at constructing common values or global ethics by the United Nations and the Parliament of World Religions take an empirical and pluralistic approach. Their approaches begin from diversity and seek to discover points of overlap or agreement. In retrospect, this move seems inevitable. How, after all, would it be possible to take a non-empirical approach to the effort to construct a global ethic? Any such approach would necessarily entail some metaphysical assumptions which would inevitably privilege one or some worldview(s), religion(s), and culture(s) over others. Any such approach would be guilty of a pernicious and hegemonic absolutism.

The Challenge to Universal Benevolence

In addition to the precepts and prohibitions that we have been discussing, religions also hold up ethical *ideals* to which they urge their followers to aspire. These are often understood to be at a level of perfection which one may never expect fully to realize, but to which, nevertheless, one aspires to become ever more faithful, or to embody ever more fully. Such ideals in many religions prominently include the ideal of benevolence.

Benevolence is not what it used to be, though. Try to hold to universal benevolence in the context of the contemporary, globalized world, in which, thanks to modern electronic communications and media, we now know current events virtually everywhere in the world. Try to hold to universal benevolence in a world in which, according to current World Bank figures, approximately 24 percent of the world's population (46 percent in sub-Saharan Africa), or 1.2 *billion* people, live in absolute poverty – a figure rejected as too conservative by many observers (World Bank 2002). Hold to universal benevolence in a world in which one's life expectancy varies by decades depending upon the country in which one is born. Think universal benevolence with respect to the urban slums of the Ivory Coast of West Africa, where the population is growing annually by 3.6 percent, meaning that the population will rise from 13.5 million people to 39 million by 2025, much of it living in new urban slums (Kaplan [1994] 2000, 38).

What does universal benevolence tell us to do in this world? What guidance do the ethical teachings of our religions give us? If we try to think seriously about the massive problems facing humanity, an ethic of universal benevolence seems to point in a direction that cannot possibly be fulfilled. Must we resort to triage like those development planners who see some countries as so vastly impoverished, so deeply in debt, so ruined ecologically, so lacking in resources and prospects that they write off the entire country as literally hopeless? If we write them off, what becomes of our humanity? On the other hand, what else can we do but put our resources where they can be of best use? Can our religious ethics help us to think through these dilemmas?

Some religious ethics emphasize justice; others, notably the Buddhist, emphasize compassion. Do these two approaches point us in different directions in the globalizing world? Let us consider. Perhaps we think it straightforward to draw distinctions between ideals and duties; specifically, between caring (or compassion) and responsibility. Traditionally, many religions and moral traditions saw responsibility stopping at the borders of "one's own" community. We may *care* about the whole world and cherish the ideal of serving all humankind, but we only have a *duty*, it seems, to take care of those closest to us.

In this view, as one moves concentrically farther and farther from one's immediate circle one seems to move from a duty of beneficence – a responsibility to act for the good of others – to a vague ideal of benevolence, good will to all. There are strong pragmatic and socio-biological reasons for this view. But even in this version there is no clear line between duty and ideal; each seems to fade into the other as one biologically *is* and emotionally *feels* less and less close.

The reality of globalization is precisely this: our idea of who is within "our community" is changing. Today the questions "Who is my brother? Who is my neighbor?" become more and more urgent, the answers less and less clear. If I have traveled, I may care as much about people in another country where I have spent time as I do about people on the other side of my own country. Do I have greater responsibility for people at a distance if I care about them more? If globalization is making us see as artificial such things as national borders, shall we ultimately agree with the Dalai Lama, who argues that globalization is making it easier for us to realize that the lines we human beings have taken as dividing us have always been imaginary, that we always have had a duty to all humankind, and that we should embrace the "universal responsibility" to contribute to the happiness of all humankind (Dalai Lama 1999)?

To the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9) shall we respond: Can you bear not to be? Since World War II and the Nazi Holocaust, we feel a great urge – a moral duty even – to intervene for humanitarian purposes to prevent the slaughter of innocents in civil war, to stop "ethnic cleansing" and genocide. *Is* this our duty, or just an ideal, which we might or might not embrace in a given case? Perhaps we do see intervention to prevent genocide as a moral duty. Does similar thinking extend to intervention in economic crises which may likewise kill, gravely injure, and uproot vast numbers of people? What about non-crisis situations? John Cobb (2002) argues that the global economic system does daily, systematic violence to the poor, to human community, and to the natural world. If he is right and the global economic system itself is violent, does our moral duty extend to changing it?

Virtually everyone reading these words is a "global winner," one who by virtue of birth in a prosperous country faces continuing prosperity as globalization proceeds. The "global losers," those born in one of the many impoverished, indebted countries, face miserable prospects. Do we "global winners" have a *responsibility* to help the "global losers," since our "winning" has nothing to do with our inherent worth or hard work? Or is such help just an optional good act? Many wealthy countries have programs to help those of its own citizens who, by virtue of birth in a poor family or a race that has been historically oppressed, face a sharply disadvantaged start in the competitions of life; in the United States there are Head Start, welfare, Affirmative Action, federal small business loans, and much more. Many believe that justice requires this of the state. As the world becomes ever more closely interdependent and national boundaries less and less meaningful, will the "global winners" come to feel that justice requires intervention in much more significant ways than heretofore in the plight of the "global losers"? Should they? The question is where to draw the line between "us" and "them" – if, indeed, we can justify drawing it anywhere.

Some institutions, in fact, do not draw the us/them line anywhere. Certain non-government organizations, such as Oxfam and Doctors Without Borders, focus on a single issue and regard it with a globalized perspective that recognizes no real lines dividing humankind. They seem to answer the Dalai Lama's call for "universal responsibility." Motivated by and initially defined in terms of compassion, experience led them to recognize and act on the need to extend compassion into the realm of justice – Oxfam now works to change world trade rules that favor the rich; Doctors Without Borders challenges the economic, political, and military rules that prevent equal access to healthcare. Here, justice ethics – minimally, the

ethic of distributive justice – blends with the ethics of compassion. Moreover, at least in these cases, while the task of compassion alone (feeding or healing the world) is infinite, if the rules could be changed to become more just, the task might become possible, though vast. Thus, in the globalized world, skillful compassion may require justice – while sufficient will to change the rules and produce justice will surely require tremendous compassion. Justice and compassion, it seems, are both necessary parts of the picture.

When asked for his advice on what to do about global suffering, Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes that we should not turn our eyes and ears away from suffering, but stay with others' suffering, be present to it, and then some response will come to us; we will feel an imperative to act. Perhaps it is here that compassion ethics and justice ethics meet. Perhaps it is when we feel that we cannot bear to see others suffering that we have a responsibility to take action to help them – a responsibility to our own humanity as well as a responsibility to others. If that is the case, then the Dalai Lama is right: any lines we try to draw to limit our compassion, our responsibility, are artificial. If that is right and our compassion points to a universal responsibility, then our compassion seems to necessitate, minimally, striving for distributive justice. Thus compassion comes to embrace justice without losing its character as compassion, while justice finds its roots in compassion.

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CHAPTER 136

Technology

Gerald P. McKenny

What is Technology?

What challenges does technology pose to religious ethics? The very question points to our contemporary historical and cultural situation. Technology poses the challenge to religious ethics, not vice versa; religious ethics must answer for itself – prove its legitimacy or its efficacy – in the face of technology. But what is technology? And how has it come to place religious ethics in the position of the addressee of a challenge?

In its precise sense "technology" refers not to every human-made device or process, or to the history or theory of such devices and processes, but rather to a complex phenomenon created by the union of scientific knowledge with what were once called the "useful arts," the "mechanic arts," or simply "art." Historians of technology often trace this union to the nineteenth century, when the systematic deployment of scientific knowledge in the service of technical invention and innovation began (see Marx 1997; White 1967). By contrast, many philosophers of technology argue that early modern science is already implicitly technological by virtue of the way it orders nature (see Arendt 1958; Gehlen 1980; Heidegger 1977; Jonas 1974). But regardless of when it began, technology is the product of this union of science and "art."

Technology, then, belongs to the modern world with its profound effects on traditional patterns of thought and conduct, authority and community, meaning and identity. Hans Jonas summed up the problem of technology for ethics in two observations. First, whole regions of existence that for premodern moral evaluation simply formed the unalterable background of the moral life, are now susceptible to deliberate human action and thus subject to ethical evaluation. Second, traditional moral evaluation presupposed the constancy or repetition of conditions subject to ethical judgment and choice. Modern technology, by contrast, overwhelms our established moral categories with problems and situations that are wholly unprecedented (Jonas 1984). In these respects technology seems not only to confirm but also to be paradigmatic of the self-understanding of modernity as a radical break from tradition. So understood, technology poses a considerable challenge to religious ethics, for it requires an altogether new kind of ethics, one that is discontinuous with traditional, including religious, forms of ethics.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Technologies and Technology

We can distinguish between the challenge posed to religious ethics by particular technologies and the challenge posed by technology as such. In an obvious sense, technology consists of the devices and processes that arise from the union of science and art: the new software program, the new prosthetic device, the new method of inserting genes into plants, the new spy plane, the new satellite communications system, and so forth. Here, ethical reflection on technology attempts to inscribe new technologies, or technological progress in a certain field, into an existing framework of natural or religious law or a set of religious beliefs.

Two things can be said of the voluminous literature on religious investigations into particular technologies like these. First, this literature refutes the claim that technology renders traditional forms of religious ethics obsolete. It is impossible to give an account of Jewish and Christian ethics in the past century without treating their extensive engagements with technologies, especially in the domains of medicine, sexuality, and war. It is true that these technologies often required significant extensions and reformulation of existing norms in these traditions. A good example is the impact of aerial bombing and mechanical respiration on the principle of double effect in Roman Catholic natural law thinking. But as that example indicates, technological novelties, unprecedented though they were, did not prevent traditions of religious ethics from dealing with them from out of their own resources. The mere existence of new technologies does not appear to render moral traditions or even the norms that comprise them obsolete.

Second, this literature is overwhelmingly Jewish and Christian. One reason for this is the nature of ethical reflection in these two traditions. In both traditions ethical norms are formulated in a context of textual learning, and a principal (though by no means the only) means of transmission of these norms is by public instruction and proclamation by recognized authorities. The casuistic and prophetic genres of ethics that have emerged in such contexts fit well into (and help to form) the discursive spaces in which technologies are typically debated and evaluated. Scholars of other religious traditions are now attempting to invent similar forms of argument on particular technologies (see Keown 1995; Nakasone 2000). However, it is not yet clear whether the insights of these traditions are best expressed in these dominant Western genres or whether instead such attempts deprive us of the challenge of a different way of addressing these technologies.

One could object that traditions of religious ethics accomplish the inscription of new technologies into their traditions only by ignoring technology as such or by treating the latter in a comparatively trivial sense. The case of Jewish and Christian analyses of human gene therapy is instructive (see McKenny 2000, 2002). These analyses show how gene therapy is analogous to conventional medical interventions and thus justifiable in principle, subject to the same conditions that govern other biomedical interventions. These conditions include informed consent, an acceptable risk–benefit ratio, justice in access to and allocation of treatment and research and in prioritizing gene therapy relative to other biomedical interventions, and so forth. Many Christian analyses rule out or express reservations over gene therapy research that involves non-therapeutic risks to embryos, while official Roman Catholic analyses also reject methods of gene therapy that would involve illicit forms of reproduction. Finally, there is often an effort to identify a limit to gene therapy – a characteristic or set of characteristics that should be off limits to genetic intervention.

It is striking how little reflection on technology as such occurs in these analyses. There is some reflection on technology as a form of human participation in the divine work of creation or as an anticipation of redemption in Christian analyses, or as a way of participating in the task of *tikkun olam*, healing or

restoring a broken world, in Jewish analyses. Less positively, in some (mostly Protestant) analyses technology is said to objectify human beings or reduce them to their constituent parts and to involve a potentially problematic control over nature – a central theme in treatments of biotechnology from a Buddhist perspective (see Barnhart 2000; Loy 2000). However, the nature of technology is left unexamined or is only superficially examined in these analyses. As a result, it is unclear whether and how technology can play the role, be it positive or negative, assigned to it. While these analyses prove that religious traditions can meet challenges posed by particular technologies, they do not prove that these traditions can meet the challenge posed by technology as such.

When we move beyond the devices and processes, the particular technologies, to consider technology as such we are faced anew with the claim that technology requires a new kind of ethics, one that is discontinuous with the ethics of religious and other traditions. But what does it mean to consider technology as such? Let us begin with Martin Heidegger's understanding of technology as the culmination of Western metaphysics, with its emphases on efficient causality and on the calculability of natural forces (see Heidegger 1977). Here "technology as such" refers to the disclosure of nature as "standing reserve" in which natural energies are unlocked, stored up, and distributed, and to the human subject as orderer of the standing reserve who stands in peril of being taken (and taking himself) as standing reserve, unreceptive to other ways in which nature might disclose itself. Two facets of this interpretation are especially significant: the notion of nature as standing reserve, and the recognition that technology is recursive – that it folds back on the subject such that the orderer of the standing reserve is also ordered as standing reserve. However, Heidegger's formulations belong to the machine age of technology, in which, as Arendt observes, nature is still used as it is given, however radically technology transforms it. This is the case with Heidegger's paradigmatic technology, the hydroelectric plant, and with his claim that technology discloses human beings as human resources. By contrast the kind of technology that occupied acute observers in the second half of the twentieth century (Arendt 1958; Gehlen 1980; Jonas 1984) does not work on nature as given but, as Arendt again observes, radically remakes nature (Arendt 1958, 147–151). The technological remaking of the external world in turn involves a much more radical recursivity. In Jonas' terms, "*Homo faber* is turning upon himself and gets ready to make over the maker of all the rest" (Jonas 1984, 18).

Theses About Technology

It is technology as the radical remaking of nature (including the human) that has posed the challenge to religious ethics since the mid-twentieth century. Ethical evaluation of technology since then has typically rested on three theses about technology, all of which are relevant to the question of whether we are in need of a radically different kind of ethics. These three theses, however, are all questionable in light of recent developments in biotechnology and information technology. To question these theses is to suggest that the need for a new ethics is exaggerated.

The Uniqueness Thesis

Modern technology is often thought to involve a kind of rationality (e.g. instrumental rationality) that is distinct from other kinds of rationality, or a kind of action (e.g. making) that is distinct from other kinds of action (e.g. doing). One result is that ethical rationality and action are often thought to be

entirely distinct from technological rationality and action. For example, Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas sharply distinguish ethical or communicative rationality from instrumental rationality (Apel 1979, 1984; Habermas 1970, 1984). Following Max Weber, they describe a modern context in which value-free instrumental (i.e. technological and strategic) rationality is complemented by pre-rational convention (i.e. the contract) or decision. They worry that if rationality is value-free and value is pre-rational, there can be no rational validation of disputed ethical norms. Their respective solutions involve formulating a non-instrumental ethical rationality based on the conditions for the possibility of the discursive validation of disputed norms. What concerns us here is the assumption that technological rationality, which selects means to defined goals, is thoroughly distinct from ethical or communicative rationality. Similarly, Arendt and Jonas, focusing on action rather than rationality, sharply distinguish ethics and technology by appropriating Aristotle's distinction between doing (*praxis*) and making (*poiesis*). All of these theorists write in the shadow of what they see as a progressive displacement of other kinds of rationality and action by technological rationality and action. The ethical itself is threatened by technology.

The sharp distinction between technology and ethics can now be challenged from both sides. On the one hand, some technologies are not merely more effective means to a given end, and thus purely instrumental, but also play a significant role in forming ends. For example, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) were developed and marketed for treatment of clinical depression but soon became a popular way to alter personality (Kramer 1993). The point is not simply that an unintended goal emerged, but rather that SSRIs opened up a whole new kind of self-forming practice. Biomedical technologies help determine which aspects of ourselves – our personalities, bodies, capacities, and performances – we attend to in our self-forming practices; stimulate and direct desires for self-alteration; form our desires into deliberate projects; and bring certain features of ourselves and our activities to our attention while suppressing others. Technology in such instances is not merely a means to an end but also projects new ends, reshapes existing ends, orients us to both new and existing ends, and reorders priorities among ends. Similarly, networked computing is not merely a more effective way for people to communicate with each other but is also a self- (and other-) forming practice in which users create anonymous and pseudonymous personae and evolve new forms of linked community. Of course, technological and ethical *rationality* remain distinct in these cases. However, these cases indicate that technological means are related to ends in ways other than the efficacy aimed at in technological rationality. Where such relations occur, ethical rationality must take account of technology as a kind of pre-rational ethical self-formation.

On the other hand, we can also understand ethics as a kind of technology, at least by analogy. Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault have drawn attention to ethical activity as a technique or set of techniques of self-formation (see Hadot 1995, 81–144; Foucault 1985, 25–32; 1997, 223– 251). The end of ethical activity (*praxis*) is not simply to act well; it is also to make something distinct from the activity itself (*poiesis*). As with technology, the self and its relations to others are a work, the product of deliberate fashioning through cognitive and disciplinary practices.

These comparisons do not suggest that technology and ethics are the same. Technology is concerned with means, however complex their relation to ends. Only ethics critically evaluates proposed ends and deliberates over what rightly pertains to an end. However, despite these differences technology sometimes operates as a kind of ethical self-formation and some kinds of ethical action are analogous to technology. This is sufficient to call into question the uniqueness claim.

The Inevitability Thesis

Technological progress is often thought to be inevitable. According to one theory, technological inevitability occurs through the force of biological need. Marx and Engels describe a process by which the activity and instruments used to satisfy the initial human need to meet the conditions of material life themselves become needs demanding satisfaction (presumably by additional activities and instruments) (Marx and Engels 1970, 48ff.). For Gehlen, technology expresses an instinctual human need to render the environment stable (1980, 16–19). According to another theory, technological inevitability is a kind of metaphysical force. Jonas, for example, describes the irreversibility, cumulativity, irresistibility, and self-perpetuating character of technological practice and decries the "automatic utopianism" which it forces on us even apart from our desires (1984, 7, 21, 127ff., 140ff., 203). Where these inevitabilist terms prevail, ethical discourse on technology oscillates between a wistful near-resignation in the face of a totalizing force and a determination to gain control over the latter (resignation and control being perhaps the two principal ethical modalities of the West). Criticism of the notion of the inevitability of technology is now prevalent among historians of technology (see Winner 1997). However, it was Heidegger who, in rejection of the inevitability thesis, pointed out what may be its most significant problem, namely that the desire or effort to gain control over technology, the will to mastery over it, is itself technological (1977, 5, 32).

Together, the uniqueness and inevitability theses amount to a kind of autonomy theory which represents technology as a force that ethics must address from outside. The task of ethical reflection is to articulate a distinct form of rationality and action and to deploy the latter in an effort to limit or control technology, which by its nature expands into all domains of life, crowding out other forms of rationality and action. If this autonomy theory is true, technology does not merely pose new problems for ethics, it threatens the domain of ethical discourse and practice itself. To question the autonomy theory is in part to suggest the possibility of an ethical discourse that treats technology, in at least some of its forms, as integrally involved, for good or for ill, in the identification and pursuit of real or apparent human goods. This possibility is explored in the concluding section of this entry.

The Replacement Thesis

Twentieth-century ethical evaluation of technology often holds that, left to itself, technology steadily encroaches on and eventually replaces human activities and capacities or even human nature itself. While the uniqueness and inevitability theses can be applied equally to the machine age, the replacement thesis captures what is most distinctive of the post-machine era of technology. In its simplest form the thesis was stated by Hermann Schmidt, for whom technology progresses from the tool, in which physical and intellectual energy must still be supplied by the human subject, to the machine, in which physical energy is objectified but intellectual energy continues to be supplied by the human subject, to the automaton, in which both physical and intellectual energy are objectified (Schmidt 1953; quoted in Gehlen 1980, 19ff.).

Schmidt's formulation is an oversimplification but this narrative of progressive replacement of the natural by the artificial which then, in the form of the automaton, becomes a quasi-nature of its own characterizes reflection on post-machine era technology. For Gehlen (1980), technology is the progressive replacement of the organic by the artificial, beginning with the tool as a substitute for the organ and culminating in cybernetics, in which the basic principle of human action is transferred into the

automaton. Arendt traces a progression from a tool-machine stage in which natural materials and forces are channeled into the artifice to a machine-automaton stage in which humans create nature-like processes, as in automated production. Arendt also shows how the understanding of nature in terms of cosmic rather than terrestrial processes in seventeenth-century physics culminated in the technological transformation of terrestrial reality by cosmic forces in twentieth-century physics. Technology, she argues, progressively alienates human beings from the earth (i.e. from the terrestrial processes that bind humans to other organisms), an alienation that culminates in biotechnology, which makes human life itself artificial (Arendt 1958, 2, 4ff., 147–151, 268ff.). Jonas, too, describes technology as the progressive replacement of the natural by the artificial and the artificial as itself a kind of nature with its own necessity – an automaton. Two decades later, he finds us on the threshold of the future foreseen by Arendt, in which the effort to remake external nature is already extending to the human. Not surprisingly, behavior control and genetic engineering, both of which portend the automaton, are two of the technologies Jonas singles out for attention (1984, 10, 17–21).

It is not only philosophers of technology but also its more reflective practitioners who hold the replacement thesis. Marvin Minsky, a central figure in artificial intelligence (AI), articulating what appears to be a widely shared desideratum in the AI community (or at least in the MIT Media Lab), promises a future of "virtual" minds capable of thinking and feeling as humans do, followed by a transformation of our "real" human minds into artifices that operate in the same way and possess the same (superior) capabilities as the "virtual" minds (Minsky 1997, 1125–1126). Minsky's utopia is well in the future, but implantable computer chips that replace or create memory, sensory, or reasoning functions are already on the horizon; some prosthetic versions already exist (Maguire and McGee 1999). Similarly, molecular biologists envision a future of artificial chromosomes, though it is unclear whether these will replace or only supplement natural chromosomes, while embryologists anticipate a future of artificial wombs.

If technology is replacing human characteristics then despite the urgency it imposes – at stake is nothing less than the future of human nature and activity – it makes the ethical task remarkably clear. The task is (1) to determine which characteristics cannot be replaced without destroying human nature itself; and (2) to establish why human nature, so understood, should not be destroyed. It is, in short, to come up with a normative conception of the human.

Three things may be said of attempts at this task. First, such attempts are common in treatments of biotechnology in Jewish and Christian ethics, especially efforts to specify human characteristics that should never be subject to genetic engineering. Second, even some secular writers concede that religiously grounded normative conceptions of the human offer a direct path to ruling out biotechnological developments that risk replacing the human. Yet these secular writers also assert the irrelevance of religious conceptions to public debates. However, their arguments for the irrelevance of these attempts are open to criticism. For example, Jonas insists that the category of the sacred has been thoroughly effaced by modern science and technology (1984, 23). This claim is questionable in itself, but Jonas concedes that his own biologically informed philosophical conception of the human is also ruled out of court under the rules of modern thought. If he is willing to challenge these rules on behalf of his philosophical conception, why is he so quick to urge these same rules against religious conceptions? Francis Fukuyama argues that religious conceptions are persuasive only to those who accept their premises. Yet his conception of the human relies on a biological–philosophical theory of emergent properties which, of course, will be persuasive only to those who accept its controversial premises

(Fukuyama 2002, 88–91, 160–171). It is not clear, then, that religious conceptions of the human are at any disadvantage relative to secular conceptions.

Third, nearly all normative conceptions of the human identify the normatively human with characteristics (e.g. rationality, purposive action, emotional capacities) that will be threatened with replacement only if technology takes extreme forms. In their focus on the limit (i.e. on what cannot be lost without losing our humanity), these conceptions leave everything this side of the limit to preference satisfaction. The problem is that if technology moves in directions that do not involve the replacement of human characteristics but rather complex interactions between nature and artifice, then the replacement thesis is false, and these conceptions of the normatively human will fail to guide us in the use of technology this side of the limit.

How sound, then, is the replacement thesis? First, the effectiveness of many technological interventions depends on cooperation with human activity. Since most human traits are not solely determined by genetic factors this will certainly be the case for the vast majority of genetic interventions, especially in the case of complex traits. A genetic intervention capable of enhancing cognitive capacities such as memory or intelligence will almost certainly not replace human activity. One will still have to study a foreign language despite the comparative ease in memorizing vocabulary and declensions, and one will still have to read the differential equations textbook. It is therefore inaccurate to speak of such interventions as replacing human activity. Second, many technological interventions do not replace or eliminate traits but suppress or enhance them for a certain temporal duration and/or allow for a certain degree of control over their expression. This is the case, for example, with most pharmacological interventions. A hypothetical drug operating directly on biochemical processes to suppress a feeling of fear clearly bypasses the kinds of human activity by which a Stoic adept engages in cognitive therapy to convince himself that fear is irrational, or by which a Thai Buddhist forest monk cultivates through meditation a habit of suppressing fear in the face of animal predators and malevolent spirits. But the fear has not gone away; given the proper stimulus it will reappear once the drug has worn off. Even if one keeps taking the drug the capacity for fear is still present – perhaps even more so than in the cases of the Stoic or the forest monk, who may no longer have to take direct action to suppress it. Once again, these technological interventions do not replace or destroy a human characteristic.

Third, consider a likely forthcoming technology such as implantable brain chips, which may impart cognitive and perceptual information and capacities more or less wholesale and more or less permanently. Here the replacement thesis seems clearly to apply. Or does it? There is no way of knowing yet how such technologies, if developed and implemented, would be used. But it is not obvious that they would be used in a way that would constitute a clear case of replacement. It is possible that they will complement and supplement rather than replace existing cognitive and perceptual capacities and functions. Nor is this merely a theoretical possibility. In her study of users of networked computing technologies, Sherry Turkle (1995) found that "virtual" online identities did not replace "real" identities. Rather, complex interactions occurred in which, for example, virtual identities were used to work through conflicts in real identities.

Should contemporary technology develop along the lines suggested in these examples rather than along the lines of the replacement thesis, it would mark a significant break with the kind of technology described by many philosophers. While still exhibiting the fundamental characteristics of post-machine technology (remaking and reflexivity), technology would result not in the replacement of nature with the artifice, but in a complex hybridization of nature and artifice, of the organic and the digital. The paradigmatic

technology would be not the automaton but the cyborg. Cyborg technologies would challenge religious ethics not at the limits, where something characteristically human must be preserved against the steady replacement of the natural with the artificial, but at every point, where not the human as such but the nature and meaning of human activities, performances, and practices is at stake.

The Ethical Task

What challenges does technology pose for religious ethics? Contrary to the most significant theorists of this post-machine era, technology does not confront religious ethics as an autonomous "other" against which religious ethics must deploy radically alternative forms of rationality and action while building fire walls around certain human characteristics. Nor is there any reason to conclude that post-machine era technology demands a radically new kind of ethics. The challenge is of a different order. Like religious traditions themselves, the technology of the post-machine era is deeply involved in the remaking of human beings. This means that technology now confronts religious ethics as a potential rival or partner in ethical self-formation, as that which may distort or may assist the cognitive and disciplinary practices by which religious traditions form us. Rather than protecting against the onslaught of a force that threatens to engulf the ethical and the human as such, the challenge for religious ethics may increasingly be to determine what place, if any, technological alteration of human capacities, performances, and character might have in the ethical self-formation practiced in a religious tradition. This would involve two kinds of religious ethical inquiry: critical inquiry to determine how technological means orient us to ends and shape the meanings of activities, and deliberative inquiry to determine whether and how these technological means promote or detract from the orientations and meanings that are normative in a religious tradition. Should these critical and deliberative inquiries flourish in religious ethics, the challenge technology poses to religious ethics will be met by a challenge posed by religious ethics to technology.

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CHAPTER 137

Animals

Charles Camosy

A Profound Shift in the Conventional Wisdom

Virtually anyone who has studied the issue in any depth knows that some religions have profound concern for non-human animals. Buddhism and Hinduism, in particular, have been singled out in this regard – not least because of how prominent a role non-human animals play in soul migration and reincarnation. But the conventional wisdom has been that the traditions which have dominated the explicitly religious practices of the West – Christianity and Judaism – have been particularly bad when it comes to ethical concern for non-human animals.

Deeply influenced by the widely-read views of thinkers like Lynn White, Jr. ("The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis") and Peter Singer (*Animal Liberation* 1975), the conventional wisdom has generally accepted that the particular focus these religious traditions have on human animals being uniquely made in the image and likeness of God – along with the Divine command in Genesis 1 to dominate and subdue the non-human parts of creation – has led these them to exclude non-human animals from their sphere of ethical concern. White argued that with the dominance of these traditions the West lost something important about the spiritual value of nature that was present in the pagan traditions that were replaced, and this was reflected in the ways later technologies have been harmfully and dramatically used against non-human creation. Singer argued that these traditions espoused a deeply problematic speciesist view that only the lives of *Homo sapiens* mattered morally, and wrote with particular contempt for Thomas Aquinas and the contemporary pro-life movement in this regard.

Those who share the critiques of White and Singer who stand outside these religious traditions have generally had their views confirmed by the overwhelming majority of believers within the traditions. There is, however, a profound shift underway with regard to this conventional wisdom, and it is coming from within Judaism and Christianity. Inspired by its past president, Aaron Gross, the Society of Jewish Ethics has taken the lead in having a particular focus on animal ethics and insisting that all of their meetings are free of animal products. The Society of Christian Ethics (SCE) followed by developing an "animal ethics" interest group in 2015, both promoting and facilitating scholarship in this area. A 2014 edition of the *Journal of Moral Theology* – featuring contributions from eminent Catholic theologians like Jean Porter and Julie Hanlon-Rubio – marked the first time an issue of a respected academic journal of this kind was devoted entirely to the topic of animal ethics. And, of course, much of the discussion on non-human creation was shifted upon publication of Pope Francis's (2015) eco-encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

In part because academic research on animal ethics has so many natural bridges to religious practice and political activism, it should not be surprising that many of the very same leaders in shifting the conventional wisdom on these questions in academic arenas are also doing so via activism outside the academy.

Jewish Scholarship and Activism

As already mentioned, Professor Aaron Gross of the University of San Diego is probably the most important and influential academic voice in the field of Jewish ethics, as well as one of the tradition's most important activists. In addition to his leadership with the Society of Jewish Ethics, he is also active in the leadership of the "Animals and Religion" group with the American Academy of Religion. In his 2014 book with Columbia University Press, *The Question of the Animal and Religion: Theoretical Stakes, Practical Implications*, Gross used the horrific case of maltreatment of animals at a kosher slaughterhouse as a jumping off point for elevating questions surrounding animals and religion more generally. Gross has also done important work on Jewish theological concepts as they impact issues of animal ethics. His contribution to *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Ethics and Morality* (Gross 2012), for instance, has a detailed discussion of the complex history and laws that comprise *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* – the Jewish legal/moral imperative that prohibits causing unnecessary suffering to non-human animals. He also marshals impressive resources from Jewish scripture and tradition in arguing for the propositions that: (1) non-human animals have inherent value, (2) there is an ideal for a "good death" of a non-human animal, and (3) meat-eating is an ethical problem.

There is other important Jewish scholarship related to animal ethics. Writing in *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* (1996), for instance, Shimon Bakon titles his piece "Not to Inflict Hurt on Animals" and draws our attention to the many times the Hebrew Bible appears to have this ethical concern. Such scriptures, Bakon points out, are deeply skeptical of sport hunting, caution against separating a non-human animal mother from her young, and even imply that non-human animals have rights under Jewish law to certain kinds of treatment.

With this base of biblical and theological support being brought to the fore by scholars of religion and religious ethics, it is hardly surprising that we are seeing an explosion of Jewish activism surrounding the ethical treatment of non-human animals. Aaron Gross's career helpfully blurs the line between academics and activism, particularly with his "Farm Forward" initiative. One is greeted on their website (www.farmforward.com) with the "Until No Animals Suffer on Factory Farms" headline, leaving no doubt about Farm Forward's goals. They describe themselves as a team of strategists, campaigners, and thought leaders – and are sponsors of the Jewish Initiative for Animals, which has worked with more than sixty-five Jewish organizations to live out their biblical and theological commitments with regard to non-human animals.

Another dynamic activist organization, Jewish Veg, is even more explicitly connected to Jewish religious culture and leadership. Boasting an impressive council of seventeen Rabbis, they are explicitly working toward putting "Jewish values in action" when it comes to relationship with non-human animals. A significant Jewish animal activist organization, for instance, *Shamayim v'Aretz* Jewish Animal Advocacy, educates leaders, trains advocates, and leads campaigns for the ethical treatment of animals. They argue that non-human animals are the most abused part of God's creation and that, in protecting such animals, holiness is brought from heaven down to earth.

Much more could be said about the proliferation of Jewish activism closely related to animal ethics, but space does not permit. In closing, however, it is worth nothing that as recently as 2011, both the *Shamayim v'Aretz* Jewish Animal Advocacy group and Jewish Initiative for Animals did not exist, and Jewish Veg was a tiny organization simply trying to find its legs. If current trends continue, by the time the next edition of the encyclopedia is published this kind of activism will have become a very significant voice in public discourse about non-human animals in general, and about ethical eating practices in particular.

Christian Scholarship and Activism

Andrew Linzey, an Anglican priest and Oxford professor, was for twenty-five years a lone voice crying in the Christian wilderness when it come theology and animal ethics. His *Animal Rights: A Christian Assessment of Man's Treatment of Animals* was published in 1976, and he went on to write nine more books on related topics over the next three decades. Though he works with a fairly standard account of secular animal rights, he was pretty much the only theologian doing animal ethics work during the 1970s and 1980s. And given that the subject itself was often not taken seriously at the time, he was often marginalized by his fellow academics for doing so.

In 1992, a Roman Catholic graduate student at Duke named John Berkman wrote an essay with his mentor Stanley Hauerwas titled "The Chief End of All Flesh." The essay was deeply theological, arguing that the proper stance of Christians toward animals: (1) came out of a general command of Christ to be nonviolent, and (2) comes from the realization that animals exist, not for us, but for God's good pleasure. Later in the decade, as a young associate professor at the Catholic University of America, Berkman (1999) would publish another essay on the topic: "Prophetically Pro-Life: John Paul II's Gospel of Life and Evangelical Concern for Animals." Predictably, his department chair attempted to marginalize this work on animal ethics and in fact ordered him to stop writing on the topic. When Berkman refused to comply and published a 2004 essay titled "The Consumption of Animals in the Catholic Tradition," he was denied tenure by the senior theology faculty. Needless to say, the topic was still being marginalized by theologians well into the twenty-first century.

But, again, a major shift has taken place in just the last few years. Major academic theological societies have now taken formal steps to promote animal ethics as a serious academic discipline. Dissertation topics on issues related to animal ethics are welcomed and even encouraged in most departments of theology. This shift with regard to animal ethics is perhaps best exemplified in the meteoric rise of the career of British theologian David Clough. Trained at Yale, he traded his early work on war and pacifism for thinking theologically and ethically about non-human animals, and almost all of his publication in recent years – including a major two volume work titled *On Animals* (2012, forthcoming) – have focused on these topics. During this time, he has become chair of the theology department at the University of Chester, former president of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics, and his *On Animals: Systematic Theology* was featured in a panel discussion at the annual convention of the American Academy of Religion. Although his recent work on animal ethics hurt his career he is now one of the most influential Christian ethicists in the world.

Clough's research and arguments are responsive to the concerns of White and Singer. Clough emphasizes that human animals have never needed an ideological basis as motivation for cruelly exploiting non-human animals. Indeed, well before any kind of formal religious practice entered the

anthropological scene, humans were well on their way to such exploitation simply because they found they could survive and thrive via such practices. Christianity's rise to power in the West brought with it no significant change for the worse. Indeed, Christianity – though obviously not perfect – was a moderating influence on animal cruelty. From condemnation of the barbarity of animal fighting and killing in the Roman games of antiquity, to centuries of resistance to hunting non-human animals for sport, the general trajectory of Christian theology was toward using and killing animals only when necessary, and to replace cruel practices with kind ones. Though underplayed in most circles, including Catholic circles, this fairly robust reading remains authoritative in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church 2012).

If we need to note a historical shift in how the West treated animals, a better marker is the convergence of the industrial revolution and free market capitalism. It is these movements, which come out of the secular Enlightenment, which led the West to think of non-human animals as mere products with no value other than what a market gave them. Tellingly, owners of contemporary factory farms often refuse to speak about the reality of the animals themselves, instead referring to their business goals of maximizing protein units per square foot. Clough and others who are part of the current animal ethics theological revolution argue that returning to a more traditional view of animals, and in what their moral value consists, can be an important source of resistance against the cruel practice of using animals as tools for profit.

But what of Singer's argument that a Christian notion of the sanctity of human life, particularly as espoused by the deeply influential thirteenth century theologian Thomas Aquinas, was a profound defeat for the value of non-human life? One important response notes that the recent theological research by John Berkman and other Thomists has complexified Aquinas's views on non-human animals. For example, Singer and others highlight his views, including the view that non-human animals do not suffer, noting that Thomas Aquinas's mentor was Albert the Great, the most prominent zoologist of the Middle Ages. It is likely that Albert's mentorship played a significant role in Aquinas concluding that each living creature manifests the goodness of God by living and flourishing according to its own nature. For Aquinas, the greatest good after God is not the good of human beings, but rather than good of the ordering of the whole universe – of which animals are an important part. Indeed, Aquinas believed that non-human animals had souls or spiritual realities and deeply complex emotional lives.

Charles Camosy, a Catholic professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University, has also responded to Singer's critiques, pointing out that the concept of moral value and personhood in traditional Christian theology is not speciesist in the way Singer suggests (Camosy 2012). Plenty of non-human beings (angels, demons, and even aliens) are considered persons – that is, "substances of a rational nature" – and there is nothing in theory prohibiting a non-human animal from also being considered this kind of substance. And even if one of our fellow creatures is not a substance of a rational nature, traditional Christian theology would never jump to the conclusion that such a creature is a mere thing to be used by human beings as a mere product. The traditional view, already discussed, is that animals belong not to us, but to God, who created them "good" with inherent dignity distinct from that of human beings. In his eco-encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reinforces the traditional view that non-human animals have "inherent value" and "value in themselves." The dominion God gives humans over animals is not to be characterized by domination, but rather by the kind of kindness and mercy God shows us.

These theological views, if taken seriously, obviously have direct import for how individual Christians and their communities live their lives. It is not surprising, then, that Christian theologians, like their Jewish counterparts, are leading the way when it comes to the growing edge of activism in this area. In

2015, for instance, Clough launched his CreatureKind (www.becreaturekind.org) project which uses the insights from his research in engaging Christian churches in North America and the United Kingdom – particularly when it comes to protection of farmed animals. Camosy has also used his research into similar kinds of activism, including partnering with Jewish Veg on a series of public lectures and a systematic attempt to reach out to US bishops on matters of animal ethics.

An activist group called Catholic Concern for Animals, in addition to producing a widely-read and high quality newsletter for non-specialists, has also done good work reaching out to Catholic bishops in the United Kingdom and Europe. Picking up on the fact that Christ's entering the world was described by the Gospel of John – not as becoming human – but as becoming "flesh," the Christian activist group Sarx has devoted itself to promoting the principle that all animals should be able to live with dignity, freedom, and peace. Remarkably, the faith outreach office of the HSUS has sought out and received the support of many prominent Evangelical Christians – including Karen Swallow Prior, a renowned Liberty University professor, and Russell Moore, head of ethics and policy for the Southern Baptist Convention.

Much like the Jewish activism mentioned above, if Christian activism with regard to animal ethics continues on its current path it will be a major force in the not-too-distant future.

Religious Ethics and Intersectionality

Particularly in the context of Christian ethics, women scholars like Celia Deane-Drummond, Jean Porter, and Grace Kao are leading the growing edge of animal ethics into its bright future. The work of Kao, in particular, is contributing to an essential part of that future's methodology: intersectionality. Scholars of theological and religious ethics, because they already do their work at the intersection of multiple disciplines and discourses, are uniquely positioned to see how various identities (gender, race, class, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) are connected with each other in systems which oppress vulnerable populations.

Kao's research on (eco)feminism, animals, and religion, for instance, works within intellectual soil tilled by Carol J. Adams in her *Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990). Feminist thinkers like Kao and Adams have done the important work of highlighting how gender identity and animal identity intersect in ways which produce profound injustice for both women and non-human animals. They call out the deep cultural connections between masculinity, meat-eating, and misogyny – and how this logic is connected to the use of violence and militarism in Western culture more generally.

Professor Matthew Halteman's "Animals and the Kingdom of God" lecture series at Calvin College is widely seen in religious animal protection communities as a bellwether for the growing edge of the discourse. Tellingly, his series featured two 2017 lectures on "Intersectional Veganisms." The first, titled "Liberation for Every Body," was by Nekeisha Alayna Alexis (Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) and argued that liberating human beings from systematic oppression and moving toward a peaceable kingdom of necessity involves liberating "other animal selves" from systematic oppression. The second, titled "Womanist Principles of Wholeness and Interlocking Oppressions in Animal Theology," was by Candace Laughinghouse (Chicago Theological Seminary) and argued that privileging womanist principles involves an empowering of all the vulnerable who are systematically oppressed, human and non-human.

An intersectional methodology is most often associated with the cultural "left" of the culture wars, but the political assumptions behind such wars increasingly fail to capture the political commitments of those

claimed by an ancient religious tradition. This is most certainly the case when it comes to theologians who are both pro-animal and anti-abortion. Berkman's work on animal ethics, as well as Camosy's, is intersectional in seeing the connections between violence directed at non-human animals and violence directed at prenatal children. Both are voiceless, vulnerable populations whose dignity is radically inconvenient for those who have power over them. The physical and moral reality of both populations is hidden away, often by powerful interests who work very hard to limit the capacity of activists to make a disconnected culture face the physical and moral reality of populations who cannot stand up for themselves.

Interestingly, even quite politically conservative figures in the pro-life movement are now making the case that their commitments on abortion have direct import for animal protection. Writing in the conservative journal *First Things*, Mary Eberstadt (then of the Hoover Institute) wrote a piece titled "Pro-Animal, Pro-Life" (2009) in which she argued that anti-abortion and animal protection activists are political strangers by way of historical accident rather than principled disagreement. Writing in the conservative magazine *The National Review*, Matthew Scully (a former speech-writer for George W. Bush and Sarah Palin) wrote a piece titled "Pro-Life, Pro-Animal" (2013) in which he argued that both kinds of activists would have their work strengthened by "defending the innocent and powerless wherever they are, bringing to all creatures who have none to help them the love of their Creator, and by that example showing what it means to be pro-life all the way" (para. 27).

This approach has particular purchase with pro-life feminist activists who refuse to choose between standing against the oppression of prenatal children and against the oppression of women. Increasingly, as an explicitly intersectional vision has taken told in several pro-life feminist communities, they have a particular focus how the cultural forces they are resisting are interconnected with oppression of the disabled, people of color, sexual minorities, and other vulnerable minority groups. One such community, the activist organization Rehumanize International, has been a leader in this regard – and has featured discussions at their major conferences which discuss animal ethics and how it intersects with their primary value: consistent resistance of aggressive violence.

Many important future trajectories with regard to animal ethics will almost certainly find themselves moving along these intersectional lines. Especially as the connections between how human beings treat animals and issues like climate change, worker justice, migration, race, social class, religious tolerance, and respect for indigenous populations become more clear, discourse about animal ethics will only grow in its intersectional focus.

In 2013, the *New York Times* did a feature article on the growing interest of Christian scholars and activists in animal ethics (Oppenheimer 2013). The piece focused on the academic work of Linzey, Clough, and Camosy, while also noting the more popular and activist work of Eberstadt and the faith outreach office of the HSUS. The author of the article also interviewed Peter Singer, and pressed him on his view expressed many years ago in *Animal Liberation* that Christianity and the sanctity of life ethic were the enemy. While it is true he used strong and critical language in the past, the article revealed that – after learning that Christians and other religious scholars and activists are engaging animal ethics in serious ways – Singer now thinks that his original language went too far. Indeed, at a recent co-presentation he did with Camosy at HSUS headquarters in Baltimore, Peter Singer revealed that he now considers Christianity to be an ally in the struggle for animal liberation.

This is the current trajectory of concern for animals within theological and religious ethics. The conventional wisdom of the culture wars of two generations ago no longer applies. At the time of writing this entry, animal ethics is poised to take its place as a primary concern of religious ethics right across the theo-political spectrum.

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CHAPTER 138

Justice

Michael Kessler

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice"

(Martin Luther King Jr.)

The word justice is inscribed upon government buildings as a lodestar for legal and political institutions, setting their goals as harmony between citizens and fairness in dealings. Justice is demanded by victims wanting to be made whole and punishing those who transgress from the laws. Justice is enshrined in scriptures as the attribute of deities and commands good people to fix inequities and relieve oppression suffered by others. Justice is a comprehensive concept across religious ethics, linking moral norms and personal duties to institutional functions and goals, especially our political institutions and our personal dealings in contracts, promises, and economic activity.

Justice is a word easily spoken, yet the demands of justice, as formulated by traditions of religious ethics, are difficult to conceptualize in the modern world. The modern embrace of the dissolution of theo-ontological unity and the resultant pluralism of worldviews means there is no substantive agreement about the origins and meaning of justice. While there are common conceptions of justice still resonant, the social and political will to achieve some of the demands of justice is frustratingly absent within our technological, global, capitalist orders. Self-interest and strategic calculation displace political goal setting that might be based on substantive principles of justice. In a world plagued by the legacies of slavery and colonialism, economic and political inequality, war, ethno-racial-nationalism, oppression, and unchecked evil, it is hard to envision justice as anything more than an unrequited dream. Can we sustain the optimism of Dr. Martin Luther King that justice will arise?

Theological ethicists can help catalyze the achievement of justice through clarifying its nature and demands in an increasingly unjust world. A review of some key ideas of justice provides the foundation for developing a theological account of justice as a form by which mediating institutions create conditions of fair, equal treatment and ensure each person can achieve dignified conditions of life. Across the taxonomy of types of justice (distributive, restorative, retributive, transnational, social) this account of justice generates critical, prophetic awareness of how social and political institutions build up or tear down human dignity and implores resistance to those which fail to achieve the good ends of institutions.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Some Key Elements of Justice

In the West, justice connects human actions to their impact on other persons. In classical Latin, *iūstitia* meant fairness and equity, and giving to one what is their due, while those who administered law and order were called justices, the embodiment of equity and order. Adapted into French and Anglo-Norman language, justice meant the power to administer the law and to exercise authority. In Justinian's *Institutes*, the codification of Roman Law defined justice as "the constant and perpetual will to render to each one his due" (Justinian, Digest. i, 1; De Just. et Jure 10). Throughout the Western tradition, justice was the virtue that described how to strike harmony among many persons, ensuring the state's institutions and one's fellows treated citizens equally and fairly.

Justice applies to many different aspects of life and different types of justice have been categorized to highlight nuances of the term in various social and political sectors. *Commutative* justice denotes the aspect of justice that demands basic fairness in individual and group agreements and exchanges, such as economic transactions. *Distributive* justice denotes that access to and distribution of resources like income, power, and capacities are fairly available to each member of society. *Political* justice imposes the *form* by which power is shaped and expressed between persons so that their dignity is not harmed and requires this justice to be a defining characteristic of mediating institutions like legislatures and courts. Sometimes justice is divided between *procedural* and *substantive,* where the former indicates that a society must achieve justice through fair and equal treatment under institutional processes (while material inequalities of rank, wealth, etc. may still be tolerable) while the latter indicates that justice may demand recalibration of those material inequalities. *Social* justice typically denotes the demands for persons and institutions to organize social, political, and economic institutions in a way that is fair and protective of the dignity of each person, including resistance to oppressive social and political situations. *Criminal* or *Retributive* justice refers to the political institutions capacity and authority to coordinate interpersonal and intergroup relations according to rules and enforce corrective punishment against offenders. *Restorative* justice refers to post-conflict processes (such as truth and reconciliation commissions) to heal from the legacy of conflict or systemic injustices and may be combined with criminal prosecutions.

Certain other elements highlight the enduring complexity of the idea of justice. A central theme in the ancient world was that justice is a cosmic principle of order and a central attribute of the deity. For instance, in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, justice represents a cosmic economy of order, the balance of the world that emerged through the interplay of violence and peace. In the Hebraic tradition, Yahweh bears justice as a core feature of the divine essence: "Ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:3–4).

While cosmic ideas of justice fill poems and scriptures with ethereal images, just adjudication of disputes required human-enacted procedures. A compelling example is depicted on the shield Hephaistos creates for Achilles in the *Iliad*, where Homer depicts the people assembling in the market to dispute over the blood price for a man who had been killed. "One man promised full restitution in a public statement, but the other refused and would accept nothing. Both then made for an arbitrator, to have a decision; and people were speaking up on either side, to help both men. But the heralds kept the people in hand" and the judges rendered an opinion to settle the dispute (*Iliad* 18, 490–509). Similarly, in Hebraic texts, rulers and local elder councils judged particular cases, usually depicted as occurring at the city

gates. While God is the ultimate guarantor of human justice (Isaiah 3:13–4), the actual decisions are guided by the wise elders in a communal setting, rendering a decision that the disputants could abide as a just outcome.

The classic Greek account of moral and political justice was given by Aristotle, where justice is the ideal character of the political society and the human moral self (albeit the aristocratic class). Book 5 of his *Nicomachean Ethics* gives a moral account of justice as a judgment through which reason determines the mean between excess and deficient tendencies of an action. Political justice concerns how people develop the moral constitution to regulate their mutual relationship in a *polis* through law so they can share a common life. A crucial element of interpersonal relations for Aristotle is distributive justice, defined as the equitable distribution of goods, wealth, services, and honor among members of a polis; conversely, injustice is when two equal agents receive unequal effects.

Rulers were often valorized when they capably administer justice and ruling justly was a requirement given by the divine. The Hebraic scriptures enjoin both personal and communal observance of justice, figured as fair-dealing and truth-telling: "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality. ...Justice. ...you shall follow, that you may live" (Deuteronomy 16:18–20). Social duties are closely linked to personal piety; one could not be a faithful servant of God while being unjust toward neighbors or strangers. The Hebraic prophets implore the followers of God to become righteous and act with justice: "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). Those who oppress while enriching themselves are condemned: "Therefore because you trample upon the poor and take from him exactions of wheat, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them. . .For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins, you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate. . .Seek good, and not evil, that you may live" (Amos 5:11–15).

Yet pursuing justice can sometimes collide with political and legal requirements. Sophocles explored this conflict between cosmic and conventional justice in *Antigone*, where the title character had buried her dishonored brother, Polynices, against the explicit order of the ruler Creon. Antigone knew that Creon's law was supreme for the city yet held that transgressions against Creon's authority are ultimately pale in comparison to the higher duty by which she is bound to give both of her brothers a proper burial: "It was not Zeus that made the proclamation; nor did Justice. . .I did not believe your proclamation had such power to enable one who will someday die to override God's ordinances, unwritten and secure. *They* are not of today and yesterday; they live forever" (Antigone 494–501:178). Justice is first a religious duty; acting in accordance with ultimate justice might make one a political criminal.

Plato developed a fully transcendent idea of justice. He dismissed inferior conceptions of justice like Thrasymachus' view that justice is that the strong, by nature, have the right to rule. Socrates argues that justice is a virtue that brings harmony and order to its object and removes the injustice of "faction and difference" (348–353). True justice refers to an objective, formal reality of divine order to be applied in both the city and the soul. In the soul, reason apprehends true ideas, which control the appetites and the spirited parts of the self. The virtue of justice, when operative along with the other virtues (wisdom, courage, temperance), balances each element, promoting moderation, harmony and accord creating a unified and harmonious self. The *polis* should be similarly harmonized so as to lead people to be law-abiding and orderly.

Cicero envisioned that the conventional body of laws (*lex*) that emanate from the legislator ought to bear this ideal form of justice or right. Humans band together for a specific purpose in the *civitas*, agreeing to associate in a partnership for the common good (Pub I:39:65). The law is not simply a product of human convention or thought; the law is "something eternal which rules the whole universe by its uniform command and prohibition" (Laws II:8). Justice is achieved when the law is properly formed: "the origin of Justice is to be found in Law, for Law is a natural force; it is the mind and reason of the intelligent man, the standard by which Justice and Injustice are measured."

The relation of the city's justice with the transcendent was problematized in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus taught unconditional love for God and neighbor. The Gospel leads to a robust Christian account of a personal imperative to pursue social justice. Yet, in the midst of massive oppression, Jesus rejected the role of a political revolutionary. Cosmic Justice comes through redemption in relation to the Divine creator, establishing the "Kingdom of God," not first through institutional transformation. There is no direct theory of institutional justice that emerges from the Gospel accounts; much of their focus points to separation between divine and political: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:15–22).

The Pauline interpretation of justice is derived from this temporal-divine split. The Christ is seen as the long-expected deliverer of Israel, who brings new life through cosmic salvation. God in Christ *justifies* the person and is the only way to salvation (Galatians 2:16). Paul urged simple obedience to the Roman authority as the basis of an earthly justice: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. . .But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer" (Romans 13:1–7). Obedience to the ruling authority institutes temporal security, even while it is only partial, not ultimate, justice.

While earthly justice may secure to each what is their due, Christians were often called to turn away from a rightful claim to property in confronting the need of their neighbor. St. Basil wrote extensively about the charitable moral duty to demonstrate love by effectively distributing one's wealth to those in need. "Money, when it is cast off to good purpose, is not lost to those who have flung it away and cast it from them. As if deposited in other, safer ships the stomachs of the poor it is preserved and, reaching the harbor in advance, is kept for those who have rid themselves of it, not to their peril but unto glory. . .These needy ones will joyfully bear it away and will lay up our wealth in the bosom of the Lord as in a safe treasury. . .Let us permit our wealth, which is meant for this purpose, to be poured out upon the needy" (Basil, 497). Basil, along with other early theologians like John Chrysostom, Clement, and Augustine, did not call for redistribution by law, but rather through charitable work. Justice could not be achieved if one held on tightly to the lawful property the laws might allow one to store up.

Augustine developed Paul's division of earthly and heavenly justice, shaped by his existentially pessimistic anthropology. The "evil" that humans succumb to is a volitional disorder in which the proper object of the will – love (*caritas*) for the Divine – is pushed aside by the love (*cupiditas*) of the self and immediate, consuming pleasures of the self and the material world. Natural human reason is incapable of restoring proper order over the desires. Nothing the human accomplishes can bring salvation; God instead is the operator of salvation, graciously inclining the will in spite of ourselves. The purpose of formal laws and government structure is tragic; without security and order, life is subject to constant threat. Augustine thereby situated Christians as simultaneously citizens of two cities – that of God and that of Man (Augustine XIV:1:261). The city of God is the community of those who have been saved and

their mode of desire toward objects and other beings is *caritas*, which preserves in love that which is desired. The city of man is the community formed by those whose love is *cupiditas*, a mode of consuming that which one craves. The Christian pilgrim is in between these worlds and must negotiate these multiple obligations, being simultaneously sinner and saint. Temporal justice may involve cessation of violence, but it was not true justice. True justice can only to be found in the City of God, the order of the "unchangeable Good" (Augustine XII:1:7). The pilgrim uses earthly things, including the political orders, simply as supports for their sojourn toward God.

Thomas Aquinas molded a view of justice that combined many strands together. Justice resulted from the promulgation of a law that reflected the objective moral order of the created universe. Human law (one of four types of law) is a collection of particular legislations to institute justice in earthly affairs (ST I–II:95:1013ff.). The human lawgiver, who has the common care and good of the community as their goal, formulates rules of social existence that apply general rules to specific political and social realities, in order to achieve a just state of affairs. Human law is circumscribed by the Divine creation (eternal law) and order of the world (natural law) and, to be valid, human positive law must be consistent with the eternal and natural law (ST I–II:95:2:1014–5). "The force of a law depends on the extent of its justice. Now in human affairs a thing is said to be just, from being right, according to the rule of reason. . .every human law has just so much of the nature of law, as it is derived from the law of nature" (ST I–II 95:2:1014–5). Positive law that deflects away from the dictates of natural law ceases to be law (ST I–II:95:2).

Modern Justice: Liberal Democracy

In the modern West, the predominant understanding of justice is enscribed within the liberal social contract model of political society. On this account, humans are self-determining and self-preserving agents bearing a range of natural rights who use their rational and instinctual capacities to perceive the shortcomings of life waged amidst a hostile natural environment and secure their autonomy in political society. John Locke theorized the basis of political society as a contract between these rational agents who bond together in the polity under a common, stable, and just rule by a sovereign empowered by each individual's alienation of executive, legislative, and judicial capacities over to the sovereign, who rules for the limited purpose of preserving each citizen's life, liberty, and property. This modern idea of technical rationality no longer emphasized transcendental goods that human agents discovered and modeled. For the materialist Hobbes, justice is nominalistic since it is the result of our desires and the "good" is only defined by our own preferences, without reference to a transcendental or natural law. Justice only becomes objective and concrete when the sovereign legislates an absolute and fixed normative order. For the realist Locke, on the other hand, a natural law horizon provides the universal and objective moral basis for just actions in the state of nature. Humans can defend their interests not merely as a material matter, but as a lawful matter – property acquisition and holding, interpersonal actions, and economic exchange are all regulated by the natural law disclosed by reason, based upon an understanding of other humans as free and equal, requiring duties of responsibility toward them and their interests. Political society is required because of deficiencies in legislating, judging, and executing the laws of nature, not because of their non-existence. The sovereign does not create the demands of justice – they exist by nature – but enforces these demands more effectively than individuals left to their own devices. Justice is achieved in political society through laws that prevent harm so citizens can coexist peacefully.

Kant perfected this definition of justice in his *Rechtslehre* (Doctrine of Right or Justice). For Kant, the civil condition between moral agents requires a positive system of law as an external structure of forms for agent actions and an executor with coercive power to enforce the laws. The *Rechtstaat* is the properly-formed state which, as an institution, creates the condition of right, or justice, between rational citizens. Civil law achieves justice by instituting "the sum of the conditions under which the choice of one can be united with the choice of another in accordance with a universal law of freedom" (MM 230:56). Duties of *Recht* impose rational constraints on an agent's external actions in order to secure the coexistence of the external freedom of other rational agents; in the *Rechtstaat*, the state actualizes and enforces these duties.

John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* is the standard contemporary account of justice. Rawls focuses on the basic structure of society "as a fair system of social cooperation over time," a "well-ordered society" of "citizens as free and equal persons" cooperatively living together in a society regulated by a public conception of justice (Rawls 1971, 5). For Rawls, we do not achieve this justice through agreement about a substantive metaphysical view of the good life; our fellow citizens hold intractably different metaphysical views. These diverse citizens, though, can come to some agreement on "fair terms of cooperation" and *political* conceptions of justice and each participate in the democratic polity on the basis of equal basic rights and liberties (Rawls 1971, 7–21). Political conceptions of justice focus on the fairness of the basic structure of society and how the political and social institutions work as a system of social cooperation and "the way they assign basic rights and duties and regulate the division of advantages that arises from social cooperation over time" (Rawls 1971, 10).

To accomplish this political justice, Rawls develops a mechanism for setting the rules of society in a fair way. The "original position" is a way for citizens to imagine themselves forming the social order. They must ask themselves what rules and political principles would ensure a fair structure of society? The "veil of ignorance" specifies a position for each citizen that brackets their contingent circumstances (e.g. race, economic status, gender) so they can rationally apprehend the basic fairness of social structures and rules. Without knowing particular bargaining advantages or disadvantages, what social structure would optimize one's freedom and equality and fair treatment regardless of the particularities of one's life? On this basis, Rawls argues that any reasonable account of justice entails two major principles:

1) Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all;
2) Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions:
   a) They are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity;
   b) They are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle). (Rawls 2001, 42–43).

Justice thus involves the fair distribution of resources (what Rawls called primary goods and includes opportunities, liberties, wealth among others) while, at the same time, the fairness of the political structure focuses on the procedural mode of political decision-making rather than some substantive outcomes: "The basic structure is arranged so that when everyone follows the publicly recognized rules of cooperation, and honors the claims the rules specify, the particular distribution of goods that result are acceptable as just, whatever these distributions turn out to be" (Rawls 2003, 50).

Rawls, and modern liberal accounts of justice, are subject to multiple critiques. One critique, waged by thinkers like Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, focuses on local, person-level capabilities, not aggregated resources, as benchmarks for justice. The capabilities assess the extent to which persons are able to actualize certain primary goods in their specific situations (like being able to live a normal lifespan, to have attachments, to form a conception of the good). Another mode of critique is that liberal accounts of justice suppress the religious and moral depth of one's life where transcendent goods are now seen as preferences determined solely on the basis of one's desires. Another critique of Rawlsian-style ideas of justice revolves around their statist focus – justice is something that citizens achieve only in states. Thinkers like Thomas Nagel argue that the State is a necessary structure and, without a state, all the hopes and aspirations for "justice" lose their foundation. Many cosmopolitan thinkers argue, instead, for a system of global justice in which individual and group rights are protected through mechanisms not dependent upon domestic legal institutions.

Theology of Justice: Forming Human Power toward the Good

Justice as a theological category pushes in a number of directions. The first, horizontal dimension of justice mandates a view that even while social relations and political institutions are transitory and not final, *better* modes of those relations (and the institutions that manage them like law and politics) can be created and sustained. As such, a theological account of justice needs to render intelligible the relationship between persons and must recognize that those relationships take place within many social and political institutions that mediate between persons. Christian theologians like Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Reinhold Niebuhr, working in the context of the world wars, sought to understand how the Gospel demands for a righteous life could relate to and take place under the reigning political institutions. Barth was highly suspicious of modern political institutions and the earthly justice they yielded (although even he recognized the primacy of the liberal democratic order as the best of the earthly models). Niebuhr argued that the Christian moral life was primarily directed to individual ethical formation; group and national identity could be ethically shaped but in limited fashion. He recognized the basic, enduring reality of human power, and the need to realistically confront power that destroys life. This Christian realism saw human modes of justice enacted by legal and political institutions, as necessary, but limited in their effect and always subject to coercion and irrationality.

Tillich's position is most instructive for a theological ethic of justice that seeks to *improve* the political institutions of a society. Tillich argued that the liberal democratic state is an ideal form of human political society, because it could, when well-formed, properly balance the interpersonal dynamics of free persons, through an organization of power and coercion in legal structures. For Tillich, power is inherent to the nature of human beings struggling in the finite conditions of life; politics is the struggle over the distribution of power and resources. To achieve the good, power must be formed so that it yields a good end for the expression of power. Justice is the form given to power, a form that channels and directs power to seek the good of all life and gain security for each existence. State law can provide this form to channel power to the appropriate ends. The liberal democratic state is necessitated by the very ontological structure of human existence – free rational individuals need a structured rational community to orchestrate their coexistence. Compulsion itself is not unjust, power is not unjust, but rather "compulsion which destroys the object of compulsion instead of working towards its fulfillment"

is unjust (Tillich 1954, 67). Rejecting the pacifist position, Tillich argued that power is a necessary component of achieving any just order; love is not enough. To destroy what opposes the integration of being and value, love must be united with compulsory power and provide the form by which power seeks to create, not destroy, being.

This movement of justice, while partial, does express a theologically significant value. Any power that works for the good of being, on Tillich's account, is a manifestation of the creative power of the divine, even if that manifestation is hidden from view. This sacramental, or theonomous, understanding of justice means that the finite form of the state's justice can bear the ultimate reality: "Every victory of the Kingdom of God in history is a victory over the disintegrating consequences of the ambiguity of power. . . and conquers, even if only fragmentarily, that compulsion which usually goes with power and transforms the objects of centered control into mere objects. Insofar as democratization of political attitudes and institutions serves to resist the destructive implications of power, it is a manifestation of the Kingdom of God in history" (Tillich 1963, 385). Tillich's conception of political criticism envisioned the idea of justice shaping and forming the finite social reality and serving as a regulative ideal to critique how existing institutions can better serve and ensure the basic goods of human life.

Another dimension of justice for the theological ethicist is the prophetic-critical role of the divine reality. Justice is a powerful tool of critical clarity about social and political institutions and identity narratives (such as gender, racial, and religious) and how received narratives and cultural structures help or hinder the achievement of justice for peoples locally and globally. Johann Baptist Metz, for example, prophetically turns to memory and suffering as categories to understand human experience and responsibility. Metz resists the absorption of suffering into a deistic logic that annihilates the meaning of suffering and leads to an "eternalization of suffering" where we come to expect that oppression and suffering are always part of human existence and nothing can be done to alleviate them (Metz 1995, 619). Christian memory resists this dismissal of the oppressed and calls forth a way to justice. Political "consciousness *ex memoria passionis*" breaks the false consciousness of our received narratives, disrupting "with a harsh and steady light the questionable nature of things we have apparently come to terms with" (Metz 1995, 8). For Metz, what we might call the critique of justice begins with memory of the oppressed: "Every rebellion against suffering is fed by the subversive power of remembered suffering" (ibid.). Christian memory of suffering is futurally-oriented: "the midpoint of this faith is a specific *memoria passionis*, on which is grounded the promise of the future freedom for all. We remember the future of our freedom in the memory of his suffering." This Christian memory of suffering refuses to "indifferently surrender the political life. . .to the play of social interests and forces. . .[but] brings a new moral imagination into political life, a new vision of others' suffering that should mature into a generous, uncalculating partisanship on behalf of the weak and unrepresented" (Metz 1995, 15). Here, justice is the inbreaking of God's redemptive reality into the midst of social and political structures that deny the validity of being, turning over every social structure and their justificatory narrative that impinges human dignity.

These prophetic modes of justice return one to consider the underlying drive of justice to harmonious interpersonal relations – whether one-on-one or via institutions – that are creative and fulfilling rather than destructive. In spite of this rich provenance, obstacles to the enactment of justice are everywhere. Within our own legal and political institutions, the deep stain of chattel slavery and its destructive legacy are embedded in open and hidden ways. When nightmares like the extermination programs of modern

nations and genocide and endless human oppression (on the basis of economic inequality, race, gender, religion, sexual identity, etc.) abound, justice for all seems to be a global fantasy. Where King spoke of a moral universe's arc bending toward justice, we need to follow King's example of acting deliberately out of love so as to directly seek a just order. As the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace articulated, theological ethicists must insist that we "move beyond a contractualistic vision of justice, which is a reductionist vision, and to open up also for justice the new horizon of solidarity and love. By itself, justice is not enough" (2004, 203). That may mean, as with Portia's injunction in the *Merchant of Venice*, that mercy and love may need to "season" justice to remind persons of higher ends than mere earthly justice. That does not entail naïve passivity in the face of this world's injustice: one can and must act with love and fulfill ultimate goods in the very movement of political and legal justice, whenever life is creatively preserved and destruction resisted. The Kingdom of God is at hand does not mean abstract piety but "to render justice to the poor, releasing the oppressed, consoling the afflicted, actively seeking a new social order in which adequate solutions to material poverty are offered and in which the forces thwarting the attempts of the weakest to free themselves from conditions of misery and slavery are more effectively controlled" (2004, 325).

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CHAPTER 139

Production and Consumption

Joe Blosser

Economics, no matter what the textbooks say, has never been a value-free science. From the first act of bartering to today's financial sector, no act of economic production, exchange, distribution, or consumption occurs in a vacuum. The economic forces involved in the production and consumption of goods and services are embedded in a multidimensional matrix of environmental factors and human needs, values, and motivations. It is the task of religious ethics to bring to light the ways in which religious rituals, practices, communities, and beliefs shape, question, and are driven by the contemporary forms of market-based economics that dominate much of the world. As religious ethicists seek descriptive and normative clarity in the concepts of production and consumption, they engage in a hermeneutical task of breaking open and finding links between the often-insular languages and practices of economics, ethics, and religious communities.

As the world is drawn more closely together through communications technology and the global marketplace, the plurality of religious, moral, political, and economic values, languages, and practices become increasingly evident. An exploration of production and consumption must be situated within competing spheres of influence that conceive of these terms in different ways.

Religion and Economics Historically Understood

In the Christian West, the relationship between religion and economics as separate fields of inquiry only became divisive in the last century. Some scholars trace the inception of religion and economics as separate fields to the Reformation (Roll 1954). But Ernst Troeltsch (1912) argues that Reformation theologians practiced an "Old Protestantism" that continued to view the economy under the power of theology. He argues that it is not until the Enlightenment and the rise of the sciences that one begins to see a separation in the disciplines (Nelson 1991).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when most scholars acknowledge the beginnings of the science of political economy, its practitioners sought to discover the universal laws – God's laws – that explained how the economy functioned. Adam Smith described the connections between God's providential order and the way the economy worked. And the parson Thomas Malthus believed, in Paul Heyne's (2008, 223) words, that "the laws of the market were not the mere will of particular social classes or arbitrary governments; they were the very decrees of Providence."

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

In the nineteenth century, most economists continued to be quite comfortable with the relationship between theology and economics. The most popular pre-Civil War textbook on economics in the United States was *Elements of Political Economy*, which was written by Rev. Francis Wayland (1837). Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 to counter the rise of socialist movements and the plight of laborers in free markets. He inaugurated a tradition of Catholic social thought concerning the economy that continues to today. The tradition has stridently protected private property rights, resisted socialism, insisted on the role of government to protect basic rights, upheld the special status of the poor, and insisted that those with power have a responsibility to those without it. Even the American Economic Association has its roots in Christian efforts to transform the economy to be in line with the laws of God. Up to the twentieth century in the Christian West, the concepts of production and consumption fell under the religious and moral teachings of the church – they were understood as a function of God's providence.

In the twentieth century, academic specialization, secularization, and the professionalization of the fields have led to a hardening of the lines between economic and religious analysis of the human condition. It is in this reified space that religious ethicists work across disciplines to answer the value-laden questions of how we all come to live and work together in a way that promotes mutual flourishing.

The Landscape of Theology and Economics

Because of the complex history of religion and economics, the terms production and consumption are not just "economic" words. The terms must be understood within the economic and religious communities that employ them. A wide spectrum of such usage exists across religions. By looking at the range of ways in which economists and Christian theologians have employed the terms, religious ethicists can identify ideal types for how religious ethicists across traditions use these terms. Such an investigation into Christian ethics is further warranted because the roots of the dominant Western economic models run deep into the Christian tradition, at least back to Calvin, but likely further.

Three ideal types capture the ways in which religious ethicists and economists understand the two fields: imperialist, isolationist, and integrationist. As ideal types they are not intended to or capable of fully encompassing any particular position or scholar. The types sketch a landscape of religion and economics that should help religious ethicists understand how production and consumption are being used in particular circumstances.

Theological and Economic Imperialism

The imperialist type describes scholars of religion and economics who seek to colonize other disciplinary approaches. Though they come from different fields, the basic logic of imperialism pervades the work of Radical Orthodox and some evangelical scholars, just as it does Chicago School economists.

Radical Orthodox theologians offer some of the clearest examples of the imperialist type (Milbank 1991). They seek to remake the economy along Christian lines because they see economic analysis as a violent form of secular reason. Many fundamentalist and evangelical Christians also call for an overhaul of the economy on Christian terms (Land 2005). They emphasize that Jesus puts a Christian view of the economy in opposition to any other view.

Such Christian imperialist approaches often understand "production" and "consumption" not in the dominant economic language of scarcity, but in terms of abundance and gift. As they see it, God created a world of abundance, and if we are proper stewards of this world, we do not have to live in the economic world of scarcity, self-interest, and efficiency. In fact, the secular economic order assumes (and requires) human sinfulness to thrive. Such Christian approaches relegate the markets to serving the Christian ends of justice and charity.

The Christian imperialist claim to have the dominant interpretive lens is mirrored by Chicago School economists. At the heart of the Chicago School approach, George Stigler (1982) preaches a belief in humans as primarily utility maximizing creatures. He traces this core belief back to Adam Smith. What Stigler finds to be Smith's Newtonian discovery is that individuals are self-interested creatures in competitive markets. Milton Friedman (1980) argues that for the individual to be successful he or she must be unshackled from the forms of coercion that prevent the kinds of voluntary exchanges on which competitive environments depend. Gary Becker (1976) takes Stigler and Friedman's fundamental presumption of people as self-interested utility maximizers and uses it to colonize other disciplines. Though other disciplines can lend insight into human motivations and non-market activities, Becker believes economics can explain most human action.

In Chicago School economics, production and consumption are purely economic terms used in marginal analysis. Consumers will consume goods until the marginal benefits of consuming one more unit no longer exceed the marginal costs. And producers will produce goods until the marginal benefits (meaning profits) of producing one more unit no longer exceed the marginal costs. These are not seen as "moral" judgments, but scientific statements about how people act in a competitive marketplace.

Theological and Economic Isolationism

Some theologians, and perhaps the majority of economists, do their work in isolation from other fields. One could look to Christian traditions of isolation, like the Mennonites or Amish. One can also see the isolation type in the work of theologians like Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon (1989). They use the phrase "resident alien" to suggest how the church is a kind of colony, a site of a different kind of living inaugurated by Christ. Such theologians do not call for the church to withdraw from the world, but to live into a narrative that is different from the world's.

Like imperialists, isolationists use explicitly Christian language and symbols to develop their approach to economic issues like production and consumption. So, again, production has to do with symbols like creation, value, purpose, or calling, and consumption is cast in terms of responsibility, justice, sustainability, desire, and questions about deserving. Unlike imperialists, however, isolationists are not trying to replace economic analysis. They are rather working up a Christian narrative separate from secular discourse.

On the economic side, the neoclassical tradition grows out of a belief in the difference between positive and normative economics. Following in the isolationist tradition, Lionel Robbins and Frank Knight advocated that economists steer clear of moral and public policy statements. Most practicing economists – as evidenced by the majority of the sessions at the national and regional American Economic Association meetings and the kinds of articles published in the top tier economic journals – continue to see themselves engaged in a positive science that is set apart from moral concerns.

Paul Heyne, a University of Chicago trained religious ethicist, turned economics professor, develops the isolationist tradition with greater nuance. Heyne (2008) draws on Hauerwas as his primary theological resource, and because Heyne believes Christian positions must proceed from scripture, he sees that they have little to say to contemporary scientific economics. Heyne disagrees with the positive–normative distinction and instead roots the separateness of economics in the kinds of stories it tells. The problem with most Christian accounts of the economy is that they believe the economy can be constructed on universal moral principles. And most of the time when theologians speak about the economy, they actually reject the economy as economists understand it. What economists do is construct persuasive stories about how the world works using "the economic way of thinking," which Heyne summarizes as, "All social phenomena emerge from the choices of individuals in response to expected benefits and costs to themselves" (294). Unless theologians are willing to talk about expected costs and benefits, they will not be talking about economics, but something else.

Theological and Economic Integration

Hermeneutical and multidimensional approaches to religious ethics find themselves in the integration type, seeking links and connections between religious and economic ways of knowing. A wide spectrum also exists within approaches to integration. Some religion scholars reject textbook neoclassical economic approaches in favor of Marxist or other heterodox economic positions. Latin American liberation theology, for example, has used Marxist analysis to help craft cultural critiques as part of a larger theological message that advocates for a preferential option for the poor. Other religion scholars embrace textbook economics, finding congruence between the kinds of freedom advocated by both religious believers and economists. For instance, Michael Novak (1993) argues for the symbiotic relationship between Catholic theology and free market economics. He suggests that both theologians and economists can counter poverty by pursuing a course of action that expands human freedom in the economic realm so that people can work and be creative. One can find theologians and economists similar to Novak in the Acton Institute and published in the *Journal of Markets & Morality* or *Faith & Economics*.

In the midst of the range of integration approaches lie a number of scholars who draw on both religious and economic ways of knowing. One can think here of Christian scholars like Sallie McFague, John Cobb, Doug Meeks, Rebecca Todd Peters, Max Stackhouse, Doug Hicks, William Schweiker, and others. Some economists also fall in this space, like Deirdre McCloskey, Herman Daly, Robert Nelson, and many of the economists in the History of Economics Society and the Association of Christian Economists.

Dimensions of Production and Consumption

Across religions scholars can be found working in each of these ideal types, and whatever their approach, the terms production and consumption are used to do work across three dimensions: the analytic, the anthropological, and the axiological. While often one or more of these dimensions is unacknowledged in a given approach, production and consumption always have some sort of explanatory power. They say something about who we are as people, and they make value claims. To better understand the integration type where so many religious ethicists do their work, one can look at how integration works in each of these three dimensions.

Analytic

Because integrationists take the field of economics seriously, the analytic force of the terms production and consumption must draw (to some extent) on the ways economists actually use these terms. While variously used in heterodox approaches, neoclassical economists use consumption and production as part of a larger narrative about social cooperation, spontaneous order, or what Paul Samuelson (1948) in his groundbreaking *Economics* textbook took Adam Smith to intend by his use of the term "invisible hand" (it's a matter of great debate whether this is *actually* what Smith intended the term to mean).

Economics has been defined in a whole host of ways. A "textbook" definition of the field might say something like: economics is the study of how individuals cooperate with each other to make voluntary exchanges in a competitive marketplace that best satisfy their needs in the face of scarce resources. Built into such a definition are important assumptions: people are rational utility maximizers, there are limited resources, the marketplace is competitive and offers full information to its participants, and exchanges are voluntary and not coerced by power-dynamics or outside forces. Religious ethicists often raise questions about any number of these assumptions, but setting these aside for a moment, the story these economists want to tell is one about how when individuals seek their own self-interest in free and competitive markets, they become participants in a complex, spontaneous order that ultimately benefits the whole.

The concept of consumption, seen through the lens of price theory, details how individuals in this order make their choices. Consumption is part of demand. It concerns the choices individuals make to satisfy their tastes in a marketplace. Such economists can predict consumer behavior if they know a person's: (1) tastes, and (2) budget. In the most basic textbook terms, economists create indifference curves to represent the baskets of goods which consumers would consider equally desirable. Such curves are downward sloping, convex, and do not cross each other. With an individual consumer's tastes mapped onto indifference curves, economists then construct a person's budget line, which is the set of baskets of consumer goods someone can afford with the money they have. When graphed, the place where the budget line is tangent to an indifference curve suggests the optimum choice – it will be the most preferred basket of consumer goods a person can afford on their budget. Another way economists figure consumer choices is through the creation of utility functions, which are a way to translate baskets of goods into a unit of utility, which is a measure of satisfaction or happiness. When economists talk about "utility maximization," they are talking about behavior or choices that maximize happiness. From this basic analysis, economists can determine how price or income changes affect optimum choice, which goods are inferior or normal, and so on. Consumption focuses on how individuals choose given the reality of scarcity and their own desire to maximize their pleasure. Professional economists go well beyond such a bare-bones textbook understanding of consumption to problematize the construction of tastes, how utility is calculated, and urge an understanding of "enlightened self-interest" beyond mere selfishness.

When it comes to the term production, textbook economics sees it as a function of how firms – which seek above all to maximize profits – supply goods and services. So where consumption contributes to an understanding of demand, production deals with supply. Where consumption assumes the self-interested utility maximization of individuals, production assumes that firms are always seeking to maximize profits. It is the task of a firm to take the factors of production (i.e. land, labor, and capital) and turn them into consumer goods. To maximize profits firms will produce a consumer good up to that point where the marginal cost of making it equals the marginal revenue from selling it. The price

at which the good is sold depends on the demand curve and other factors determining supply, like technological advances, creativity, long vs. short run choices, availability of kinds of inputs, competition, externalities (e.g. pollution), and so on.

For both consumption and production, economists assume the person making the decision uses marginal analysis to make the best choice, given constrained options. A person will continue to consume or produce a good, service, or activity until that point when the marginal benefits no longer exceed the marginal costs. Consumers are thinking of marginal benefits in terms of utility or happiness, and producers are thinking of it in terms of profits.

Religious ethicists can take at least two things from the neoclassical economic analysis of production and consumption. First, the fact that such models are even somewhat predictive suggests that there may be something of analytic value in them. Religious ethicists often balk at assumptions about humans as self-interested utility maximizers, the sanitized economic models that are removed from the complexities of life, the focus on individuals and not communities, the lack of moral evaluation of choice, and so on. These assumptions, however, do seem to say something about how we live. Religious ethicists may not want people to act this way, but it appears people cohere to these assumptions enough that the models hold some predictive value. Second, even if one rejects the descriptive abilities of economic analysis, the models tell a persuasive story that policy makers, politicians, and much of the public find convincing. Religious ethicists must understand why people believe and act according to this story if they hope to tell their own stories of how production and consumption work. If used in their own work, religious ethicists must ask what kind of analytical work production and consumption are doing.

Anthropological

When neoclassical economists assume humans are self-interested utility maximizers, they construct a view of people as *Homo economicus*. Religious ethicists from across religious traditions often find this an unworkable view of humans. Christian theologians may recognize in these economic assumptions a view of "sinful" or "fallen" human reality. They may acknowledge that people act self-interestedly most of the time, but reject that such actions should be *encouraged* or that society should be predicated upon the continued sinful actions of people.

From an Islamic integrationist perspective, people are not fallen or sinful, but contain something of God. Humans have incredible potential to reflect God, but Islamic ethics is keenly aware of the power of human attachments to worldly things. Thus, an Islamic economic system builds itself around both human potential and curtailing temptation. Islamic economics sees humans as Allah's trustees on earth, so all economic activity must be in accord with the teachings of Allah as revealed by the Prophet Muhammad. Allah is understood to "own" everything, and as trustees, by extension, humans are afforded private property as long as the holding of that property remains in the spirit of the trust, not violating others rights, paying appropriate fees for the property, enjoying it properly, and so on.

An integrationist Islamic view of humans as God's trustees has significant economic implications. On the production side, profit must be obtained within a strict set of ethical guidelines. One cannot produce goods that violate the law (e.g. gambling, alcohol, etc.), nor can one produce goods in such a way that they harm people (through sweatshops, child labor, etc.). The productive resources that one owns must also be put to use. One cannot, under the guise of private property, sit on resources for personal gain. This includes one's own labor. Work itself can be a form of worship, so Muslims often are encouraged to work as God's trustees.

On the consumption side, many Muslims are taught to not become addicted to worldly goods, so there are restrictions on consumer goods, like cigarettes or pork. Traditionally, Muslim investors must also be wary not to invest in companies that damage health, the environment, or produce goods that coerce and tempt humans to worldly pleasures. Consumer behavior is also limited by prohibitions against *riba*, or interest. This prohibition intends to protect the poor from predatory behavior and prevent people from going into unnecessary debt. These guidelines, along with others that govern Islamic finance, helped the Islamic banking sector thrive through the 2008 recession and beyond because Islamic banks were buffered from the abuses driving the banking crisis. An integrationist approach to Islamic ethics reveals how production and consumption are rooted in a view of the human as God's trustee, which structures how such ethicists engage the economic discourses of costs and benefits.

Axiological

A major point of contention between religious ethics and economics concerns the claim by some economists that they participate in a value-free science. All economic analysis, however, produces a slate of values, and the value-free approach to economics tends to reduce all values to money alone. The impact of this unacknowledged axiological claim extends beyond economic analysis and undercuts the moral value of all the ways humans create, labor, consume, and build relationships through economic activity. Most especially, the production and consumption of goods, services, and activities cannot be separated from issues of commutative and distributive justice.

Many religious ethicists are moral realists, and as such, moral claims are seen to be more than the products of economic or social analysis. The Abrahamic traditions, for example, make claims about the inherent worth of humanity that resist the reduction of all value (including human labor, creativity, etc.) to monetary terms because they appeal to a value beyond earthly values. The most important contribution religious ethics can make to conversations of production and consumption is to insist on a set of values outside those of money, beyond complete commodification. Through the various tables of value employed by religious traditions, religious ethicists can work alongside economists (probably primarily heterodox economists and historians of economics) to reinvigorate the place of political economy within the ecosystem of moral philosophy and religious ethics.

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CHAPTER 140

Sustainability and Climate Change

Michael S. Hogue

The Passing of the Future?

Sustainability and climate ethics are concerned with the challenges provoked by the mutually amplifying systemic trajectories of modern life: the exponential growth of the human population, the magnitude of our technological and industrial impacts on natural systems, the global expansion of a fossil-fueled economic system that generates inequality and concentrates economic and political power, the increasingly radical forms of energy extraction needed to maintain this economic system and the growing population, and the fact that marginalized and disempowered individuals and communities tend to suffer the most immediate and negative consequences of this juggernaut of dynamics.

In response to these dynamics, sustainability and climate ethics revolve around a multitude of complex moral questions. What moral values and responsibilities should orient our powers to intervene within the natural world? What principles should we prescribe to ensure that future human generations have the environments and resources they need to survive and even to flourish? What moral duties, if any, do we have toward the future of life? Do we have duties toward the future of animal and vegetal life as well as human life? Does non-human life have intrinsic value, or merely instrumental, utility value for humans? Do we have moral obligations to ecological systems, to landscapes, to species, or even to the whole of the planetary system? How should we adjudicate conflicting ecological, social, and economic goods, the moral status of the future and the present, the claims of individuals and systems? Which economic and social policies, and what level of policy framework – local, national, and/or international – are best suited to the application and enforcement of ecologically sustainable and socially equitable economic practices?

In the field of religious ethics, these complex moral questions are addressed through the ethical, philosophical, and theological resources of the religious traditions. What role can, or should, religious traditions play as we engage the diverse challenges of the ecological crisis? Are certain religious traditions, symbols, beliefs, rituals, and values more ecologically attuned than others? If the major religions of the world originated millennia ago, and developed their primary texts, doctrines, and ethical systems long before the emergence of global economic systems and the planetary ecological crisis, can any of them be expected to provide the practical wisdom we need now?

In response to these questions, some religious leaders, thinkers, and practitioners have discovered wisdom in their traditions they had previously overlooked. Others have sought to imagine and theorize

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

new moral and religious concepts, values, traditions, and practices. Responses include formal statements made by official bodies of all major religions of the world; scholarly works written and debated by theologians and religious ethicists; and educational, legislative, and grassroots initiatives across the traditions at local, regional, national, and international levels. Many anthologies survey these various responses and the conceptual and methodological issues they raise as well as the normative proposals they advance. There is also a multitude of outstanding individual works, adopting a variety of reformist, reconstructive, and comparative approaches. For example, religious thinkers from diverse traditions have utilized an ecological hermeneutic to reinterpret and reform select philosophical, symbolic, textual, and ritual aspects of their respective traditions. Others have developed more critical approaches that deconstruct and reconstruct the central doctrines, symbols, and practices of traditions. Yet others have advanced comparative projects by interpreting the ecological resources and histories of multiple traditions, or by examining how sustainability functions as a comparative category and a religious discourse that creates new occasions for multifaith engagement. Each of these types and levels of response, from formal ecclesial and institutional statements, to grassroots work, to the innovative reformist and reconstructive efforts of individual thinkers, are vitally important aspects of a robust religious ethical response to the ecological, sustainability, and climate crises.

Rather than offering an interpretive survey of the normative and methodological options, or a comparative analysis of the ecological resources of diverse traditions, this entry explores the urgency of the present moment by questioning a common assumption that orients many religious ethical approaches to the sustainability and climate crises: the assumption that there will be a human moral future that is continuous with the human moral past. This is a common assumption because moral thought, and particularly sustainability and climate ethics, is oriented around a problem structure and is motivated by a concern for the future consequences and effects of human action. The sense that there is something wrong, that there is a problem that should be engaged now for the sake of the future, is why prophetic statements are made, acts of witness are enacted, and scholarly articles and books are written. Although religious and moral actors do these things for diversely articulated reasons – for instance, out of a sense of obedience to a divine will, in response to a call of faith, or as an act of compassion – these reasons are often aligned with the aim to positively influence the future.

But what if the claim that the assumption that there will be a human moral future is itself a problem because it fails to recognize the tragic paradox of the crisis we face and therefore obstructs the kind of cultural analyses, systemic transformations, and existential conversions that religious and moral response to the urgency of the crisis demand? The fact is that our human interventions into, and alterations of, the planetary system, and especially our impact on the climate, imperil the human future, not to mention the future of other forms life. And this endangering of the future is due not only, or even primarily, to malicious intent, willful ignorance, or pathetic indifference to nature. If this were the case, as is often supposed, then the solutions to the problems (if not executing those solutions) would be straightforward – transform evil, increase knowledge, expand the scope of value and extend the reach of responsibility. However, these remedies are insufficient if the tragedy of the ecological, sustainability, and climate crises is the paradoxical effect of the systems, practices, and values that have shaped human civilization over the past several hundred years. To identify these crises as a tragedy is to claim that they are the unintended and unforeseeable, but seemingly inevitable, result of the employment of capacities and powers intrinsic to a form of being human.

If taking the ecological crisis seriously and fearlessly facing facts ruptures the very concept of a human moral future, and the concept of a human moral future continuous with the past is intrinsic to the form of human life that has brought about the crisis, then a religious ethical approach to the crisis compels a reimagining of what it means to be human. Likewise, a reimagining of what it means to be human in the context of the ecological crisis entails a reimagining of the future as one hypothesis among others, rather than an assumption. If the climate crisis is an utterly new moral event in the history of life on earth, incommensurable in scale and urgency with any other kind of moral challenge the religious traditions have ever engaged, but nonetheless one that we as a species have precipitated, then responding adequately to it may require that we think beyond the resources of existing moral and religious traditions, perhaps even against their grain. What form of religious ethic, and what form of human life must we reimagine or rediscover if we are currently living, as Bruce A. Collings has evocatively argued, in the "ruins of the future," a present in which not only history, but also the future, has passed?

The religious ethical significance of the loss of the human moral future, in a form continuous with the human past, orients the rest of this entry. The section that immediately follows engages this loss through a brief analysis of the reconfiguring of the phenomenology of moral space and time in the context of the Anthropocene, the name geologists are using to describe the present, human-dominated epoch in the history of earth. The concluding section will introduce the vital elements of a religious ethic of ecological attunement as a constructive approach to the sustainability and climate crises.

Moral Time and Space in the Anthropocene

Human life, like any other form of life, is spatially and temporally conditioned and consequential. As organic, metabolic beings, we are affected by, and cannot help but to effect, the spaces and times of our lives. But as moral creatures, as beings who recognize, affirm, and assign value to other things, states, and beings in the world, our relation to time and space is different from other organisms. We imagine and compare possible futures and diverse consequences as we discern how we should act in the present. We examine our personal moral histories, and the histories of our religious and moral traditions, for moral insight and wisdom. We know that just as the conditions of our lives have been influenced by the lives of our ancestors, the consequences of our decisions and actions will affect the lives and worlds of our descendants.

However, the timing of moral life is neither linear nor uniform. As organisms, we live and die according to the unyieldingly linear flow of biological time. As ecological beings, we observe seasonal time by noticing changes in the weather, the growth cycles of plants, and the migratory patterns of other animals, but in geological time, these patterns and cycles fluctuate. As moral and cultural creatures, we live in multiple registers of time at once and we measure time in different ways for different reasons – we orient ourselves in relation to liturgical and ritual cycles, secular and religious, and we plot the meanings of our lives through the storied time of mythic worlds, the origins and endings of worlds coming and going.

Just as we inhabit multiple registers of time, we also live within and move among many different spaces at once. We inhabit physical, social, natural, and cultural environments. As human moral animals our capacities to register and assign moral values, to deliberate, imagine, decide, and to act are physically embodied. To have a body is to take up space and to be dependent upon a natural environment that provides clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and nutritious food to eat. As social animals, we inhabit

associational and institutional spaces, family spaces and spaces for work and play. We develop our physical, mental, and emotional instincts in relationships with others, for good and ill. We dwell within and migrate across sacred and profane spaces, spaces of solitude and community, wild and cultivated places.

All this is to say that we are polychronic and polytopic creatures: we live and move and have our being in the spaces and times of many worlds (Schweiker 2004, xii). Our species habitat is pluriform and multidimensional – historical, spatial, biological, ecological, social, and cultural. Although this has always been the case, the ecological, sustainability, and climate crises illuminate this reality in new ways. While we may be the only creatures who have evolved the capacities to affirm, assign, and argue over the moral value and purposes of life, we also have more power over the present and future conditions of life than any other species. Our capacities to intervene within natural systems have made it possible for us to grow our own food, domesticate animals, construct shelters to protect us from the weather, build towns and cities, cultivate landscapes, channel waterways, harvest minerals, mine coal, drill for oil, and manufacture a human world so vast and interconnected that there is now no place on earth untouched by our influence.

But the very same powers that have brought about many qualitative improvements to human life have also precipitated the sustainability and climate crises that threaten the planetary conditions necessary to sustaining habitable worlds. We have brought about these crises through our participation in a global economic system that illogically demands unlimited growth and yet is predominantly fueled by nonrenewable and ecologically hazardous forms of energy; through industrial agricultural practices such as monocropping and the intensive use of chemical pesticides and herbicides, which have depleted the soils we need to continue to grow healthy food; through mass consumption of meat that has led to overgrazing, the clearing of forests, and increasing levels of methane, a potent greenhouse gas; through the destruction of watersheds by land erosion, forest depletion, chemical leaching, and agricultural runoff; through habitat destruction and fragmentation; through industrial pollution of water, land, and air; through a fossil-fueled form of life that has thrown the natural carbon cycle out of balance and is warming the planet at an unprecedented rate.

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-eighteenth century, human population and economic production have grown exponentially, the amount of land under intensive human use has nearly tripled, and atmospheric CO_2 concentrations have increased from 277 ppm (parts per million) to over 400 ppm. And yet, while the population grew from one billion to approximately three billion between 1750 and 1950, it has taken only fifty years for the population to double since then. Alongside the accelerated population growth during this period, the massive buildup of manufacturing capacity during World War II, combined with the efforts of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to generate, manage, and administer postwar recovery, led to the global expansion and intensification of industrial impacts. Postwar population growth, increased production, and economic globalization required more fossil fuels to sustain, thus massively magnifying the impacts set into motion by the Industrial Revolution. As a result, the cumulative CO_2 emissions generated over the past two centuries have overwhelmed the "natural" sinks in the carbon cycle and spawned the reinforcing feedback loops that constitute the climate crisis: warming air and oceans reinforce one another, causing changes in ocean currents and increased ocean condensation, which increases the volume of moisture in the air, which, in combination with altered ocean currents, leads to more frequent extreme weather events, such as longer droughts in some areas and more intense rainfall and flooding in others. These changes have generated tertiary socioecological impacts such as diminishing water supplies, crop failure, rising numbers of ecological refugees, new migratory patterns, and changing distributions and rates of vector-borne diseases.

While every species alters its environment to some degree, no other species has the power to alter the whole of the planetary system in this way. Thus, we have become a moral event in the history of the earth, a geohistorical as well as a biocultural force. The history of the human species has become the dominant story in the history of the earth, and the planetary dominance of our species story has led geologists to propose the "Anthropocene" as the name for the earth's current geological epoch. As a geological term, "Anthropocene" signifies two ideas. First, it signals that the earth is no longer in the geological epoch called the Holocene, which literally means "present age." This is alarming since the relatively stable climate of the Holocene made human civilization possible – it made agriculture possible, which made settlement, cities, and complex forms of human social life possible. If everything that humans know and experience as civilization was made possible by the climate stability of the Holocene, then to move out of this epoch into a new one, the Anthropocene, is to move into a time without human historical analogue. Strange as it may seem, humans have never lived through a human age for the earth. The second idea signaled by the term Anthropocene is at least as unsettling as this. It is the claim that we have not only exited the Holocene, the geological niche that has been uniquely hospitable to human civilization, but we have shown ourselves the door – we have escorted ourselves into a time of uncertainty on earth with no human historical precedent.

Because of the planetary scale of our deepening human ecological impacts, the earth has become like a hall of mirrors. Wherever we peer into planetary systems, whether geological, hydrological, or atmospheric, we see a peculiar image reflected. What we see is the end of the idea of the human as set apart from nature. This hall of mirrors is the Anthropocene, a human age in the history of the earth in which the human and the non-human, the political and the planetary, the economic and ecological, and the human present and the future of life have become viscerally and inextricably entangled.

But the paradox of this self-caused retreat from the Holocene is that by making the earth *Homo imago*, by terraforming our species' self-image into the earth, we have an opportunity to reimagine ourselves as *terra bēstiae* (Hogue 2018). As creators of a geological age we have crossed over from a biocultural to a geophysical form of agency, a profound phenomenological, moral, and religious threshold. It is this crossing that marks the ending of the idea of human separatism from the rest of nature. Since human/nature separatism, or the idea that the human and natural are ontologically distinct, has been a founding opposition in the history of modern Western civilization, it has also formatted other organizational binaries such as nature/culture, mind/body, animal/human, outside/inside, environment/organism, economy/environment. And since this founding opposition and suite of binaries have aided and abetted the ecologically negligent systems and practices that drive the ecological, sustainability, and climate crises, then the ending of human/nature separatism is also, potentially, the beginning of a new ecological form of being human. In particular, the Anthropocene paradox opens an imaginal space in which to potentiate new ways of doing religious ethics in an ecological key.

Ecological Attunement and the "Outcry of Mute Things"

Two vital ideas animate a religious ethic of ecological attunement. First, a religious ethic of ecological attunement inverts the traditional conceptual logic of religious ethics by hypothesizing the ecological crisis itself as a religious event, instead of treating it as a problem that can be solved by existing religious traditions. Second, a religious ethic of ecological attunement does not assume the human moral future, but interprets it as one possibility among others, including the possibility that there may not be one.

To explain the first idea, the conceptual inversion, it is important to comment briefly on what is meant by a "religious event." Religious events are dramatically transformative in some way, whether by illuminating what has been obscured or by integrating what has been alienated. Religious events cause a reseeing, or reimagining of the meanings and values that ultimately orient us; they move us to reconnect, rediscover, or integrate our lives with what we take to be most fundamentally important, with the sacred, or with some profoundly creative reality or power, such as God, or nature. Thus, religious events are encounters, insights, relationships, experiential undergoings and overcomings that throw life into question; they rend the veil of the ordinary; they interrupt, disrupt, and can sometimes transform life.

What would it mean to imagine and experience the ecological, sustainability, and climate crises as a religious event, rather than as a set of problems to be engaged by the religions? Consider for a moment that we humans, like every other thing that exists, are the unplanned creatures of an exquisite lattice-work of natural processes which originated in mystery about 13.7 billion years ago. If this is so, then the answer to the question of why the Universe exists or why there is something rather than nothing is likely to remain infinitely out of reach of human comprehension. But we know that if the rate of acceleration of the elements out of the Big Bang varied even in the slightest, the Universe would not have unfurled the way that it has. We know that even a slight adjustment of the earth's coordinates in relation to the sun would have made life impossible. We know that life first emerged on our planet about 3.5 billion years ago. We know that since then life has been in a process of relentless transformation. We know that, even though the origin of modern humans was recently dated further back to approximately 200,000 years ago, we are latecomers to life on earth. We know that we are creatures with purposes and values. And, what is more, it can be argued that all other living creatures, insofar as they metabolize, also have purposes and values of their own, whether they are consciously held "in view" or not.

The synthesis of human consciousness, moral empathy, and our capacities to alter the world, yields moral responsibility. This responsibility emerges out of our awareness that human life is entangled with the rest of life, that life as such seems to be rare in the Universe, and that we as a species possess the power to alter the planetary conditions upon which the future of life depends. Thus, precisely insofar as we have become a massive planetary force that imperils the future of life, we have also become earth's (if not the Universe's) custodians of life and therefore also conservators of value. More fully realizing this responsibility is what a more ecological form of being human entails; and more fully integrating this ecological mode of responsibility entails reconnecting to the nature we share with other forms of life as *terra bēstiae*.

The question, then, is whether the ecological, sustainability, and climate crises constitute an event, experience, or undergoing that can lead us to reconnecting to this nature and thus more fully to realize our responsibility. The Jewish philosopher Hans Jonas answers this question with unmatched pathos:

> It was once religion which told us that we are all sinners, because of original sin. It is now the ecology of our planet which pronounces us all to be sinners because of the excessive exploits of human inventiveness. It was once religion which threatened us with a last judgment at the end of days. It is now our tortured planet which predicts the arrival of such a day without any heavenly intervention. The latest revelation – from no Mount Sinai, from no Mount of the Sermon, from no Bo (tree of Buddha) – is the outcry of mute things themselves that we must heed by curbing our powers over creation, lest we perish together on a wasteland of what was creation.
>
> (Jonas 1996, 201–202)

The hearing of this outcry could become the encounter and upending that rends the veil of the human-centered meanings and ecologically negligent values that have oriented human life for centuries, a religious event that initiates the cultural analyses, systemic transformations, and existential conversions demanded by the tragedy of the ecological crisis and the paradox of the Anthropocene. But one needs to be able to hear this outcry, in its urgent immediacy, which is why abandoning the assumption that there will be a human moral future continuous with the past, the second vital idea in a religious ethic of ecological attunement, is so important.

To live in the "ruins of the future" makes it possible to experience the ecological, sustainability, and climate crises as a religious event. This religious event, if grasped in its burdensome fullness, illuminates the tragedy of human separatism from the rest of nature with such blinding light that it can compel a total conversion in what it means to be human; it is an event so ultimately disorienting that it can provoke a crisis, or turning point, in our species self-image that leads us to hear what the ecological negligence of human separatism obscured, the mournful tune of the "outcry of mute things." Once we attune ourselves to this outcry, it is impossible to unhear it. If we can cultivate and sustain this attunement to the fulsome ecology of life, it may lead to a recovery of, as John Foster eloquently describes, "our ability to live and act as whole natural beings, undisintegrated and unalienated" (Foster 2014, 12). Thus, abandoning the assumption that there will be a human moral future continuous with the past is not an act of acquiescence. Instead, it is an act of responsibility, a demand to see through the delusion that anything other than radical system change, or anything less than a profound conversion of what it means to be a morally responsible human being, is sufficient to the urgency of the crises we face. Facing the facts of climate change, as well as the fact of our failure as a species, thus far, to catalyze a global transition from a fossil-fueled to a more sustainable form of life, is the first step toward a more ecologically attuned religious ethic.

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Part III

Communities

1 Structures and Conditions

CHAPTER 141

Religious Membership

Robin Gill

One of the important rediscoveries in religious ethics over the last few decades has been the intimate and complex relationship between moral agency and moral communities. This relationship is extremely varied. Sometimes, as in Islam or Judaism, it also involves an intimate connection with a Holy Book. Sometimes, as in Confucianism, it is very closely related to the traditions of a particular society. There is also a wide range of ideas involved, from Buddhist claims about compassion and enlightenment to Christian debates about grace and freedom. Yet, in many religious traditions, a connection is made been moral agency and moral communities that is at odds with much, but not all, modern Western ethical theory. The latter tends to conceive of the moral agent abstracted from communal membership and to focus upon freedom and rational autonomy as the defining feature of moral agency.

This entry explores some of the implications of this debate about accounts of moral agency. At stake, most basically, is how religious ethics is to understand the importance of religious membership in providing an adequate account of moral agency.

Within the secular post-Enlightenment tradition following Kant, moral agency has characteristically been perceived as being independent of religion and based instead upon autonomous rationality alone. The individual makes moral choices and decisions based solely upon rational criteria that are available to all competent, rational agents (whether they are themselves privately religious, as Kant was, or not). Moral philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) have challenged this understanding of moral agency. At a negative level, moral philosophy – the discipline concerned with autonomous, rational criteria in moral thinking – has been unable to deliver indisputable rational criteria or universally agreed moral decisions. Incommensurable differences remain on key moral issues such as abortion or justice both within the general public of Western societies and (especially and most significantly) among experts in moral philosophy. At a positive level, MacIntyre has argued that virtues molded by moral and religious communities are essential to an adequate understanding of moral agency. Charles Taylor (1989) has also challenged a purely secular understanding of moral agency. Although committed to a notion of autonomy within moral agency, he nevertheless has argued that moral reasoning cannot be properly understood without acknowledging the long history of moral concepts within specific and typically religious communities.

Using insights from MacIntyre and Taylor, this entry argues that a pluralistic society should recognize not only that religious minorities need to be respected if such a society is to be genuinely inclusive, but also that a number of crucial, but supposedly secular, moral notions have religious roots and may even

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make full sense only when these roots are explicitly acknowledged. This entry will begin with the current debate in ethics about agency and membership before moving to specifically religious concerns. Although drawn predominantly from current Western, Christian ethics, there should be implications here for many other forms of religious ethics as well.

The Debate About Agency

A central part of MacIntyre's critique of moral philosophy is that it makes claims for secular reasoning that it is unable to deliver. Modern ethics as a discipline has tended to claim that it alone, unlike theological ethics, can resolve moral dilemmas in the public realm. Moral reasoning without any divine revelation can be a universal means of reaching moral conclusions. Whereas religion divides people, secular moral philosophy can unite them. Through the Enlightenment understanding of morality we have been delivered from the bitter religious warfare that characterized Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Decision making based upon moral philosophy offers the prospect of agreement across cultural and ideological divisions. Reason abstracted from religious membership is morally central.

In *After Virtue* MacIntyre subjects such claims to a detailed critique. There is, so the book argues, a clear gap between such claims and their attainment. Within moral philosophy there are very evident and unresolved differences between, for example, deontologists and utilitarians. These differences become apparent as soon as recent debates are examined about issues such as the rightness of abortion or the nature of justice in society. The book maintains that these differences are actually incommensurable in terms of post-Enlightenment moral philosophy.

So, for example, the differences between pro-life and pro-choice factions in the abortion debate are not, so MacIntyre argues, resolvable in terms of post-Enlightenment moral philosophy. All too often contesting rights of the fetus, on the one hand, or of the woman, on the other, are simply asserted by the different factions without any prospect of rational resolution between them. Vigorous attempts to resolve this contestation have so far failed to convince either faction. Of course, particular power groups within society can ensure that, in the absence of intellectual agreement, one of these factions prevails. In reality this has now happened in much secular bioethics within the West in favor of the pro-choice faction. Although there is still a widespread belief that it is right to have a conscience clause allowing healthcare professionals opposed to abortion not to take a direct part in providing abortions, the same professionals are nevertheless still obliged to refer women requesting an abortion to other professionals who are not opposed. At best this is a conscience clause allowing professionals to opt out of direct action on abortion but not to opt out of abortion provision altogether (akin, perhaps, to ambulance service on the front line in World War I for exemplary pacifists rather than incarceration for thoroughgoing pacifists). A conservative Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, or perhaps Buddhist doctor, opposed on religious grounds to abortion, has no legal alternative but to comply.

Again, a central weakness of much recent moral philosophy is "atomized individualism." It is all too often assumed that moral conclusions are typically reached by individuals through a series of logical steps without reference to others or to tradition until they make a moral decision. The focus here is upon the self as a self-contained island and upon moral decisions reached by an internalized process of logical deduction, as if individuals were not actually part of wider communities embedded in history and

tradition. Taylor (1989, 305ff.) seeks to show at length that this is a very impoverished understanding of the moral self. Yet, ironically, it is still an understanding that is implicit within much discussion of autonomy and decision making in applied secular ethics.

In contrast to atomized individualism, some ethicists advocate a return to the moral tradition of virtue ethics and point to the role of moral communities in shaping virtuous individuals. Within this tradition, individuals are trained in virtues within local communities so that, when faced with ethical dilemmas, they do not approach them *de novo* as isolated individuals but as members of communities and as heirs to longstanding sources of moral wisdom. Such individuals depend less upon secular rationality than upon deeply ingrained virtuous habits to resolve moral dilemmas. On this understanding of bioethics – an understanding which is beginning to receive more serious discussion – the primary task of the discipline is to identify virtues which should guide and shape healthcare professionals and patients alike.

Herein lies a central problem. MacIntyre, for one, is highly skeptical about whether Western society is ever again capable of having a unified moral vision. Having deconstructed the universal claims of moral philosophy, he sees only fragmented and changing moral communities in the Western world. He points to the need for a new moral community, but offers little hope that it is actually still possible for any moral community to gain widespread acceptance. At most, presumably, a series of fragmented communities can bring their virtues to areas such as modern medicine, but without any expectation that everyone can accept them.

All of this suggests a serious moral gap that is particularly relevant to religious ethics. There is an evident gap between philosophical claims about virtue within communities and sociological skepticism about actual communities within the modern Western world. If modernity is premised upon individual rationality, it founders upon incommensurable moral conflicts (the very conflicts that moral philosophy was supposed to resolve). A more postmodern vision is premised instead upon local communities shaping virtuous people, but it founders upon the seeming impossibility of achieving general assent today for returning to premodern communities. Moral fragmentation and social conflict seem to be inevitable.

It is at this point that Taylor identifies a second major moral gap. He believes that moral agents are now in an age in which a publicly accessible "cosmic order of meanings" is an impossibility. All that moral agents can rely upon today is "personal resonance" – and that of course will vary from person to person. He likens us to a crew of car mechanics in a pit-stop, each with four thumbs and with only a very hazy grasp of the wiring used in modern racing cars. We can resort to mundane procedures in an attempt to counter this serious deficiency, but these will not finally obscure the fact that we no longer share a vision of a "cosmic order of meaning" (Taylor 1989, 512). To apply this analysis to bioethics, it is painfully obvious that in ethical discussions about healthcare today we cannot even agree upon a notion of health. For some people, health is concerned narrowly with an absence of disease (itself a term with cultural variants), whereas for others it is concerned with wider well-being (a term with metaethical variants) and for others still with physical, mental, and spiritual health (now with metaphysical variants). Or consider modern warfare: it is often extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get opposing factions to agree about how just-war theory actually applies to them. For example, one side may see a particular recourse to arms as being a legitimate struggle for liberation, whereas the opposing side may see it instead as an act of terrorism.

Within a detailed discussion of Kantian ethics, John Hare (1996) suggests a third major moral gap. He argues that this is the gap that arises from Kant's high moral demand for individuals combined with his

belief that everyone has a propensity not to follow this demand. Specifically, the high moral demand that all people should always behave morally in ways that are universalizable is in clear tension with their propensity to selfishness. For Kant, Hare argues, this gap was particularly acute precisely because he believed that "ought" implies "can": if it is not the case that people can live by the moral demand, then it cannot be the case that they ought to do so. Hare is unconvinced by secular strategies designed to reduce this moral gap. The first seeks to reduce the moral demand itself (perhaps moral demands need not be universalizable) and the second exaggerates our natural propensities (perhaps humans really are not selfish after all). Both of these strategies have also been used at times in bioethics. If the moral demands in bioethics are sufficiently low then we should be able to attain them, or if we can assume that all healthcare professionals and patients will act selflessly then we can keep the demands high. They have also been used in applications of just-war theory. For some, war is inevitable, so they regard the function of just-war theory as simply to limit the worst features of warfare; others maintain that rational moral agents really can consistently reject violent action of any kind and live in a peaceful utopia. Rejecting such strategies, Hare (and, he believes, Kant) argues that this gap can only properly be resolved in terms of specifically religious ethics.

The influence of these moral philosophers upon specifically religious ethics in the last two decades has been immense. Many religious ethicists argue that this philosophical shift away from an individualistic understanding of moral agency gives renewed impetus to their discipline, concerned as it is with providing a critical account of differing ways that particular religious communities respond to moral issues. Some argue that Enlightenment secular moral agency is itself just one ideological tradition among others rather than a privileged mode of moral agency replacing traditional, religiously based moral agency (Hauerwas 1992, 2001; Milbank 1990). What does this really mean? It is at this point that the theme of religious membership becomes significant.

Assumptions About Moral Agency

A number of assumptions lie behind this new understanding of moral agency among religious ethicists. The first is that modernity is characterized by global pluralism rather than by secularity. Modern secularism is not a neutral platform for examining the world, but itself a form of ideology. The second is that, within this global pluralism, differing and sometimes competing religious communities abide and continue to contribute to moral agency. And the third is that such religious communities properly understood – and despite their internal differences – do still have a significant role to play in the public forum, even within secular democracies.

A good illustration of this is the extent to which religious ethicists, both in the United States and in the United Kingdom, and more widely within Europe, have been involved in public discussions of the morality of military action following September 11, 2001 and the morality of novel scientific areas such as that of stem cell research. It is still a feature of many national committees established to consider such moral issues that they regularly include a religious ethicist, alongside secular philosophers and lawyers. Politicians within both the United States and the United Kingdom are very wary of basing public policy upon any specific religious teaching (even within the Republic of Ireland such an approach is no longer popular). The same can be said of other, non-Western pluralistic societies, say India. Within many Islamic countries, too, there are similar tensions. In these contexts, secular "law" has increasingly had to navigate

religious diversity. Not the least of the fears is the risk of alienating other religious minorities within their respective countries. Nonetheless, there is still a wide-spread recognition that religious groups may have a distinctive contribution to make to the well-being of society at large.

The appointment of the theologian Rowan Williams as archbishop of Canterbury (2002–2012) is one example of this increasing recognition. Because the Church of England is still an established church, the prime minister of the United Kingdom has a direct role in the selection process of an archbishop. This role remains despite the fact that religious attendances across Christian denominations and across faith groups as a whole in England are lower than those elsewhere in the United Kingdom and about half of those in the United States. The archbishop, in turn, can vote in the House of Lords and thus has a direct role in political decisions and is likely to be especially influential in those involving moral issues. Before his appointment it was already known that Rowan Williams held relatively conservative views on the morality of stem cell research involving human embryos (research which the government supported) and more radical views opposed to the bombing of Afghanistan following September 11, 2001. In addition, to the consternation of evangelicals within the wider Anglican Communion, it was also widely known that he had liberal views on homosexuality and had knowingly ordained as priest someone who was living within a committed same-sex relationship. All of this suggests a very complex pattern of interaction quite at odds with a separation of public morality from religious traditions. A prime minister at the time, himself with known religious commitments, sanctioned the appointment of an archbishop who was likely to exercise a role of public leadership on moral issues, despite evangelical opposition to this appointment from within the Anglican Communion and despite the possibility that once appointed the archbishop might actively oppose government policy in some moral areas (as he did over invading Iraq).

An added twist to this example is that as England increasingly sees itself as a multi-faith society (although in reality the official membership of mosques and synagogues there is relatively small), so the archbishop of Canterbury has sometimes been identified as a spokesperson for religious faith in general. In recent years, a number of key meetings have been sponsored at Lambeth Palace, the London residence of the archbishop, involving a broad spectrum of religious leaders. The objective of these meetings has not been simply to promote interreligious friendship and cooperation, but also to present common cause when needed to influence government policy. For example, when Robert Runcie was archbishop (1980–1991), an unsuccessful attempt was made by one of these meetings to influence government to extend the law against public blasphemy to religious traditions beyond Christianity. Inevitably, such an attempt was contentious even within the religious traditions themselves. Some adherents argued that internal contradictions would inevitably arise (especially given the intellectual difficulties in defining what constitutes a "religious" tradition) and in any case free speech was preferable to anachronistic concepts of blasphemy.

There have been a number of religiously inspired empirical studies of public attitudes and moral behavior. One obvious example is *The Family, Religion and Culture Project* directed by the theologian and ethicist Don Browning (1934–2010). Books published as a result of the project attempted to give an overview of the social and theological debate about the family in modern America. At the heart of this project was a conviction that the family should be defended robustly by people of faith, despite the fact that in the name of the Bible it has often been distorted in the past. In the foundation book for the series, the authors argued that the fundamental family issue of our time may be how to retain and honor the intact family without turning it into an object of idolatry and without retaining the inequalities of power,

status, and privilege ensconced in its earlier forms (see Browning 1997). Using extensive social statistics they argued that in America one out of two marriages ends in divorce and almost one in three children is born outside marriage. Yet the United States is still a country of relatively high religious attendance and over two-thirds of all marriages take place in churches and synagogues. Second and even third marriages regularly take place in them in the United States and increasingly within the United Kingdom as well. Those writing for the project were well aware of these facts when they sought to defend what they term the "intact" family – by which they meant families in which children are brought up by both of their biological parents. Not wishing in any way to discriminate against other families, they still believed that it is vital for religious communities to encourage intact families, if necessary with help from the law.

Another approach, which I have set out at length elsewhere, is based less upon a moral campaign than upon an attempt to assess in social scientific terms just how significant religious factors are in moral agency (see Gill 1999) and in moral passion (see Gill 2017). Using extensive international data from social attitude questionnaires, I test whether claimed religious behavior or belief has any demonstrable relationship to more general moral attitudes or action. What emerges is that the religiously active are indeed distinctive in their attitudes and behavior. Some of their attitudes do change over time, especially on issues such as sexuality, and there are obvious moral disagreements between different groups of the religiously active in a number of areas. Nonetheless, there are broad patterns of belief, teleology, and altruism that distinguish those who are religiously active from those who are not. For example, Christian churchgoers have, in addition to their distinctive theistic and Christocentric beliefs, a strong sense of moral order and concern for other people. They are more likely than others to be involved in voluntary service: many childcare groups, youth clubs, charity shops, and care-of-the-elderly services depend heavily upon churchgoers. They see overseas charitable giving as important and are more hesitant about euthanasia and capital punishment and more concerned about the family and civic order than other people. None of these differences is absolute. Analogies could be found in other religions. The values, virtues, moral attitudes, and behavior of churchgoers are shared by many other people as well. The distinctiveness of the religiously active is real but relative.

This evidence is consonant with the argument about moral agency and communal membership. Even in pluralistic American society, there are still religious communities – Catholic Irish, Orthodox Greeks, and Orthodox Jews – which are relatively less fragmented. Yet, as MacIntyre notes, "even however in such communities the need to enter into public debate enforces participation in the cultural *mélange* in the search for a common stock of concepts and norms which all may enjoy and to which all may appeal ... in search of what, if my argument is correct, is a chimaera." This produces a curious mixture of historically and culturally contingent communities misguidedly searching for moral consensus. Further, "moral philosophies, however they may aspire to achieve more than this, always do articulate the morality of some particular social and cultural standpoint." As a result, modern, pluralistic societies cannot hope to achieve moral consensus. Rather, "it is in its historical encounter that any given point of view establishes or fails to establish its rational superiority relative to its particular rivals in some specific contexts" (MacIntyre 1984, 268–269). While moral agency within particular religious communities may be distinctive, it can still overlap with that of other religious and "secular" communities.

Can a causal relationship be established between religious belonging and the distinctive virtues that religious people hold to a greater degree than other people? The strongest evidence for such a relationship involves comparing the responses of two groups of adult non-churchgoers – the one originally brought up going to church almost every week and the other never going in childhood at all. This

suggests that the effects of involuntary churchgoing as a child can still be traced in the relative strength of the Christian beliefs of adult non-churchgoers. Compared with non-churchgoers who never went to church as children, those adult non-churchgoers who went regularly as children show twice the level of Christian belief. In addition, the latter are more likely to hold moral attitudes on personal honesty and sexuality that are closer to those of regular churchgoers (see Gill 1999).

Belief and Action

If this evidence is accurate it suggests that for many moral agents there is not the clear separation of morality and religion that the secular post-Enlightenment ethics has claimed. The latter may have underestimated the power of religious belonging/belief to motivate individual moral agents and overestimated its own power to resolve public moral disagreements. In contrast, in a world that is more self-consciously pluralistic, religious traditions may once again be allowed a significant role in public debates about moral issues, even though they are unlikely to be granted the sort of monopoly of ethical decision making more characteristic of theocracies than modern democracies.

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CHAPTER 142

Future Generations

Svend Andersen

"Future generations" is the name for an ethical problem. People now living can influence the lives of future people in new ways. Industrial civilization has such an effect on the natural world that the life conditions of future generations depend upon it. Modern biotechnology can influence both the very existence of future persons and their properties. Because of the recent emergence of the problem, it is unsurprising that traditional Christian and other religious thinking does not contain obvious resources for dealing with it. One could even argue that there are important elements in traditional religious thinking that run counter to moral responsibility for future generations.

The Facts and the Problems

A closer look at the problem of future generations shows that it is not simply one issue, but several different problems. They can be presented as three questions:

1 Should there be future generations at all? This question presented itself dramatically from the point in history when it became possible for humans to extinguish the whole of humankind. That possibility emerged after the construction of nuclear and biochemical weapons, and it was a determining feature of the political climate during the Cold War.
2 What living conditions should future generations have? This question has, first, a purely *economic* meaning: how does the handling of contemporary wealth influence the economic conditions of future humans? This problem is not new, but its dimensions are. Second, during the last fifty years the question has acquired an *ecological* meaning. In what kind of natural environment will future generations find themselves? And third, the question has a *demographic* dimension, which is not totally distinct from the previous two aspects. Will the number of people on the planet cause grave problems in terms of life conditions?
3 What kind of people should future generations be? Thanks to biotechnology and the so-called reproduction revolution, it might be possible to an increasing degree for parents to influence the properties of their offspring. Prenatal genetic testing makes possible the negative selection of diseases and handicaps. Genetic engineering might be used for "enhancing" the genetic makeup of future children. Reproductive cloning could mean that some future persons will be (almost) genetically identical with existing persons.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

These problems raise different ethical questions, some of which are similar to traditional moral problems. In Western societies these problems are also dealt with in a secular context with moral philosophy as its form of reflection. It is therefore appropriate to present some arguments in moral philosophy and religious responses. Before we enter into the ethical field proper, however, it is necessary to mention some conceptual difficulties.

Conceptual Difficulties

The moral problems related to future generations are in many ways shaped by secular, Western culture. Their very formulation presupposes that the moral agent is an individual acting against other individuals. Traditionally, future individuals were thought of as children or grandchildren of now-living persons. The problems of our day, however, are not only "private" or family problems. Rather, the moral agent is the whole of humankind, the living inhabitants of the planet. And the moral subjects with whom they are confronted are future generations as a collective entity. The new issue is whether and to what degree this collective entity belongs to the sphere of responsibility of the now living. As to the concept of the future, in secular terms, its content is not qualitatively different from the present. Future generations are human beings like us, living in the same physical world we inhabit and in the same empirical time.

Many traditional religious beliefs do not fit into these concepts of "generation" and "future." Religions do not regard the future just as an extension of the present. In the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) we find ideas about a future which is transcendent to worldly reality. Cosmic time is one single process beginning with creation and aiming at the end of the world and the establishment of transcendent reality. Asian religions, on the other hand, see the cosmos as a continuous repetition of stages, even if there is a final state (nirvāna). So the very picture of temporal development and hence of the future in many religious worldviews is different from the secular picture, and the views in various religions are different from each other. The same is true of the concept of "generation." According to the "biblical" religions, children are the same kind of individual humans as their parents. There is one uniform chain of generations until the end of time and the establishment of a new transcendent life form. In Asian religions, however, the idea of reincarnation gives a totally different picture. Children are beings who make rebirth possible.

Related to these cosmological and metaphysical differences are differences in the concept of individual persons. The "biblical" idea of a human agent presupposes the concept of the person in the sense of an identifiable conscious entity who remains the same over time. This concept is far from obvious in Asian religions, where, say in Buddhism, the idea of a stable self is rather regarded as an illusion. It is therefore not enough to realize differences in various religions' moral teachings about future people. One also has to keep in mind that the very idea of future generations takes its meaning from metaphysical frameworks that vary in different religious traditions.

Future Generations in Traditional Religious Ethics

As an example of traditional religious thinking about future generations we can look at biblical religion (i.e. the Hebrew Bible that is common to Judaism and Christianity, and the New Testament). In the religion of the Hebrew Bible, this-worldly human life has a central place. Humans are created by God as

bodily beings. This involves sexual differentiation, sexuality, and procreation: "male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). And it is emphasized both as a blessing and a task that humans shall "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (1:28). It is a divine obligation for humans to create future generations.

Even if "future generations" clearly is a central motif in the religion of the Hebrew Bible, one can hardly call it an ethical issue. But the importance of the continuation of the people is reflected in some norms of sexual ethics. Thus, it is emphasized that sexuality should be linked to procreation. Children are regarded as those on whom the future of the parents depends. Hence the obligations of the children are strongly emphasized, as is obvious in the so-called fourth commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Ex. 20:12).

The "this-worldly" thinking is altered with the appearance of a new understanding of time in apocalyptic thought (i.e. ideas about the end of this time and the beginning of a new era with the establishment of a transcendent, eternal kingdom). Even if this prophetic vision is about a future enacted by God, human responsibility is still emphasized. However, humans are not responsible for the enactment of this "new" future. In the New Testament, apocalyptic thinking plays a dominant role, to such a degree that the end of time will soon occur: "the time is short" and "the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:29, 31). This of course makes the question of future "worldly" generations quite irrelevant. Marriage and procreation more or less have the character of an interim arrangement: "they that have wives be as though they had none" (1 Cor. 7:29). One could say that according to original Christian belief as we find it in St. Paul, salvation in the transcendent future dominates over the created world. In a way, "future" and "generation" do not really belong together.

Christians soon had to realize that this world would not come to an end immediately. They had to develop an ethics for life in this material world, involving marriage and the raising of children. As an example, consider Martin Luther's interpretation of the fourth commandment. Remarkably, Luther finds in the commandment not only prescriptions for children to obey their parents, but also a reminder of the responsibility of parents. Their main task is to raise children to become useful people for God and neighbor. This not only means collecting "money and goods" for the children, but also securing their learning and education. The result of good upbringing in this sense would be the flourishing of the worldly and spiritual community of humans. Luther sees the issue of future generations in the framework of his doctrine of social life – both secular and religious – as sustained by God the creator.

Responses in Moral Philosophy

Modern Western ethics has responded to the problem of future generations along the lines of the three questions noted at the beginning of this entry.

Nuclear deterrence after World War II challenged philosophers from very different camps. Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) saw in it the threat of "extinction of the human species." According to German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), the existence of the atomic bomb and the possibility of nuclear war marked a qualitatively new situation: the threat of total annihilation of humankind caused by humans themselves. The risk of nuclear war raised metaphysical or existential questions. Jaspers saw the problem of nuclear war as closely related to the problem of totalitarian government. The West was faced with an alternative: either prepare to defend freedom with the risk of annihilation, or surrender

to communist totalitarianism. For Jaspers, this is an alternative between two sacrifices of not only political–rational, but also religious significance. The sacrifice of the whole of humanity for the sake of freedom only makes sense if human life is seen in relation to transcendence. Also, the new situation requires a conversion of human beings. The decisions of world politics hence reached dimensions similar to the myths of earlier times (e.g. about the Flood) and the challenge was not only to politics but also to the churches.

Hans Jonas (1903–1993) saw a similar threat in the environmental crisis. His answer is a future-ethics of responsibility (Jonas 1984). Prototypical is the responsibility parents carry for their children. Jonas regards as the most fundamental ethical imperative the obligation for there to be future generations – not in the sense of an obligation towards specific humans, but rather as an obligation towards the very idea of humankind.

As to the life conditions of future generations, one question is whether and how the present generation has any responsibility for the economic basis – the wealth – of their descendants. The question can be understood as one of *distributive justice* (i.e. of finding an ethically defensible distribution of the burdens and goods in society). Does it make sense to talk about a just distribution across generations? The concept of distributive justice has a long history within moral philosophy and religious ethics. Two important theories dominate contemporary philosophy: contractarianism and utilitarianism.

American philosopher John Rawls (1921–2002) constructed his theory of justice on the basis of the classical idea about the social contract (Rawls 1973). In order for political principles to express fairness, the contracting persons have to choose them under a "veil of ignorance" (i.e. ignorant as to their position – social and otherwise – within the future political order). According to Rawls, under these conditions, two principles of justice would be adopted: (1) equal rights of freedom for all, and (2) unequal distribution of goods and burdens only if all benefit, particularly the worst off. Among the things hidden under the veil of ignorance is the place of each contracting person in the order of generations. The problem of distribution is this: what is a fair share to leave for the following generation? According to Rawls, transmission of the "gains of culture and civilization," maintenance of "just institutions," and the saving of "a suitable amount of real capital accumulation" are required (Rawls 1973, 285). Even if the relation between the present generation and the following is asymmetric and non-reciprocal, just saving mirrors a kind of mutuality. In Rawls, the historical life of a people is seen as cooperation governed by the same principle of justice as that between contemporaries. One generation acting justly for future ones is an essential part of maintaining and improving a just social order.

For utilitarians, the goods to be distributed are amounts of "happiness," nowadays defined as preference satisfaction or interest fulfillment. The utilitarian concept of just distribution is not primarily based on equality, but rather on maximizing: the right way of acting is the one that leads to maximal interest fulfillment for all parties involved. The principle of utility is applied to *environmental* problems by Peter Singer. What kind of environment should the present generation hand over to future ones: should "wilderness," for example, be regarded as "world heritage"? According to utilitarianism, we should leave an environment that will create maximum interest fulfillment, perhaps in terms of enjoyment of nature (Singer 1993). But how can we know which kind of environment will bring enjoyment for future generations? They may have different preferences from ours. This is just one of the difficulties with which a utilitarian ethics for future generations is confronted.

The life conditions of future generations will to a large degree be determined by the number of inhabitants on the earth, hence there is also a *demographic* aspect to our problem. Global population

growth will require increased production of food and goods, and will cause further exploitation of natural resources. Hence, it seems to be an obvious requirement to curb the growth of the world's population. Seemingly we have a moral obligation to limit the number of individuals in future generations. However, according to utilitarian ethics, this conclusion is not obvious at all. Utilitarianism has a clear stance on the future of humankind. It regards the extinction of human beings as the gravest crime, because it would entail a vast reduction of the possible sum of happiness. A crucial feature of contemporary ethics, Derek Parfit argues, is that it must take into account that human beings now live in large communities. This means that the negative effects of our acts spread over thousands of millions of people. This is the problem of future generations which, for Parfit, belongs to the most important part of ethics. What is required in this situation is a rational altruism which rejects the self-interest theory of rationality. Rational altruism means radical impartiality. In some cases that requires us to give up our preferential treatment of our own children in favor of acting for the best for all children (Parfit 1985).

Now, if quantity matters, as it essentially does in utilitarianism, a remarkable consequence regarding future generations seems to follow. For any size of the world population, growth would be preferable because that would cause a larger amount of lives worth living. Parfit calls this the "repugnant conclusion" because he admits that the theory he is looking for must avoid it. Even if Parfit has not found the theory required in order to improve non-religious ethics, he has sharpened our awareness of the kind of control we have over future people, and the new kinds of ethical problems that such control brings with it.

Human power over the future also lies in some of the possibilities biotechnology has brought with it. A couple making use of prenatal genetic testing might have the choice of either giving birth to a diseased child or having another child through a new pregnancy. Is this choice about either harming or benefiting a child? In whichever way we answer, the question is an indication of the new kinds of influence people have on future generations. Genetic testing has bearing not only on the parent–child relationship. According to many critics, it can rather be understood as a kind of *eugenics* (i.e. an effort to influence the genetic properties of future generations). Genetic testing and selective abortion would be an instance of negative eugenics. It would improve the genetic quality of the population by selecting away "bad genes." One important argument against this practice is that it contradicts the basic principle of equal human dignity.

Genetics holds promise not only for diagnosis but also for the treatment of diseases. Techniques of so-called gene therapy could not only be applied to diseases, but also be used for improving capacities such as intelligence, longevity, memory, etc. This future possibility for genetic enhancement gives rise to a moral dilemma. On the one hand, it seems natural for parents to give their children the best possible opportunities, and what could be better than the traits mentioned? On the other hand, the determination of crucial properties would give parents a power over the lives of other human beings that contradicts the basic principle of human freedom. This principle has been advanced by Jürgen Habermas in relation to both genetic enhancement and reproductive cloning. The successful application of these techniques would cause the birth of children, the genetic makeup of whom was intentionally designed by other human beings. According to Habermas (2003), this would be an elimination of the chance that is normally connected with reproduction to such a degree that both individual human freedom and a relationship of equality would be violated. This would deeply alter the moral self-understanding of the human species and in this sense influence future generations.

The philosophical theories mentioned in this section fall into three groups. In the first we find a philosopher (Jaspers) who explicitly represents a philosophical religion. Similarly, Jonas could be called a religiously inspired philosopher. In the second group we have philosophers of a Kantian type (Rawls and Habermas), whose theory could not be called religious. Yet they defend liberal positions that leave room for congenial religious arguments. Third, the utilitarian philosophers explicitly emphasize that they seek a non-religious moral theory.

Responses in Global Politics

The environmental threats to the future of humankind – overpopulation, pollution, and resource scarcity – have been on the agenda of global politics since the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. In 1983 the UN created the World Commission on Environment and Development (called the Brundtland Commission, after its chairperson). The commission published its report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987. As a follow-up to the report, the UN organized the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, followed by a conference on the same issues in Johannesburg in 2002.

The main ethical idea related to UNCED is "sustainable development." The statement of this idea explicitly mentions future generations: "a sustainable development is a development that fulfills present needs without putting the possibilities of future generations to fulfill their needs in danger." The idea expresses a principle of intra- and intergenerational justice. The primary needs to be met are those of the poor of the present world. The development necessary to achieve this should not, however, unjustly limit the fulfillment of the needs of future generations. The realization of sustainable development would require a universal effort directed at the common (future) good. The UN serves as a political–legal framework, however fragile, to achieve it.

Besides the official UN conference, the Rio summit hosted a great number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), among which were several religious communities. The World Council of Churches (WCC) held its own conference, Searching for the New Heaven and the New Earth. In a letter to the churches, the participants of the WCC conference emphasize the uniqueness of the historical situation: for the first time, the life-sustaining systems on the planet can be destroyed by human activity. "And the children, what shall we say to the children and to the future generations?" Christians are to work for a just, peaceful, and ecologically sustainable development in a life-oriented global community. The religious foundation of this global ethics lies in the Christian belief in the Holy Spirit. The power of the Spirit, the authors claim, permeates the whole of creation. Christians should develop a spirituality of creation. A life according to the Spirit would work for all that supports life, such as justice and peace, and fight against poverty and racism, etc. But because the Spirit is present in the whole of creation, spiritual life also means taking care of nature.

Christianity was of course not the only religion present at the 1992 Earth Summit. Among the nongovernmental activities was a multi-religious manifestation celebrating the "sacredness of the earth." This event can be seen as an expression of the same idea as the one behind the project of a "world ethic" represented by the Christian theologian Hans Küng. According to Küng (1991), the global threats that put the very survival of humankind into question make necessary the establishment of a common global ethics in which all world religions should play a substantial role.

Conclusion: Why Should Religious People Care?

To skeptical eyes the "world ethic" project could be seen as an effort to instrumentalize religious ethics. The reasoning behind the project seems to be this: because of the grave global problems that threaten the very existence of future generations, we must create a common global ethics with elements from the main religions. Such a pragmatic attitude might conceal some of the theoretical problems inherent in religious ethics. In conclusion, I want to point at two examples of such problems.

1 The emphasis on the obligation to make possible future generations could be seen as an expression of an *anthropocentric* attitude. However, religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism are often regarded as favoring a *biocentric* view, seeing humans as just one kind of entity within the wholeness of being. And even if the Abrahamic religions can be understood in an anthropocentric way, they too think of the whole universe as God's creation and hence question the absolute value of human beings. In any case, the main religious traditions place a caveat on the idea of the survival of humankind as an absolute ethical obligation.
2 As mentioned in the beginning, religious doctrines essentially contain ideas of non-empirical reality and hence forms of existence that transcend the chain of generations. Non-empirical reality can be seen as a spiritual realm behind the illusion of the empirical world or as a future beyond worldly time. In either case, human bodily life is only given a relative position, and the existence of humankind is hardly seen as an end in itself.

The "relativity" of the existence of future generations that follows from both sets of ideas is, however, not the same as moral indifference. Even if this-worldly existence is not the final form of life, it is not without significance. That would be the consequence of asceticism. It is precluded by those religious doctrines that – like creation in Christianity – emphasize the God-givenness and goodness of human life on planet earth. As far as religious ethics is founded in this dual attitude – human life is significant, but not the final good – it could issue in a realistic ethics for the relationship to future generations. Even if religious believers realize that some day there will be no humans any longer, they take on the responsibility for creating the best conditions for their successors. They love their future neighbors as themselves.

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CHAPTER 143

Ecumenism

Timothy F. Sedgwick

Ecumenism marks the search for shared Christian identity in matters of belief and practice in a post-Christendom world. The development of Christian ethics is the story of ecumenism in the movement from moral judgments to shared understandings of the nature and purposes of moral teaching. These include understandings of moral development, formation, discernment, and the exercise of power and authority to determine membership and the relationship of church to culture. This is, moreover, the story of the development of universities and the discipline of religious ethics which informs Christian ecumenism and leads to accounts of religious ethics and interfaith understandings.

From Denominationalism to Ecumenism

The driving force of Christian ecumenism came from missionaries in the early twentieth century. They saw the mission field divided between churches such that Christian faith was identified with the particular claims of the different churches engaged in "overseas" mission, largely Protestant, Anglican, and Roman Catholic. For the sake of mission, some 1,200 representatives of Protestant churches, primarily from Northern Europe and North America, met in 1910 for nine days in Edinburgh, Scotland, for the first World Missionary Conference. There, in worship together and small groups, they sought to listen and learn what they shared in common as a matter of Christian faith.

Charles Brent, Episcopal missionary bishop of the Philippines, was "converted" and with the support of the Episcopal Church's General Convention sought a second conference on "Faith and Order." Delayed by World War I, in 1927 the first World Conference on Faith and Order met in Lausanne, Switzerland. Represented were Protestants, Anglicans, Eastern Orthodox, and two unofficial observers from the Roman Catholic Church. Just two years earlier in 1925, Nathan Söderblom, Archbishop of the Lutheran Church in Sweden, convened representatives of Protestant, Anglican, and Eastern Orthodox churches to work together for peace and justice.

These two movements – called respectively, "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work" – set in motion the ecumenical movement. "Life and Work" focused on Christian service and witness to a broken world. "Faith and Order" focused on coming to shared understandings that churches might be united as communities of faith and worship. In 1948 these two movements came together in Amsterdam to form the World Council of Churches (WCC). Together they sought to unite churches in "the inhabited world," which is the literal meaning of the Greek *oikoumenē,* or in English "ecumenical."

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The work of the two arms of the WCC reflected the claim that "doctrine divides, service unites." Matters of ethics were thought not to be church-dividing. In fact, however, this reflected a mainline Protestant, post-World War II consensus. Matters of morals have been a cause of division in the church since the first century. For example, scripture evidences contrary convictions over the morality of the use of lethal force, property, and marriage and divorce. The religious establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in the West – in other words, Christendom – established a common morality enforceable by ecclesiastical and civil law. Still, differences over morals remained as evidenced in the Roman Catholic history of casuistry and in the differences between moral teaching and actual conduct, for example, regarding marriage and sexual relations.

Divisions over moral teaching continued within Protestant churches and between Protestant churches. Major moral issues of contention have included slavery and apartheid, the use of lethal force, conscientious objection to military service, questions of non-combatant immunity given modern warfare, capital punishment, the claims of human rights, and more individual matters such as contraception, abortion, sexual identity and relations, discontinuing of medical treatment, assisted suicide, and genetic engineering. Differences over these matters within churches were variously addressed and adjudicated in terms of teaching and discipline. In turn, differences between churches were not only differences over morals but differences over ecclesiology, over how authority and power were structured in determining membership.

In 1982, at its plenary meeting in Lima, Peru, the WCC adopted what has been the most widely engaged ecumenical document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. As the name of the document indicated, baptism, Eucharist, and ministry were seen as central to Christian faith and the life of the church. In response to the document, baptism and Eucharist as initiating and celebrating Christian faith were broadly agreed to by members of the WCC (which is to say by Protestants, Anglicans, Mennonites, and Orthodox members of the WCC) and by Roman Catholics. It should be noted, however, that Evangelical churches largely absented themselves from ecumenical work because of their theological convictions. Instead, since 1846 they have been affiliated in the World Evangelical Alliance.

Baptism and Eucharist are, however, one thing; the nature and structure of ministry as matters of authority for leading and insuring the integrity of Christian faith within the church are something else altogether. Nowhere are the challenges for the unity of the churches greater than in addressing the nature and structure of authority in matters of moral judgments. Different churches may be divided over who teaches and what is taught. They also may be divided over how churches differ in respecting or encouraging different voices in matters of morals.

Matters of ecclesiology and ethics are central to what we may call "ecclesial ecumenism." Seeking an understanding of the basis for difference in moral judgments and for ordering moral authority is informed by what we may call "academic ecumenism." In the end, though, ecumenism is a matter of practice, of what individuals and local communities of faith do together that express and form faith and life that extends beyond the local into the world. Ecclesial ecumenism is, in the end, for the sake of "practical ecumenism."

Academic Ecumenism

Until the first half of the twentieth century, theological education was denominational in character. Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Anglicans, and Evangelicals had their own seminaries and universities. This meant that the preparation of ministry within churches was focused on the history,

doctrine, and discipline of their own traditions. Teaching was assimilation into a distinct tradition as a matter of preparation for ministry. In the United States, major universities such as Harvard (1636) and Yale (1701) were founded to prepare a learned ministry to serve the churches of New England. The founding of other colleges, that became universities and leaders in theological education, sought similarly to prepare a learned ministry to serve Protestant churches in other parts of the developing United States. These would include Union Theological Seminary in New York City (1836) and the seminaries or schools of theology at Emory University (1836), Duke University (1838), the University of Chicago (1857), and Vanderbilt University (1873).

As universities developed to serve the broader public in the United States and eventually the world at large, theological education broadened from a narrow denominationalism to a critical, historical focus on Protestantism and its importance for Western civilization. Given faculty and curriculum, they remained Protestant and more specifically mainline Protestant. Similarly, Roman Catholic theological education – moving from diocesan seminaries to Roman Catholic universities, such as Notre Dame (1842) and the Catholic University of America (1887) – was the study of Roman Catholic thought and practice, a world apart from Protestant universities. However, this all changed in the late 1960s with the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church (1962–1965).

In *Lumen gentium* [Light of the Nations] (1964), the Roman Catholic Church gave full expression to the possibility of salvation of those outside the Roman Catholic Church. Further, *Dignitatis humanae* [Of the Dignity of the Human Person] (1965) not only claimed that the dignity of persons required religious liberty in the political sphere but that the dignity of persons reflected that faith was a personal act that called for respect and understanding of the person. Given that Christians are called to be "one body," to be one as the Father and Son are one (John 17:21), Roman Catholics were, therefore, called to ecumenism: to open the door and engage other Christians in order to discover the faith they shared in common.

Given this ecumenical mandate, Roman Catholics – ordained, religious, and lay, men and women – began doctoral studies in programs that had been Protestant only. In turn, Roman Catholic scholars joined faculties and curriculum broadened accordingly. More than Protestant and Roman Catholic, programs in theological studies and in the developing field of religious ethics increasingly became ecumenical. This included persons from across religious traditions and cultures, including those that cut across historic church identities, for example, from the Black Church, from liberationist and postcolonial church movements, and especially women who came from all traditions and movements. Major university programs, such as the Divinity School at the University of Chicago and Harvard Divinity School, moreover, included in their program of studies religious traditions other than Christianity. Comparative religious studies brought additional perspectives on the nature of religious faith and as a way of life.

Who was at the academic table brought critique and new perspectives in what was studied, how it was studied, and hence in what was learned. Together, the work of scholars since the last quarter of the twentieth century sought ways to make sense of the moral life beyond denominational identities. The field of religious ethics broadened from a focus on the nature and application of moral norms and rules to how communities of faith formed people and shaped the moral life, especially given the multicultural, post-Christendom, and postcolonial worlds of contemporary cultures and politics. This included work in theories of virtue, narrative theory and moral identity, accounts of moral development and formation, ritual studies and the relation of worship and ethics, organizational theory and theories of change, political theory and the nature of justice, peace studies and conflict resolution, trauma studies and reconciliation. As universities of study, religious ethics is informed and shaped by all the disciplines of study that make sense (as the Latin *universitas* means)

of the whole, of the world, of the universe. It is by its nature ecumenical. As such it informs the ecumenical understandings between churches.

The ecumenical development of the field of Christian ethics is reflected in the development of the Society of Christian Ethics (SCE) in the United States. The SCE began from a small group of approximately 25 Protestant seminary professors that had been meeting together informally in the 1950s. From this small group, the SCE was formed in 1959 and grew to more than 850 active members in 2019. Roman Catholics were, in 2019, approximately one-third of the total number of members. Protestant denominations totaled 40 percent of members with Anglican-Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians, each having more than 50 members. Members identifying as "other" or as "unspecified" were approximately 10 percent of the members. Mennonites and members of nondenominational churches were together less than 10 percent of the members. Five people identified as Evangelical and four members were Jewish. In terms of racial and ethnic diversity, membership was approximately two-thirds Caucasian, just over 5 percent were African-American, just under 5 percent Asian or Asian-American, and just under 5 percent Hispanic or Latino/a. Just under 20 percent of members were unspecified. In terms of gender, two-thirds identified as men, one-third of the members identified as female, and three persons did not specify.

While the development of the SCE reflects the development of an ecumenically informed discipline of Christian ethics, the focus of concerns shifted as a majority of members moved into teaching positions at colleges and universities. Reflecting the mission of universities to serve a multicultural world, college and university programs of religious study increasingly sought to address questions of ethics and society and to develop interreligious understanding through historical and comparative approaches to religion. This change of focus in programs at colleges and universities is broadly speaking ecumenical in that it seeks a global ethic to address problems in all "the inhabited world." With this change, a new, interreligious ecumenism is conceived.

Ecclesiastical Ecumenism

For churches, the ecumenical challenge of seeking a unity of faith and life "that the world might believe" (John 17:21) was addressed through the WCC, in bilateral consultations and commissions between churches, and in the work of national and local councils of churches. In terms of ecumenism and ethics, the challenge was twofold. First, "what moral judgments do churches share together in order to offer common witness given the needs of the world?" Second, "how are churches to understand differences in moral judgments as matters of Christian faith?" The two questions, of course, are related. They reflect, respectively, the work and focus of the two main bodies that together formed the WCC in 1948, "Life and Work" and "Faith and Order."

In its focus on life and work together, the WCC has – as have national councils of churches – brought together members of different churches to offer moral witness, service, and advocacy. This includes addressing poverty, human rights, empowering women, the well-being of children and youth, physical and mental health needs, HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, economic justice, food security, sustainable agriculture, water protection, and justice in care for creation, peace-building, healing trauma, and reconciliation.

While ecumenical in terms of participation, these programmatic initiatives of the WCC were also church-dividing. In 1992 the Joint Working Group representing the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC appointed a small study committee to work on ecclesiology and ethics. They sought to identify the basis for agreement and division over moral judgments and thereby the work of witness, service, and

advocacy. In 1996 they published a study document, *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Division*. Broadly speaking, churches of different traditions agreed upon a basic moral vision given in Jesus Christ, an account of virtues that express the character of the Christian community as a moral community, and a set of moral values and obligations that indicate the goals and responsibilities of Christians.

Differences that divided churches in matters of morals reflect differences in specific moral judgments, how such judgments are formed, and how differences are addressed. As the study document says, churches have different pathways in their processes of moral formation and deliberation. This includes differences in understandings of scripture, liturgy, moral traditions, catechisms, pastoral practices, understandings of the world, prayer, and discernment. Differences that divide churches also include differences in the role of ministerial authority to teach and to demand obedience.

Concurrent with the work of the Joint Working Group, the WCC developed a study program among member churches to deepen understanding of what the church as communion (as *koinonia*) requires morally. Published as *Ecclesiology and Ethics* in 1997, the report from the WCC raised the outstanding question first raised by the WCC 1982 agreed text *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. Given differences in ministerial authority between churches, how are churches to move from baptism and Eucharist to matters of morals in terms of shared witness, service, and advocacy?

The Faith and Order Commission of the WCC drew together the work of the Joint Working Group in what is the second convergence text in its history. The text, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision,* was adopted in the spring of 2013 by the representatives of the churches of the WCC at the plenary meeting in Penang, Malaysia. Like *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry,* the text expresses the shared understanding of the church as communion, as local and universal. In terms of ecclesiology and ethics, the text emphasizes that questions of ecumenism and ethics and calls upon churches to seek together how and why they differ in not only what they teach but how they teach, how they determine who speaks for the church, and how they determine membership. In other words, the determination of moral teaching that results in witness, service, and advocacy is a matter of power and authority given changing social contexts and positions of privilege in the movement from established churches to postcolonial churches.

The first, bilateral, ecumenical dialogue that addressed ecclesiology and ethics was the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). In 1994 they published an agreed statement titled *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion, and the Church*. The document offered a shared moral vision of life in Christ expressed in a set of moral values and obligations that indicate shared sources of moral authority. They went on to identify differences in moral teaching as the result of how structures of authority developed. The difference between Anglicans and Roman Catholics in seeking shared life in Christ was, they concluded, the differences between dispersed and centralized authority where moral teaching is commendatory rather than prescriptive and binding. The challenge for Anglicanism was thus the problem of clarity in moral teaching and unity in witness, service, and advocacy. The challenge for Roman Catholicism was the problem of legalism and formalism in moral teaching.

In 2008 the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Roman Catholic Church (the Anglican-Roman Catholic Theological Consultation in the USA/ARC-USA) continued the work begun in *Life in Christ*. In 2014, ARC-USA completed an agreed statement titled *Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment: Seeking a Unified Moral Witness*. Again, differences in teaching on specific moral matters, such as human sexuality, reflect differences in dispersed and centralized structures of authority. As in the two case studies presented – one on migration/immigration and the other on same-sex relations – there was

agreement that the purpose of moral teaching was to inform conscience and to bear witness, often prophetically, to the world. This requires, they concluded, clear moral norms offering clear moral judgments. However, moral discernment and witness are not necessarily tied to singularity of teaching. Moral conscience is also formed, or must be formed, in a process that requires hearing different voices offering different moral judgments given differences in histories and contexts.

What voices should be privileged, authoritative, in a church's teaching and discipline in order to form a holy community carries with it questions of how dissent may be limited or restricted. This opens the question of how the structuring of authority – dispersed or centralized – shapes or forms moral conscience and what then are the strengths and weakness of different ways of ordering ministry. A further question is whether or not different churches with different structures of authority and power are a gift that may make the church more ecumenical, more able to bear witness to God in all people and to all people in all lands.

Practical Ecumenism

Academic ecumenism provides the historical and critical understandings of the nature and development of Christian faith and life as given and shaped by the church. As a critical study of religion, religious ethics is integral to ecumenical ecumenism in its focus on moral formation, discernment, and judgment in the larger context of the world as that has developed into the multicultural, post-Christendom, post-colonial, religiously pluralistic world of the twenty-first century. This serves Christian leaders in ecclesial ecumenism in their own focus on forming the church that is both local and global that all "may be one ... so that they world may believe" (John 17:21).

In turn, ecclesial ecumenism serves a practical ecumenism. The ecumenical documents that have been written over the last seventy years are clear that life in Christ begins with life in the church. As a communion of the people of God, gathered locally and bound together globally, Christian faith and discipleship is celebrated and effected individually and corporately in worship and in such practices as prayer and devotions, scriptural meditations, shared fellowship, education, pastoral care, community service, evangelism, and advocacy for those in need.

Service together is why the original Life and Work Movement after World War I was understood to unite Christians. At the level of practice, it still does. And in that work, faith in Christ is shared, as it was in the 1910 first World Missionary Conference. In these face-to-face relations, Christian faith is rooted, indigenized. At the same time, in these relations, in worship and service, Christian faith is ecumenical as it extends beyond a tribe into all the world. In this sense, practical ecumenism is supported by ecclesial ecumenism and academic ecumenism, but practical ecumenism is where Christian faith is incarnate and from whence Christian ecumenism and ethics begins and ends.

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CHAPTER 144

Family

Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar

The structure and conditions of "family" have varied across cultural and religious traditions, historical periods, and forms of political economy. Very rarely has "family" signified something like the contemporary nuclear family of Western post-industrial society that is the object of yearning by many of those calling for a resurgence of "family values." Kinship structures have always existed in a mutually formative relationship with economic and political structures, and these structures have, in turn, shaped the religious and ethical imagination. Kinship terms have also been used in metaphoric ways to signify close affective, political, economic or religious ties, through fictive kinship categories.

In this entry, I examine family structures in ancient Israel and early Christianity before turning to contemporary debates about family structures and ideals in Jewish and Christian ethics.

Genealogy, Genetics, and Fictive Kinship

If we were to quickly brainstorm characteristics that signify "family," undoubtedly one of the first to be mentioned would be genetic or genealogical connection. In Judaism, genealogy has held tremendous religious and political significance. The ancient Israelites, and later Jews, understood themselves to be descended from Abraham, who had received the promise of land for his descendants from YHWH. Israelites understood their twelve tribes to be descended from the twelve sons of Jacob, grandson of Abraham. YHWH was conceived as landlord, distributing land to the twelve tribes, who must pass it down within the kinship network. Other metaphors for YHWH invoke family relationships: they include father, mother, and redeemer (*go'el*) – this latter specifically referring to economic redemption. The *go'el* rescued kin from economic devastation, paying debts so that the land could be retained within the kinship network. Metaphors for Israel in relation to God include bride, son, daughter, and redeemed slave.

Early Christian writings and practice both acknowledge and transform importance of these genealogical ties. Jesus is placed within the genealogical story of Israel in Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–38, which trace Jesus's lineage back to David, Abraham and (in the case of Luke) to Adam. The decision to admit Gentiles to the early Christian communities (Acts 15) meant that the significance of this genealogy had to be relativized or reinterpreted. Paul argued that all those with faith become children of Abraham (Romans 4; Galatians 3). Within early Christian communities, the language of fictive kinship was

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

pervasive. God is described as Father, fellow Christians are brothers and sisters, disciples are children of God and heirs of God (Esler). This language provided early Christians with a new, "fictive" form of the genealogical ties so important to Jewish identity, and an alternative to the hierarchical and exclusionary family and patronage ties that structured Roman society (see below).

"Family" in the Hebrew Bible

The religious significance of family in Judaism and Christianity was shaped by the lived experience of family structures. The predominant family structures during the formative periods of Judaism and Christianity existed in a complex integration with political and economic relations.

There are various terms describing kinship organization in the Hebrew Bible. The smallest unit or *bayit,* often translated as the "house of the father," was much broader than the paradigmatic nuclear family of today. Meyers suggests that the best translation of *bayit* is "family household," where *family* signifies that aspect of ancient Israelite kinship and social structures originating in and organized around hereditary ties, and *household* signifies the inclusion of those not connected through biological reproduction (such as servants or sojourners), as well as the domicile itself and its economic assets (tools, land, etc.). The family was an economic unit, both productive and reproductive; children became economic assets when they began to work, probably at age five or six. There was no contemporary "work/family" distinction to navigate.

At the next level of social organization, the term *mishpachah* generally signifies several *bayit* or households closely connected to one another, geographically, socially, and economically. These might comprise an extended family, or a group of such extended families. Finally, the broadest unit of kinship organization is the *sevet,* usually translated as "tribe." In the earliest centuries of Israel's existence, governance was constituted through these broader tribal kinship networks. As recorded in the Book of Judges, judges were the political leaders of the tribes and justice was administered by tribal courts. The household or *mishpachah* as the central unit of Israeli society persisted through the monarchy and the second temple period, though as Blenkinsopp has argued, the monarchy set up its own centralized state court and temple to compete with the political and religious functions of kinship networks.

Kinship structures were also deeply integrated with economic relations. The earliest, pre-monarchical Israelites, in the period from roughly 1200–1020 BCE, settled the Palestinian highlands, a relatively inhospitable agricultural environment. Kinship relations were organized to secure subsistence and survival. Many of the provisions of the Hebrew law codes emerge from this period and originate in economic imperative. For example, as Meyers suggests, the strong emphasis on maintaining each family's "inheritance," or share of land granted by YHWH, may be rooted in variable local agricultural conditions and the need to pass down intimate knowledge of particular parcels of land.

Marriage in ancient Israel, as in surrounding Ancient Near Eastern societies, was contractual, and intimately tied to property rights, inheritance, and labor (both productive and reproductive). Women were transferred from father to husband in marriage agreements, in ways that paralleled property transactions in many respects. Marriage law incorporated economic protections for the wife in the event of a divorce. The institution of levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5–6), according to which a man must marry his brother's widow if the brother has died childless, was instituted to

ensure an heir for the deceased, maintaining property in the family line, as well as economic security for the widow.

Biblical laws aimed at economic security for marriage partners and offspring were supplemented by provisions to protect the most vulnerable in society, those who existed outside of protective kinship ties, or lost them. The codes repeatedly adjure particular care for widows and orphans, for the poor, and for strangers/foreigners, "for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21, Deuteronomy 10:19). Some directives instituted communal responses to ongoing need, such as the provision of the fallow year (Ex 23:10–11) or leaving the edges of the field ungleaned for the poor to gather food (Deuteronomy 24:19–21). The commanded periodic remission of debts (Deuteronomy 15:1–11) and freeing of debt slaves (Deuteronomy 15:12–18) would, if implemented, prevent Israelites from falling into a permanent state of economic servitude, and would protect the kinship claims to particular parcels of land. This social legislation is intimately entwined with cultic regulation and religious memory; arguably, it envisions a society where all are included in the community and have their basic needs met.

In short, the religious ethics of the family in ancient Israel and early Judaism were also social and political ethics, because kinship structures were related to politics and economics – often, kinship structures were *constitutive* of politics and the economy; and when political and economic structures emerged independent of kinship relations, they had to be constituted through competition with kinship traditions and structures.

Family and Kinship in Early Christianity

An account of family structures and ideals in early Christianity must navigate the Palestinian Jewish context of Jesus' followers and the early Christian urban communities that incorporated both Jews and Gentiles.

The Greco-Roman Context

Just as there is no word in the Hebrew Bible to correspond to today's nuclear family structure, neither is there such a word in Latin or Greek. The Latin word *familia* referred to persons, but also material possessions, as well as persons who were possessions (slaves), and referenced relatives beyond the nuclear core. The Greek word *oikos* could refer to property or to all members of the household; *oikonomia,* semantic root of the contemporary word "economics," referred to household management. The home was not private, a place of retreat from political and economic relations; on the contrary, political and economic relations were often conducted within the household space.

In the early Roman Empire, family relations were integrated into complex hierarchical structures of patronage, honor and shame, a system which distributed material, social, and political goods in profoundly unequal ways. Patronage relations were a form of fictive kinship – they incurred a set of mutually binding obligations between unequals that paralleled the obligations associated with kin and marriage relations. Honor itself was a primary social good; the individual received honor through his or her membership in a group, particularly a family group, and conversely, the group's honor could be destroyed by the actions of an individual. This was particularly true of women's sexuality; women's virginity and

chastity were markers of family honor. As Osiek and Balch (1997) note, the strength of patronage systems is inversely proportionate to the effectiveness of government as an instrument for distributing power and material goods. Kinship and fictive kinship take over where the state cannot.

Palestine

The first-century Palestinian Jews who first heard Jesus's message existed within a family system that reflected both their Jewish heritage and the influence of this Roman social order. In Jesus's time, large elite Romanized households were established in Palestine, living from the agricultural produce of the surrounding peasant population, and gradually expropriating their lands. New Testament statements about the family and household must be understood against this backdrop. Jesus's parables drew upon the household and agriculture to image the kingdom of God; many scholars read Jesus's moral teachings as endorsing the mutual support that might enable survival in this oppressive economy.

Some aspects of the New Testament record, acknowledge, and even reinforce the importance of family ties. Of the several Jewish schools of thought on divorce in circulation in the first century, Jesus chose the most restrictive, that of the school of Shammai, which taught that a man cannot divorce a woman except for adultery (Brodsky). Jesus received hospitality (a form of patronage) in the homes of relatives of his disciples, attended weddings, and offered healing to petitioners' close relatives.

Other teachings and actions attributed to Jesus seem to encourage a rejection of family ties and obligations to facilitate total devotion to God (Mark 3:33; Luke 14:26), and predict family strife as a result of discipleship (Mark 13:12–13; Matthew 10:21, 34–37). Jesus's table fellowship with tax collectors, sinners, and his contact with unclean persons took direct aim at conceptions of honor and shame that structured Greco-Roman and Jewish social, economic, political, and family life. Disciples were encouraged to leave behind their *oikia* and *agrous* – *their* household and fields – the structures that located them within broader social and economic relationships, thus conferring security, identity, and material benefits (Mark 10:29–30, 31).

These seemingly contradictory threads make more sense when we remember how thoroughly kinship and family intersect with political and economic structures that that gave shape to life in Palestine. These structures could serve well-being or institutionalize exploitation. They could include or exclude. In addition to the multivalent nature of the New Testament witness in general, the pervasive intersection of family and kinship with social and economic structures virtually guaranteed that family would operate to oppress and exclude in some respects, and to serve human well-being in others. Thus, the New Testament's depiction of Jesus's nuanced and contextualized response to family relationships can be seen to reflect a consistent concern with ensuring inclusive structures that serve human well-being.

The earliest urban Christian worshiping communities were house churches. Roman religion was practiced in households, but these early Christian communities stood in tension with Roman household structures in many respects. Notably, the inclusiveness of the Eucharistic meal, while continuous with Jewish traditions of inclusion of the marginalized and vulnerable, would have stood in sharp tension with prevailing Roman status hierarchies. Most scholars see the household codes in the deutero-Pauline letters (Ephesians 5:22–6:9; Colossians 3:18–4:1) as evidence of increasing accommodation to Roman social and political norms. In sum, early Christian house churches adopted, stood in tension with, and sometimes transformed the household and kinship structures that allocated status and access to material goods and political power within first-century Roman society.

Contemporary Religious Ethical Reflection on the Family

Family and kinship structures have taken many shapes in relation to differing political and economic structures across the centuries. The canonized texts emerging from the earliest phases of Judaism and Christianity that we have just explored have influenced conceptions of family to some extent. Arguably, however, interpretations of the authoritative texts have been shaped by prevalent family structures and ideals more than they have shaped them (Satlow 2001). It is not possible to provide a comprehensive survey of this history here. Rather, I explore some contemporary discussions of family structures and conditions, continuing to argue that family structures always exist in interdependence with political and economic structures.

Since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the advent of social-contract political theory and classical and neoclassical economic theory, much Western thought has conceived of the family as separate from politics and the economy. During the Industrial Revolution, a significant portion of productive economic activity moved outside of the home and into the factory; over time, the work that remained in the home, domestic maintenance and child-rearing, was excluded from the conceptual domain of "work." Those persons (primarily women) who managed the household and provided care were defined as dependents rather than economic contributors. Political theory moved from a patriarchal model, whereby political authority was passed down through kinship lines from fathers to sons, to the view that political authority derived from the consent of the governed, or at least of adult, property-owning males.

The home came to be understood as a private realm, one that should be governed by distinct, even contrasting motives from those that governed politics and the market. Whereas the latter were seen as places for the pursuit of enlightened and competitive self-interest, the family was theorized as a realm of altruism, moral formation, and affective concern. This understanding of family as private and as uniquely responsible for the moral formation of its members (and, by implication, for the moral quality of society as a whole) has saturated our worldviews.

Such a view of the family informs at least one important strand of contemporary Christian and Jewish ethics, as well as some secular discourse about the family. This school of thought puts forth the thesis that there exists a "crisis of the family" and that this breakdown in the "family" is more cause than effect of various social ills such as crime and poverty. Thinkers in this vein encourage renewed commitment to the intact, monogamous, permanent two-parent family as the site of child-rearing, while often emphasizing the contemporary value of gender equality within the family (Browning et al. 2000; Post 2000). Often, but not always, these thinkers prefer families formed around a heterosexual couple to those led by same-sex or other gender-variant couples. Concerned about high divorce rates, which they attribute to excessive concern with personal fulfillment, many critique contemporary parents for insufficient sacrificial commitment to their children. Many in this school use the language of "intrusion" to describe the state's relation to the family. They express concern that the state will improperly intervene in family life and encourage the breakdown in individual responsibility and commitment that they diagnose as the cause of contemporary family ills (Browning et al. 2000).

Most of us would affirm the value of long-term commitment between partners, and loving concern for and moral guidance to children. However, this school of thought may give too little attention to the ways in which state and economy already shape the family. For example, most adults have little control over the working hours demanded by their employers, and the most marginalized workers tend to have the least flexibility in this regard. This can present significant difficulties for families balancing paid work

with care for dependent children or aging parents. Likewise, family does not exist as an entity separate and independent of the state, with which the state may or may not interfere (Fineman 2010). The state determines who may marry, the requirements for marriage, obligations of spouses to each other and to their children, how property is shared between spouses and children and how it is transferred after death. The state determines how much autonomy to allow parents in their child-rearing practices and when to intervene to prevent abuse, require vaccines or education, and so on.

The state can also redistribute monetary income toward those providing unpaid dependent care, a necessary human activity that occurs primarily, though not exclusively, within the family. The burden of dependent care in human life has increased. Unlike in the subsistence agricultural economy of ancient Israel and much of human history, children today are not economic assets, beginning to labor at a young age. Rather, preparation for participation in today's skilled service economy requires long years of expensive education and training. In addition, modern healthcare means that significant numbers of people live long enough to require intensive care in old age. Caregiving labor is typically uncompensated or radically undercompensated in a money economy; this contributes to widespread poverty and vulnerability among those providing and receiving care (Kittay 1999; Fineman 2010).

For some the idea of remunerating care seems like a contamination or commodification of love; it seems to suggest the heightened self-interest and failure of sacrificial commitment that worries some contemporary ethicists. The decision to raise children is often viewed as an expression of personal preference and fulfillment, rather than as a contribution to the society and economy. In the United States, state support for the economic labor of dependent care has been minimal. Those forms of state support that do exist have often been carefully crafted to exclude families of color (Abramovitz 2018).

Cognizant of such concerns, some religious ethicists, following the lead of feminist economists, philosophers, and political theorists, insist that we attend to the ongoing, inescapable economic functions of the family (Adler 1998; Albrecht 2004; Hinze 2015; Sullivan-Dunbar 2017). The family is economic not primarily in Gary Becker's (1991) sense of a location for the expression of preferences and utility maximization, but in the richer sense of "provisioning" articulated by feminist economists (Folbre 2012 and Nelson 1993). These ethicists tend to argue for a stronger state role supporting families in carrying out the demanding task of nurturing children and caring for dependent adults. They give less attention to encouraging particular family structures.

Different communities have resorted to different strategies for balancing care work with work in the paid economy. Privileged families may be able to imitate the widespread ideal of committed spouses together managing both productive and reproductive labor. Frequently, however, their apparent moral achievements have been founded upon the exploitation of others who are thereby excluded from the same family ideal (Cahill 2000; Albrecht 2004). For example, for much of the history of the United States, a large proportion of care responsibilities were met through indentured servitude and slavery. After slavery ended, a large portion of care needs continued to be met by women of color who were often shut out of other employment opportunities (Glenn 2010). In prosperous Western societies today, many families hire migrant careworkers. Many of these migrant women leave their own children behind in the care of other family members, neighbors, or even orphanages to care for the children of the wealthy (and to provide desperately-needed financial support to their own families). Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) describe a "care drain" from less-developed countries, a drain that repeats the past colonial pillage of other economic resources.

Those living in marginalized communities develop strategies to ensure material survival and appropriate care for children. Carol Stack (1974) described the kinship networks that assured care for

children in a low-income black community. Biological mothers often, but not always, raised their own children; where needed, other kin – grandmothers, kin of the child's father, aunts, or sisters would step in. Black feminist social theorist Patricia Hill Collins (2009) describes such caregivers as "othermothers."

In short, long-term commitment and sacrifice for other family members are important ideals and markers of Christian identity for many Christian ethicists. However, if Christian ethicists ignore the ways that economy and state shape the family, they will likely reinforce ideas and practices that end up exploiting marginalized groups – women, people of color, and migrants.

Contemporary Jewish Family Ethics

Most contemporary Jewish ethicists acknowledge the economic nature of the family more readily than do some Christian ethicists. The notion of marriage as a contract, through which the spouses are expected to contribute to the economic life of the community, to bear children and to carry on the life of the people of Israel, persists through the centuries of rabbinical legal interpretation and Jewish practice. The economic nature of marriage may be reconceived to better suit contemporary notions of economy and contemporary social norms, as in Rachel Adler's revisioning of the Jewish wedding liturgy. Adler argues that the traditional Jewish marriage ceremony, *kiddushin,* still bears connotations of the acquisition of the wife as property. As an alternative, she puts forth the *B'rit Avuhim* or "Lover's Covenant," modeling the marriage on a business or financial partnership between equals. Adler explicitly affirms that marriage is (among other things) an economic institution, but her model depicts the couple as joint stewards of communal resources, rather than casting the wife herself as property.

Adler is very explicit that her *B'rit Avuhim* is intended *not* to be valid under halakhic law. If it is halakhic, then only the husband may initiate a divorce, even today. However, since adherence to *halakhah* is a strong marker of Jewish identity, this deliberate avoidance of halakhic validity does exact a cost. Adler offers an alternative account of the relationship of the wedding liturgy to Jewish identity: in it, the newly married couple become a *bayit b'Yisra'el,* a household among the people Israel. As such, they are responsible both for the continuation of the people of Israel (a form of reproductive labor), and for participating in the central Jewish task of *tikkun olam* or repairing the world. Thus, Adler connects the mission of the Jewish family with both religious identity and a broader social ethic.

Thus, we see religious ethicists, Jewish and Christian, mining, challenging, and reinterpreting ancient religious texts for guidance on family ethics that speaks to the contemporary challenges. In so doing, they necessarily make choices about thematic emphasis while drawing on a rich and polyvocal set of resources to address profoundly transformed realities for kinship and family structures and conditions.

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CHAPTER 145

Interspecies Communities

Celia Deane-Drummond

Interspecies communities are about the specific ethical challenges that arise when different species are living in close association with one another and either accommodating to or competing for the same resources. Anthropological research that uses tools for investigating specific animal communities in their association with humans through an ethnographic approach is particularly illuminating for this topic. One can view such communities as a complicating factor when considering related moral challenges of, for example, ecology, animal ethics, justice, and sustainability. For example, ecological ethics tends to focus on issues such as resource scarcity or biodiversity loss, or possibly ecosystem stability rather than ethical significance of the interaction between species. Animal ethics gives priority generally to the worth of individual animals, and claims for their rights along analogous grounds to human rights, rather than viewing different animals in a complex community that includes humans and other living species. Justice, on one hand, is often narrowed to mean what is due to whom, and while it might be stretched to include those who are not human, or even the earth, as such as part of what counts as being morally considerable, it is rather harder to determine what is due to whom when the flourishing of different species are mutually entangled. Sustainability, on the other hand, is more used to dealing with what could be termed system ethics, but the multiple definitions of sustainability in terms of economic, social, and ecological flourishing orientated toward future generations does not necessarily take sufficient account of the complex entangled natural and cultural dimensions. Consideration of interspecies communities forces the questions about relationality in a way that presses beyond standard environmental ethics approaches that either consider the earth through a romantic perspective on wilderness, for example, or an equally alien treatment of living things just as ecosystem services.

Anthropologists have begun to take the social dimension of species other than humans very seriously in thinking through the dynamics of interspecies interactions and their significance in diverse religious and cultural settings. Indeed, the extent of human interaction on planet earth is such that many anthropologists believe that a "pristine" natural world is no longer really feasible, even "wild" species are impacted in some ways by human activities, encapsulated in a broader scientific narrative about the impact of humans that is gaining increasing influence known as the geological era of the Anthropocene. The start date of that era is debated, with anthropologists and many ecologists tending to favor a very early date coincident with the Holocene and the beginnings of human agriculture, while geologists favor a much later date beginning with the industrial revolution or the rise in the use of the steam engine.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Interspecies communities are also very significant historically, with coevolution of hominins and other species arising from the very beginning of human evolution in the Pleistocene era even prior to the birth of human agriculture and domestication of animals in the Holocene. These communities therefore need to be taken into account in debates on the evolution of morality and evolutionary ethics. These studies raise significant questions about moral theories, such as the relationship between language and morality; how far and in what sense virtue language can be extended to species other than human beings, and the extent to which domesticated animals, for example, need to be included when considering ethical frameworks for migrants, refugees, and broader questions of sustainability.

Case Studies

Consideration of the moral and ethical implications of interspecies communities, like its sister subject, ecology, necessarily starts from a specific context. In this case it is one that relies on social scientific and natural scientific research, particularly anthropology. Ethnological studies that use tools more properly addressed to human communities as well as ethological studies that study animal behavior are both brought to bear in this research. Given the close relationship between humans and other primates, much of this research began with close investigation of inter-primate associations. Anthropological research by Agustín Fuentes (2010) in Bali, Indonesia, for example, has traced the close interaction between the human Balinese community and the long-tailed macaque monkeys (*Macaca fascicularis*) that inhabit the Hindu religious temple complexes. There are social and biological implications of this close interaction that have been in place over many hundreds of years. Macaques seem to be aware of when they are or are not permitted to consume the food offered in religious ritual practices, and the Balinese assume that macaques are fully agential beings and actors in the overall setting in which they live. The monkeys are also viewed as an important part of the spiritual life of the sacred forest groves in which the temples are placed. Tourists who arrive to visit these Hindu temple complexes may be caught off guard as both parties are not attuned to their feeding habits in the same way. This then generates some ethical difficulties for the Balinese who on the one hand accept the presence of the macaques, but on the other hand need the income generated from tourist visits. At a biological level the Balinese agricultural practice is concentrated down river pathways, which have created migration corridors for the macaques, so that the population genetics of the macaques follows the geographical pathway that has been created by human activity. The point is that the behavior of the macaques is impacted by the activities of the human population and vice versa. Studies of this kind, known as ethnoprimatology, open up important theoretical questions about viewing human interactions with other species as a whole system, rather than distinct biological and social ones. Terminology such as natural–cultural contact zones speaks of this close, interlacing activity.

Another perhaps more surprising example is the association between hyenas, *Crocuta crocuta* and humans in the Muslim town of Harar, Ethiopia studied by anthropologist Marcus Baynes-Rock (2015). Hyenas in the wild are feared, and the hyenas in Harar are no exception. The difference in this case is that different clans of hyenas have formed close associations with specific human populations in Harar, and rely almost exclusively on food from human sources, both direct and indirect through human waste. As in the Balinese case, the close association with these animals has also attracted tourists, with local families managing specific feeding sites at specific times as a tourist attraction. Ethnographic and ethological

research has uncovered a complex social history in these communities, where rival hyena clans engage in battles over territory on specific urban sites that also have a specific human cultural history. The Ethiopians, like the Hindus in Indonesia, also weave the hyenas into their religious and cultural life. They are convinced, for example, that hyenas will revenge any attempts to deliberately harm them by a human agent. They also believe that hyenas have the power and authority to consume evil spirits and therefore play a direct role in the spiritual life of the community. The local population perceives hyena clans as having social structures and relationships that are close to that in human societies, such as the ability to hold meetings, make supplications for food, and speak in a detailed way to conspecifics and other humans who can understand them in hyena language. Religious rituals include offering particular meals of porridge to hyenas at specific times. In cases where hyenas have become sick, their treatment is very similar to the kind of response that would be given to a sick person in the community, with administration of smoke from burning rag, matches, and lime. Unlike other parts of Ethiopia, where hyenas are perceived as a threat to pastoralist practice, and so have largely disappeared, in Harar there were ways of managing the landscape that did not depend on their extermination. The local farmers in Harar grow "chat" which is used as a stimulant; but hyenas are tolerated as the farmers believe that they keep thieves at bay. Lions have also largely disappeared from this region, leaving hyenas to associate freely with the human population.

The close association between animals and humans and their entangled coexistence has been studied in most detail in hunter–gatherer and indigenous communities and includes numerous other associations such as those between humans and pumas, elephants, and lions and some where more than one species are involved. This should not, however, give the false impression that the only human societies that are tied up in multispecies associations are removed from Western or more materially developed cultures. Close and mutually shaping associations between humans and other animal species also occur in more modern societies, but urbanization has frequently disguised the intimacy of these relationships. How far back do such multispecies associations reach? While evolutionary anthropology relies to some extent on intelligent guesswork, given the fragmented nature of the artifacts left behind in the archeological record, there is uncontroversial evidence that humans and hyenas, for example, coevolved over millions of years, as far back as the early Ardipithecenes, over four million years ago. At this stage in evolutionary history hyenas were much larger megafauna, *Pachycrocuta*, that would have been even more threatening to fragile hominin communities of comparatively small size with respect to both stature and group. Other large predators such as saber-tooth cats and giant snakes roamed the landscape in what must have been a very threatening environment for early humans. One of the reasons why humans became what evolutionary biologists have called highly successful super-cooperators is that their existence quite literally depended on it. This implies that one of the key elements in human morality, namely, the ability to cooperate, arose because of the specific entanglement between human beings and other species.

These examples throw up important theoretical and practical issues for ethics that are worth exploring further. It is not enough, for example, to consider in isolation specific treatment of animals without situating this in the longer religious, cultural, and biological history of complex and sometimes ambiguous associations. It could be argued that the latent historical memory of being prey rather than predator has encouraged hostile treatment of animals as the default position. On the other hand, the incorporation of specific animals that would otherwise have been viewed simply as a threat into the religious and cultural lives of communities in a relatively peaceful coexistence shows that a dynamic but relatively consistent

multispecies community is possible to achieve through years of accommodation and mutual coevolution. There may too, be lessons here in comparative peacekeeping across disparate and conflicted human communities.

Beyond Anthropocentric Ethics

Humanity's relationship with other animals has historically been ambiguous, even though religious traditions such as Buddhist have affirmed the value of all living creatures. In the Western Enlightenment tradition, René Descartes (1596–1650) reinforced the view that other animals are simply automata and so do not possess the mind and the sensibility of human subjects. Indeed their characterization as lacking in subjectivity and the ability to either feel pain or suffer is one of the reasons why other non-animals have been treated so harshly. According to veterinary practice manuals anesthetics were used in veterinary operations as late as the 1970s in order to control movement rather than pain. Christian traditions have also not assisted in this process either with their historically strong emphasis on human exceptionalism and human uniqueness that cuts out moral consideration of creatures other than humans. Scholars need to search further back in the historical record to the early church to find a much greater emphasis on community and the value of life as a gift of the Creator. Thomistic thought, particularly once natural theology had been stripped away, left an instrumental view of ethics that was uncongenial to treating animals well. While there are other elements that can be retrieved, such as through natural law theory or virtue theory, for example, the influence of instrumental views of animals has proved dominant.

More recently, a shift toward a much greater sensitivity to the worth of other animals and their place in human communities has been opened up by three intellectual developments. The first development, stemming from Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, showed clearly that human beings and other animals shared an evolutionary history. It was no longer possible to view the evolutionary tree as simply culminating in human history, even if humans are the most dominant species on planet earth. The second movement is that of postmodernity, challenging cruder versions of humanism that stressed the importance of humans to the exclusion of other creatures. Everything comes under question in a postmodern world, leading to different ways of thinking about human nature, or even if there *is* a human nature. The third movement is that of feminism, which challenged the oppressive social and political structures that worked against women in particular, but also other vulnerable groups including animals and ecosystems. It is not surprising that one of the leading voices in considering multispecies communities is Donna Haraway (2008), who is also a leading feminist writer in animal studies. Animal studies, that take in literature and the social and political sciences, considers the social, political, and theoretical aspects of the way we treat other animals, so consideration of interspecies communities necessarily touches on this literature as well.

As other animals begin to be incorporated into the moral realm of humans, the possibility is raised of not just how animals might be treated, that is, their moral considerability, but also whether some social animals display forms of morality or virtue. Virtue language has traditionally been about human habits of mind, and the question of animal minds is a contested one, not least because many will deny the ability of animals to display a theory of mind, that is, to know, for example, what the other is thinking in a self-reflective consciousness. This topic also raises ongoing discussions about the relationship between

language and morality. Most evolutionary biologists believe that morality arose in an evolutionary history of humans prior to language, which itself is prior to organized religion. If morality is dependent on spoken language or even abstract reasoning as Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) supposed, then the idea that other animals can display any kind of morality is meaningless. On the other hand, if morality is more broadly construed to include established patterns in a complex social community, whether or not there is formal or conscious agreement to those patterns, then this opens up the possibility that at least some advanced social animals can display at least some of these characteristics. It needs to be added that overall many of those working in this field will now resist the idea that animal studies is best done through a comparative model, that is, making judgments about what humans can do against that which other animals cannot. Instead, each species is viewed as having its own integrity and with characteristics suited to its particular social and ecological domain. And those specific characteristics could include moral ones. Of course, interspecies communities muddy that approach, in that rather than perceiving a single species form of flourishing, it is necessary to be much more inclusive.

The Significance of Evolutionary Ethics

The above raises wider critical issues about biological and cultural aspects of morality and the relationship between them. Evolutionary biologists today are more reluctant than their predecessors to assume that genetic inheritance is the only form of inheritance. Unfortunately, most non-specialists still assume that evolution by natural selection in a broadly Neo-Darwinian narrative is still correct. This gives the impression that biological evolution is about genetic determinism, even though the process itself is dependent on the contingency of genetic mutations in given environments. It is not surprising that forms of evolutionary ethics that arise out of this paradigm present an evolutionary naturalism that is not necessarily palatable to either religious believers or religious ethicists. Evolutionary psychology has not necessarily assisted in such a clarification either, since its most dominant sociobiological approach gives the impression that there are fixed behavioral traits or characteristics that are passed down from one generation to the next. Genes for violence or language or cooperation seem to predispose people to act in certain ways and thus undercut the natural basis of freedom. However, the actual evidence for such genetic dispositions is relatively weak, for even if generalized tendencies have a biological substratum, this is not the same as understanding the genes as in any way being causative. Alternative evolutionary theories that are gradually gaining ascendency include extended evolutionary synthesis (EES), where niche construction is not just an environment in which genes are selected, but an active process in evolution by the agents themselves. There is, in other words, a mutual malleability in the way these processes are set up in a dynamic system of interchange. This newer evolutionary theory is particularly significant for interspecies communities, since it means that those communities are themselves integral to the evolutionary process. The case studies highlighted above show more clearly how this might work, where the actions and interactions between different actors has a significant impact on the lives of all those in the multispecies commons.

The theoretical basis of how to conceive of such communities is more difficult to adjudicate. One possible example is actor network theory that has been proposed by Bruno Latour (2005). Another possibility is to use systems theory in order to work out the dynamics of the system as a whole, though this theory works best for global systems rather than smaller community structures. Niche construction has,

of course, a long history in ecological studies, stemming from the idea of *Umwelt* first pioneered by the German biologist Jakob von Uexküll (1864–1944), and then later taken up into more contemporary concepts of niche construction by evolutionary biologists such as Evelyn Hutchinson (1903–1991) and Richard Lewontin (1929–). The biosocial basis of religious ethics has an even longer history in natural law theory, which in its simplest form states that evil should be sought and good avoided, with a nested hierarchy of relationships grounded in living things seeking their own survival. While natural law was a popular foundation for legal theory or what Thomists called positive law, it has largely been replaced by economic goals that are themselves dependent on mathematical formulations of economic behavior. There are two possible responses to such a narrowing of scope to legal regulation. One is to widen the basis of legal theory so that justice and rights, for example, become extended to creatures other than humans. Another is to envisage a different *telos* or goal of flourishing, so that law has a theoretical framework orientated to the transcendental themes of goodness, truth, and beauty. One of the challenges of interspecies community ethics is working out the *telos* or goal of that community and what priorities should be given and for what reasons where there are clashes in intra- and interspecies interests. The difficulties with any communitarian or system approach are related to the dangers of individual difference and interests being suppressed in the interests of system flourishing. They are the opposite dangers of Kantian approaches to ethics that tend to favor the individual at the expense of the community. Some moderation of interspecies community ethics from the perspective of religious ethics will normally include love and compassion that takes account of or even gives ethical priority to the weakest members.

Future Directions

This is a new area of research and therefore there are many unanswered questions that could potentially be addressed. Key questions include discerning the ways in which different religious communities can learn from each other from their own experiences of living in interspecies communities. Different religious traditions will have different approaches to the domestication of animals, and in some societies animals freely associate with humans in order to gain protection from predators. These affiliations raise new and interesting questions about human societies and their entanglement with other animals. The evolution of morality is another important related question that is associated with an understanding of the evolution of consciousness and the mind. The definition of morality will shape how far and to what extent other animals are considered to possess any form of moral agency, though distinctive aspects of human morality include powers of abstraction and critical self-reflection that are of course impossible for other animals. In an interspecies context human action is not necessarily self-conscious of its impact on that community, so questions arise as to how far and to what extent deliberative choice is integral to moral agency. The frameworks for that moral agency will vary depending on the specific religious and social context of the interspecies community, which implies, from a purely evolutionary and anthropological perspective, a form of moral relativism.

Christian approaches to ethics will resist that slide into moral relativism and argue in favor of giving priority to the weak and, despite the dangers of anthropocentrism, will lean toward a stress on human dignity. One way to tease out questions about the evolution of morality in more detail would be to distinguish different aspects of what that morality entails, rather than assuming that it can be described

under one umbrella. For example, questions on the evolution of justice and altruism (love) that finds expression in human merciful action, humility, and so on, could have precedents of some sort expressed in a multispecies commons and in a community where the agency of other animals is recognized and respected. An argument in favor of animals having religious affections is rather harder to sustain, though not theoretically impossible. Indeed, if morality is considered as having a basis in moral emotions and inclinations, then desire could be seen as a primary motive in religious sensibility, and other animals, regardless of their status in terms of theory of mind, could potentially share religious affects. More anthropological research is needed in order to tease out in more detail the significance of these communities for human flourishing and practice, including religious practice.

The importance of domesticated animals in particular to human well-being has not been properly appreciated, and companion animals can be important in restoring psychological health to those who have been victimized. Those who are fleeing persecution, those who suffer domestic abuse, and those who are environmental refugees often speak of their need to keep their pets. Such intimacy also gives opportunities for the less welcome relationship of abuse, so that sexual abuse of animals is mirrored in pedophilia later in life, and violent abuse of animals is mirrored in extreme violence toward women and others. How far and to what extent the two are directly connected is unclear, but the close correlation speaks of the importance of interspecies relationships as a reflection of the health of human relationships considered more broadly. The closeness of relationships is also reflected in the dedication of pet owners to their pets. Hurricane Katrina, for example, is a good example where 44 percent of those who refused to leave their homes did so because they did not want to leave their pets. The work of NGOs and others in resettling those fleeing abusive situations of either domestic or structural violence has not yet taken sufficient account of the affiliation between humans and their companion animals, especially dogs, who commonly become incorporated into the human family as if they are family members. Such affiliations raise larger questions as to whether traditional approaches to moral decision-making, such as that through Catholic social teaching on the common good or natural law for example, can be broadened to include other animals and beyond that to the multispecies community niche.

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CHAPTER 146

Labor and Trade

Christine Firer Hinze

Economic activity, most fundamentally, work, is a requirement for human survival, and a constituent human practice. Every major religious tradition emerged and evolved in contexts where economic activities, including work and trade, were givens of daily social life. In ancient and modern, traditional and secular societies, religions have consistently deemed economic activities morally and spiritually significant, and their teachings and followers have influenced, and been influenced by, ways work and commerce have been understood and practiced.

Each major religion posits a transcendent origin and destiny for humanity with implications for every aspect of living, including the economic. Religions' interpretive frames simultaneously valorize, relativize, and norm work and trade in light of larger spiritual visions and corresponding criteria of judgement. Economic activities are deemed reflective of the human condition as embodied, interdependent, intelligent, free, capable, industrious, and creative; and as finite, fallible, and corruptible. As distinctively human, these activities are never merely instrumental or technical, but carry moral and spiritual meanings and obligations. Comportment in work and trade thus affects and reflects the rectitude of individuals and communities.

In evolving, varied, and often contested ways, religions have reflected on work and trade light of their distinctive traditions and particular contexts. In so doing, theistic religions have been guided by three foundational tenets. Each "recognizes God as the ultimate source of value; acknowledges the centrality of the community; and holds out the promise that men and women (living in community) can transform themselves" (Pava 1998, 604).

An Ultimate, Transcendent Source of Value

Monotheistic faiths Judaism, Christianity, and Islam profess one divine creator, judge, and redeemer, source and center of all existence and all value. Their theocentric worldview exempts no aspect of life from religious significance or duty. Through creation, revelation, and sacred traditions, the Divine discloses the values and rules that must orient believers' daily lives, including their economic lives.

The Ten Commandments or Decalogue illustrate these faiths' ways of interpreting work. The first, fundamental command to worship the one God above all else is followed by the command to observe the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8–11, Deuteronomy 5:12–15; cf. Genesis 1:28; 2:1–3; 2:15).

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates (Exodus 20:9–10).

This command at once acknowledges the importance of work and trade in people's lives, and requires their weekly cessation to rest, and to honor God. By forbidding work on Sabbath and other festivals, and requiring regular time for Torah study, Jewish laws create boundaries around the time and attention allowed for economic activities (Wilson 1997, 25–26).

Reinterpreting Sabbath commands in light of Jesus and the gospels, Christians came to gather on Sundays to worship the one God and commemorate Christ's resurrection. Among post-Constantinian Catholic, Orthodox, and Reformation Christian communities, Sunday observance included stopping daily labor and business for both worship and rest. Strictures against work were treated with varied degrees of flexibility, however, in part warranted by Jesus' teachings and example (cf. Matt. 12: 1–8; Mark 2:23–38, Luke 6:1–11) and in part dictated by changing demands placed on laborers (Strand, ed. 1982).

Muslims witness to Allah's primacy over work and business by taking time from daily labors to pray, and public communal worship on Fridays (Jumah, or Day of Assembly) (Goitein 1959). Yet rather than setting aside a day of rest, Muhammed prescribed weekly worship on midday during Medina's main market day. "It is evident from Surah lxii., 9–11, that Muhammad regarded it as not incompatible with the holiness of the weekly day of worship to be also one of flourishing business" (Goitein 1959, 193). Midday Friday worship was also a way to witness publicly before one's Jewish and Christian neighbors, "because on that day the people of Medina gathered anyhow to do their shopping."(Goitein 1959, 189; cf. Qu'ran, Surah lxii.9–11).

The ultimate source of value and center of allegiance looks different for a nontheistic faith such as Buddhism. Buddhists uphold a transcendent view of human destiny as moving beyond the cycles of samsara, to the ultimate liberation and fulfillment of Nirvana. This spiritually ennobling view of humanity is the transcendent measure against which Buddhists reckon work and trade's value and purposes.

Centrality of Community

Religious traditions emphasize personal agency and responsibility, but regard persons as inherently relational, embedded in and obligated to communities. Versus modern western views, personhood and agency are understood to emerge from and depend upon communal bonds. From conception to grave, human survival and well-being is exquisitely dependent on material-ecological and social conditions and relations. In the economic arena, human material needs, dependence on the earth, and reliance on one's skilled exertions with those of neighbors intersect and are addressed. These intertwined dynamics of personal agency, responsibility, and interdependence are deeply etched into the activities of work and trade.

Transformative Possibility

Religions variously identify the obstacles impeding human fulfillment and destiny, and the transformative paths by which these obstacles may be overcome. Economic activities and their fruits are valued insofar as they serve, or at least do not impede, this transformative pursuit. Performed justly and with right intent, work and trade can cultivate personal virtue and rectitude; by serving and positively shaping communities they may become expressions of virtue, indeed, worship. (Pava 615–16).

Paths to spiritual and moral transformation vary: for Buddhists, submission to the disciplines of the Eightfold Path and the Five Precepts; for Jews, following Torah; for Christians, Gospel-inspired discipleship as specified by church traditions and teachings; for Muslims, daily and lifelong adherence to the Five Pillars. Common emphases are the primacy of love of God (for theistic faiths), and of neighbor as God commands, and an ethics of work and trade that respects others' dignity, prohibits deceit, theft, or coveting, and promotes equity and reciprocity by "doing unto others as you would have them do unto you." Well-known in the Christian scriptures (Mt. 7:12), this "golden rule" is echoed "in Islam, 'No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.' Buddhism expresses it in terms of 'Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.' The Judaic rule is: 'What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire law; the rest is commentary.'" (Bassiouni 1993, 117; Al Nawawi 13, Qu'ran 4:36; Samyutta Nikaya v. 353 Udana-Varga 5:18; Leviticus 19:18, Shabbat 31a, Tobit 4:15).

Religions' relational anthropology cultivated often-astute awareness of the impacts of individuals' actions on communities and vice versa. But in pre-modern contexts where social arrangements were considered fixed and natural, transforming economic institutions or structures was rarely thought possible, much less a duty. So, for example, "Buddhist teachings were generally less interested in [challenging inequality or] changing the current distribution of wealth" to meet some definition of economic justice, "than in cultivating the proper attitudes toward wealth, ... of giving and nonattachment" (Ornatowski 1996, 233). In the twentieth century, influenced by modern social thought and movements, more religious communities began to incorporate structural critiques and calls for institutional change within their ethical teachings concerning economy (Kind 2009).

In no religion, of course, is teaching equivalent to action. Religions' historical impact on adherents' economic behavior or surrounding societies has been perennially uneven, mixed, and never assured.

Religions' Ethics of Work and Trade: Brief Overview Buddhism

Buddhism's Four Noble Truths direct adherents toward liberation from the craving that causes suffering, and ultimately to release from the cycles of material death and rebirth (*samsara*), into Nirvana, or Enlightenment. Buddha's Eightfold Path of righteous living includes three, moral conduct components: Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood (e.g. Marques 2015, 84–94). Right livelihood requires making a living in ways that uphold the Five Precepts (not killing, not stealing, not misusing sex, not lying, not abusing intoxicants). "To be ethically sound, economic activity must take place in a way that is not harmful to the individual, society or the natural environment ... but rather enhance well-being in these three spheres" (Payutto 2000, 13; Vanijja Sutta AN 5.177).

Buddhists further judge an economic activity's value according to "which kind of desire is at its root." Activities motivated by or feeding the inferior desire of *tanha* (craving for material pleasure or other passing goods) increase suffering and undermine well-being. "Those working with *tanha* are motivated by the desire to consume," and because work delays gratification, "the work itself affords little enjoyment or satisfaction" (Payutto 1994, 28; 2002, 83). Alternatively, work performed with *chanda* (wholesome intention) aims at relieving suffering and promoting well-being. *Chanda*-motivated work offers intrinsic satisfaction as by it, people develop skills and talents, overcome ego-centeredness by joining with others in common tasks, and "bring forth the good and services needed for a becoming existence" (Schumacher 1968).

With Confucianism, Buddhist teachings counsel cooperation and moderation in life, work, and business (the "Middle Path"). Employers are admonished to treat workers with respect, fairness, and

benevolence, and workers to reciprocate with good work and loyalty to the employer (Sigālovāda Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya 31). In countries like China, India, and Japan, Buddhism encouraged habits of productive labor and supported lay accumulation of wealth, and many monasteries (as in Christianity) became sites of innovative business enterprise. But strong teachings on non-attachment and giving meant that lay labor and wealth and were regarded as instrumental to activities directly related to monk enlightenment or lay meritmaking through community service or donating to monasteries (Ornatowski 1996, 232).

Judaism grounds economic ethics in biblical creation and redemption narratives which emphasize obedience to Yahweh, and regard earning a living and cultivating the world through work and trade, even amid post-Edenic toil and sweat, as God-given tasks, subject to Torah law. Observing justice in business dealings, non-exploitation of vulnerable workers and the poor, and sharing due portions of labor's fruits with the needy are especially stressed (Deuteronomy 14:28–29, 24:14–1; Sirach 34: 26–27; Jeremiah 22:13; Isaiah 58:3–7).

At life's end, the Talmud states, one's business conduct will be among the first subjects of God's judgement (Talmud, Shabbat 31a). To live justly and avoid sin require Torah study, Torah (including Sabbath) observance, and working for one's livelihood in a manner that "lives Torah" (Mishna,Tractate Pirkei Avot 2:2).

Jewish ethicists have interpreted key Rabbinic legal principles to illumine just business practices that serve the community's welfare. So, for example: "The recognition of different levels of responsibility for charitable giving (Baba Mezia 7a)," prioritizes workers and businesses' responsibilities to family and to nearby communities. The *Kofin al midat S'dom* principle, or *kofin*, calls for waiving one's legal rights in economic situations where insisting on exercising them brings one no benefit, but waiving them would positively benefit another. The principle *Ufnim mishurat hadin*, or "beyond the letter of the law," highlights moral responsibilities beyond the legal rules, and may require waiving one's legal rights, even at some cost, in order to meet ethical obligations. Such principles help direct work and business practices toward the welfare of the community. But because caring solely for those within one's own community can be corruptive, ethical work and trade practices must also heed Torah commands concerning faithful Jews' concern for the wider society beyond the community, and ultimately all God's children. (Pava 1998, 607–613).

Christians, likewise, treat work and trade as distinctively human, necessary, and meaningful avenues for attaining material sustenance, cultivating and express skills and talents, and contributing to community welfare (e.g. Pope John Paul II 1981; US Bishops 1986, ch. 2, 97–98). Traditionally, economy, work, and trade are understood as serving God's "universal destination of created goods," that is, the divinely ordained purpose of the earth's resources to provide sustenance for all people (Spieker 2005). Economy's primary purpose is to provides avenues for all members to gain fair access a share of creation's resources, typically through work (Ryan, *Distributive Justice, Gaudium et spes,* 69; Paul VI *Populorum progressio,* 22) "The early church fathers affirmed not only the nobility of work but also the obligation to work diligently and not be idle." Honest work is necessary for a dignified life (Volf 2001, 72; cf. Pope Francis 2015 nos. 127–128).

"Stewardship" and "vocation," prominent Christian paradigms evaluating work, affirm that God charges humans to care for and cultivate creation, and that work carried out in this spirit is a calling or vocation by which one serves God and neighbor. (Witherington 2011). Much Catholic and Orthodox thought highlights work as co-creativity, cooperation, and participation in God's continuing creative activity. Related models depict human work as a sharing in God's eschatological work of recreating "a new heavens and a new earth" (Volf 2001, 91). By activating divinely-bestowed gifts (*charismata*) in their work, Christians bear the fruit of the Spirit into the realms of labor and trade, and contribute their humanization (Volf 2001, 113, 157, 190). Some Christians name holiness or witness as motivations for ethical business conduct. For others, humanistic values such as reliability and trustworthiness, or the

conviction that "since human beings are created in the image of God, they should all be treated with respect" shape economic and business behavior (Werner 2008). Such ennobling views press against amoral or reductive understandings of work as merely a means to subsistence or consumption, and affirm work's unique status in both human and divine economies (Volf 2001, 197; John Paul II 1981).

Reformer Martin Luther famously deemed all honest work religiously vocational. But he maintained medieval suspicions of commerce and money-making, and was chary of the expansion of international trade. Luther warned against avaricious profit-seeking and self-serving business practices, and advocated governmental oversight of business in order to restrain price gouging and unjust dealings. John Calvin shared Luther's appreciation of secular work as vocational. But in his urban Genevan context, Calvin encouraged commerce as useful for the common good. Those who engaged in trade, he saw, provided positive service to society, often at a risk to themselves (Eaton 2013, 5; Finn 2013, ch. 10). Post-Reformation Catholic ethics approached work and trade in casuistic ways, often grouping and treating questions of economic right- and wrong-doing within expositions of the Decalogue and its commandments against stealing, killing, dishonesty, and avarice (Davis 1943).

Arising at the turn of the twentieth century to address the "new things" wrought by modern social, economic and technical changes, Protestant social-gospel thought and modern Catholic social teaching contributed to distinctive developments in Christian ethics of work and trade (Dorrien 2011, 60–229; Himes et al. 2018). Both rejected amoral and laissez-faire market economics, and defended on theological and moral grounds economy's inclusive, provisioning purposes. Both condemned work and business arrangements that exclude, exploit, or disserve the poor and working classes. With a modern awareness of social structures as humanly-constructed and changeable, both championed legal and institutional reforms to protect and empower the poor, workers, and their families. Attentive to contemporary social sciences and on-the-ground realities, twentieth century Catholic and Protestant ethicists deployed religious-ethical principles such as "the pursuit of the common good and the universal destination of goods; equity in trade relationships; and attention to the rights and needs of the poor in policies concerning trade and work," to address myriad issues surrounding work and trade facing a technologically-advanced, globalizing, but persistently unequal economy (Pontifical Council 2004, no. 643).

Later-century Catholic teaching increasingly championed participation, preference for the poor, and solidarity with the vulnerable as powerful medicine against unjust social structures (Pope John Paul II 1987; Dorr 2016, chs. 11, 13). Peaceful reform, not violent revolution, was consistently advocated. Yet solidarity and the option for the poor carried potentially radical implications for political and economic business-as-usual. In a 1983 teaching document on economic justice, the Canadian bishops limned these implications bluntly:

> The needs of the poor have priority over the wants of the rich; the rights of workers are more important than the maximization of profits; the participation of marginalized groups has precedence over a system that excludes them.
>
> (Canadian Bishops 1983, 400).

Islam treats work and trade extensively – over 1,400 of 6,226 verses of the Qu'ran refer to economic issues – surely influenced by the fact that the Prophet Muhammed himself was a successful trader, from a family of traders (Wilson 1997, 117). Subjects of guidance in the Qu'ran include "commerce and politics, interest and debts, contracts and wills, and industry and finance." More broadly, in a Muslim's economic dealings, "every act that would remove righteousness and bring evil, whether it benefits the perpetrator or not, is forbidden" (Rizk 2008, 250).

In Islam work, trade, business, and merchants, are socially valued and esteemed (Ali 2005). The Qu'ran and related holy books yield a body of directives for promoting Islamic values of community, equality, and fairness through practices that curb economic abuses, moderate privilege, and protect and uplift the economically vulnerable. *Zakat* taxes the wealthy, then directs the proceeds to aid disadvantaged members of society "including the poor, the handicapped, the unemployed, dependents of prisoners, orphans, and travelers in difficulty" (Kuran 1989, 173). Islamic laws of inheritance curtail the growth of huge family estates. The well-off are obliged to live without extravagance and to give charitably to those in need. A duty to altruism requires that businesses and workers act with concern for others' welfare, refrain from harm, and contribute to the common good (Kuran 1989, 174).

In any economic activity, "It is immoral to acquire possession of income or wealth by stealing, cheating, dishonesty, or fraud" (Rizk 250, Qu'ran 83:1–4; 5:1). "Woe to those who give less [than due]/deal in fraud ... . Do they not think they will be called to account?" (Qu'ran 83:1–3; cf. 11:85). Employers must pay fair wages and charge just prices, be transparent in their selling practices, and refrain from exploiting workers or customers. A range of injunctions and prohibitions concerning usury or interest-taking, profit-making on insurance, monopoly, speculation, and activities of middlemen, are meant to assure equitable sharing of risks and losses in business transactions, and to curtail the taking of unearned benefits, especially at the expense of more vulnerable others (Kuran 1989, 175).

Islam regards work as obligatory and salutary for self and society. Muhammed taught that "hard work caused sins to be absolved," that "no one eats better food than that which he eats out of his work," and, further, that "work is a worship." Working with effort and quality is stressed, and succumbing passively to poverty is treated as akin to impiety (Ali 2005, 50). "Effort, competition, transparency, and socially responsible conduct" are central tenets of Muslim work ethics. Work is seen "as a means to further self-interest economically, socially, and psychologically, to sustain social prestige, to advance societal welfare, and reaffirm faith" (Ali 2005, 54, 56).

Workers' rights to fair treatment, just wages, and timely remuneration confer moral and religious obligations on employers; failing to meet them risks eternal condemnation. The three types of people Allah will oppose on Judgement Day include, "one who hires a worker, but does not pay him his right wages owed to him after fulfilling his work" (Sahih Bukhari 36:470). "Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due" (Qu'ran 11:85). "Give to the worker his wages before his sweat dries" (Ibn Majah III 16:2443).

Taking seriously Qu'ranic directives concerning work and trade, Muslim scholars debate over whether "there is a unique Islamic economic system, characterized by a well-defined ensemble of institutions, practices, and behaviors," how and by whom such a system would be delineated and overseen, and what flexibility or adaptability to different cultures and contexts Qu'ranic economic teachings allow. As with modern Catholic economic thought, wide acknowledgment of Islamic economic principles guarantees neither consensus nor clarity on how they are to be related, prioritized, or operationalized (Kuran 1989, 185–186).

Modernity and Religious Economic Ethics

Theorizing the eighteenth-century shift into the era of modern industrial capitalism, Adam Smith maintained a traditionally normative understanding of economy, and, contrary to later interpretations, absolutized neither self-interest nor markets. Smith envisaged modern markets as remaining embedded in, and subject to

the moral demands of, their local communities and broader societies. "Smith's ideal economic actor," moreover, was "a person of goodwill, prudence, and self-restraint who operates both co-operatively and competitively in a social and economic milieu based on a foundation of morality, law, and justice" (Werhane 1991, 180).

But as new technologies and communications displaced household-agrarian with wage-dependent means to livelihood and fueled massive market expansions, large-scale business and trade became increasingly untethered from material, moral, and religious moorings in local communities. As economic globalization and pluralization weakened the normative influence on businesses of the communities they affected, secularization curtailed religions' public authority and influence, and specialization reduced firms and managers to actors playing impersonal roles unrelated, and often unaccountable, to their social contexts. (Gonin 2015, 228).

Neoclassical economics theorized and helped legitimate a new orthodoxy which defined markets as socially-disembedded arenas coordinated by the impersonal workings of the price system, where rational individuals compete for profit and control over scarce resources by freely exchanging goods and services (Weintraub 1993). In practice, modern markets depend on high levels of cooperation and myriad legal and governmental supports. Yet market orthodoxy disvalues government interference and predicts the highest returns to businesspeople who excel at the competitive, self-interest-maximizing behavior of *homo economicus*, and to employees who best approximate the geographically and relationally unencumbered, single-minded focus of the "ideal worker" (Williams 2000, 1, 5; Nelson 2010).

For the vast majorities of workers and families dependent on wages for basic livelihood, this new economic milieu created acute vulnerabilities. Among nineteenth- and twentieth-century attempts to address them were a gendered, "family living wage" agenda (never realized by a majority in any nation) intended to support households via waged male breadwinner-dependent female homemaker couples, and labor and legislative struggles for just wages, working conditions, and benefits. In a third response driven both by necessity and by several waves of feminism, female participation in paid work rose worldwide throughout the twentieth century (Hinze 2015, 76–82). By 2008, the majority of households worldwide had dual (or multiple) earners, large numbers plying jobs lacking adequate pay, security, or benefits. Continuing to perform the bulk of unpaid labor in households and local communities, female wage-earners remained, overall, more vulnerable and less remunerated than men. (UN 2016, ch. 2) For poorer women, heavy responsibilities for family care work, bad wages and working conditions, and ideal worker-job performance standards exacerbated chronic economic precarity and endangered families' health and safety (Heymann 2006).

As secular human-rights discourses and economic justice movements became prominent in the twentieth century, many religious bodies perceived welcome points of agreement with their own views on work and trade. These confluences facilitated religions' collaborations with civic groups, non-governmental organizations, and broad-based movements in campaigns for economic inclusion and justice, especially for marginalized people and communities.

Twenty-First Century Contributions

Religions' distinctive treatments of work and trade share significant convictions. These include understandings of economy's aim as inclusive, material provisioning; of work as constitutive to humans' survival, cultivation, and well-being; and of work and trade as subjects of moral and spiritual

accountability, to be conducted with honesty, fairness, and equity, giving special priority to protecting, including, and empowering the vulnerable. Wide agreement exists on workers' and families' rights to decent livelihoods marked by sufficiency, security, status, and sustainability. Acknowledging influential economic theories and prevailing practices, religionists assess work and trade-related activities, arrangements, and policies according to their contributions to economy's inclusive provisioning purposes. From simple exchanges to the complexities of a far-flung, globalized economy, labor and trade's legitimacy hinge on their present and future impacts on people's survival, dignity, and well-being.

By participating in ecumenical, interreligious, and cross-disciplinary ethical reflection, and in practical movements for economic justice, religious communities honor and illumine the material, embodied, realms of work and trade as sites where the quotidian and transcendent intertwine. Beyond merely supplying principles or scriptural texts that echo or add lofty resonances to secular economic-justice rhetoric, religiously-shaped ways of seeing world and economy offer distinctive ways to catalyze solidarity, fuel activist energies, and "open novel possibilities for advocacy and organizing, as well as new visions of worker justice more transformative and grander than those permissible when we approach these issues through a secular frame" (Glennon and Lloyd 2017, 218).

Religions also have long experience, for good and ill, in local-global institutional organizing, communicating across historical and cultural differences, and grappling with intramural and extramural disagreements and conflicts. This equips them with resources to offer economic-justice organizations and coalitions facing similar challenges. In local grassroots coalitions and in large NGOs, religious organizations and members perform key political-education and bridge-building tasks, mediating varied concerns and cultures through "ideology translation, relational repair, and inclusion monitoring" attuned to the situations and needs of the vulnerable and marginalized (Snarr 2009, 73).

Too often, religions' promise in these areas has gone unrealized, as religious adherents and institutions have instead benefited from, participated in, or legitimated unjust labor and trade arrangements. Yet to address contemporary labor and trade's urgent, complex contours requires all hands on deck, religions included. Several areas especially need religious-ethical and practical work: first, advancing economic theories and practices that norm and prioritize inclusive access to sustainable dignified work and provisioning; second, illumining the human faces and material underpinnings and impacts of globalized production and supply chains, trade and finance, and advancing strategies to assure accountability for these; third, addressing ubiquitous gender disparities, especially by recalibrating social and economic valuations and distributions of household and care-related labor; fourth, combating extreme economic inequalities by articulating frameworks and helping to operationalize strategies for ensuring (especially vulnerable populations) inclusive, equitable participation in trade and labor and their benefits.

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CHAPTER 147

Marriage*

Eugene F. Rogers, Jr

The Vows of the Rite Present Marriage as an Ascetic Discipline for Sanctification

"For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part." The vows make marriage an ascetic discipline, a school for virtue, a means of sanctification. Marriage takes desire, and turns it into devotion. Whether the dirty diapers come from small children, incontinent in-laws, or aged partners, there are enough to go around. What begins in eros ends, if it lasts, in agape. Marriage is not so much about satisfaction as sanctification, and no conservative has ever seriously argued that same-sex couples need sanctification any less than opposite-sex couples. Marriage sweeps us up into this great gamble: that God can prepare us for life with God, by binding us for life to each other.

Paul Evdokimov (1985) makes the crude but salient typology: Catholics tie marriage to procreation; Protestants to control of lust; while Eastern Orthodox tie marriage to training in virtue, or sanctification. Russian theologians even see marriage and monasticism as two forms of the *same* discipline: both vowed relationships that hope to bear us into God, by teaching us to bear with one another. The Orthodox call weddings crownings after their most dramatic feature: the placing of laurel or iron crowns on the heads of the newly-weds. They interpret them as crowns of martyrdom, of those who undertake a discipline. The advantage of this third approach is that "it easily accommodates the other two (procreation and lust-control) and orients both to a spiritual goal: growth into God. Traditional goods of marriage--children and faithfulness – make more sense within this sacramental context" (Jenkins and Kittredge 2011). A couple's growth into God (they continue) "prompts them to welcome children and to practice faithfulness." Marriage becomes a means by which God may bring a couple to God's own self, by exposing them to each other: they may grow into the love of God, by practicing the love of nearest neighbor.

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*This entry abridges and updates material first published in Good, Jenkins, Kittredge, and Rogers 2011. (Authors appeared alphabetically.) I separate, quote, and acknowledge words originating with one or more co-authors. The material I originated also benefited from reading and conversation among the co-authors and from the facilitator, Ellen Charry, and authors of an alternative account (John Goldingay, Grant LeMarquand, George Sumner, and Daniel Westburg) who offered improvements to an account they did not share. The material appears here by permission of the co-authors and the *Anglican Theological Review*. I thank Federico Altbach for an invitation to deliver this material in Spanish at the Universidad Católica Lumen Gentium on March 27, 2019, which published it in English with acknowledgment of the *Anglican Theological Review* and the *Blackwell Encyclopedia* as "Marriage as an Ascetic Discipine for Same- and Cross-Sex Couples," *Puertas Lumen Gentium* (Mexico City) 3 (2019): 53–63.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

"This account of marriage," Jenkins and Kittredge point out (2011), "does not minimize procreation and chastity, but follows traditional marriage rites in upholding the context of those gifts": "the union of Christ and his Church" (BCP, 423) by which "God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). This is no new theology of marriage, but extends one that Orthodoxy never lost and that traditional marriage prayers and vows still imply. A *lex orandi* argument follows from the Book of Common Prayer. It avoids appeals to autonomy, individualism, or personal experience, but arises from the marriage prayer of the church. Can witnesses credit what they pray in the marriage rite (taking the whole rite as a form of prayer)? For example, they ask God to "make [the spouses'] life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair" (BCP, 429). Does the prayer make sense for two women or two men? Do same-sex couples also fit the marriage vows? Can God prepare them too for life with Godself, by binding them for life to each other?

"For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part" (BCP 1928, 301). The vows mark marriage as no privilege for spiritual heroes, for the adept or the perfect. To heroes, Paul commends celibacy (1 Cor. 7:9). Marriage like Eucharist provides medicine "not for the well but for the sick" (Mk. 2:17), for those who would follow Christ to be perfected in weakness for love of another (2 Cor. 12:9). The prayers of the church identify marriage as a discipline for sinners: "Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault" (BCP, 429). The discipline of marriage relies on the difficulty of living with another "in prosperity and adversity" not to avoid but precisely to *expose* our faults – in order to heal them. Nor does "when they hurt each other" confine itself to minor slights. Since the acknowledgment of hurt – the confession of sin – nourishes Christian growth and sacrament, the next prayer sets their discipline in the largest theater: "Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken *world*" (BCP, 429). The vows signal no privilege or right; they do not treat sexuality as a need to be satisfied. Rather they expect the promises of Hosea and Jeremiah to come true, that God will heal our waywardness and teach us to love (Hos. 14:4; Jer. 3:22).

"To love and to cherish": the vows offer a means by which God may turn eros into charity. Not all marriages begin in eros, but it would be an odd account of marriage that ignored it. Patristic and medieval commentaries on the Song of Songs taught the Church to see in eros the hope for agape (for example, Gregory of Nyssa's Homily 13). The vows do not turn eros into charity by relying on our self-control. That would be a plan designed to fail. Self-control is something you would hardly expect to come from *eros*. Rather, Paul commends marriage "if they *lack* self-control." Marriage so often begins in eros, with its *abandonment* of self-control, that the rite names *not* all the things that humans can muster *against* eros. The rite invokes the very things that might defeat eros: for worse, for poorer, in sickness, till death. Marriage relies not on self-satisfaction or self-expression, still less on titanic self-control: it relies instead on self-dispossession for self-donation. It is "the daily version," as Jenkins wrote (2011), "of finding one's life by losing it, and it encompasses all the daily practices of lives lived in covenanted closeness: laboring to provide for one another and to support family, organizing a household and its daily table, maintaining and sharing property, caring for another in sickness and finally into death. The Christian covenant of charity challenges and heals just such distortions of self-giving." If it begins in the self-dispossession of eros, it ends in self-abandonment to God. It turns not our attempts at self-possession but our self-abandonment into victory, on the pattern of Christ's self-giving. It begins in mutual self-donation to the other, and ends in mutual self-donation to God.

How Can Sanctification Apply to Same- and Cross-Sex Couples?

Complementarity theories of marriage stress "difference." If difference covers more than body-shape, which differences matter? God intends difference for blessing. Under conditions of sin, human beings turn difference to curse. There is enough difference to go around. The question is, *which differences bless?* The differences that lead to moral growth on the pattern of the incarnation are those, as Gregory Nazianzen says (Oration 14.7), that *turn our limits to our good*. The differences that turn our limits to our good are those that *cause us to need one another,* since love can exist only as relationally possessed. We need each other because we both yearn for and challenge one another. It is difference – as need – that excites longing. Same-sex couples are no strangers to that. Rather, they encounter yearning and challenge of the deepest, most heart-felt, most life-changing sort from someone of the *apposite,* not the *opposite* sex.

If I am in a same-sex couple, my spouse is the one who most *differs* from me in the morally significant sense: the one who makes me most vulnerable; the one who most escapes my control; the one who brings me to give myself; the one who challenges me; the one who confronts and stands over against me because with that one I disarm and donate myself. That one inspires and requires me to live out the relation of Christ with his bride: with whom in mutual self-donation I undertake the ascetic discipline of "for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, for better for worse, till death do us part."

It is thus marriage that makes the difference, the difference God intended, the difference that blesses, the difference that makes us different, that opens us up to challenge and change. The difference that marriage makes is the differentiation of the Spirit, by which the Spirit drives *eros* to sacrifice, as it drove Jesus for love's sake. On this view, the Church should call to same-sex marriage those for whom someone of the same sex makes the moral difference. The Church should call to same- or different-sex marriage those who need sanctification. The Church should call to same- or different-sex marriage those whose witness she desires to the love of God for the church.

The mystery of Genesis 1 is that I am made in the image of another not my own. Creaturehood destines me to find my greatest good in one beyond my control, God. But the human other whom I love is another mystery beyond my control. God is a mystery, as a good too great for me to grasp, and I am a mystery to myself, as having my true good there. Genesis 1 portrays sexuality as reflecting or imaging this mystery: in the image of this mystery God created the human being; male and female God created them (Gen. 1:26).

Real desire, therefore, does not satisfy the ego, but loses it in self-donation. Too many queer people have tried opposite-sex marriages to gratify their egos and gain self-control. Only in same-sex or non-binary marriages can they undergo real self-abandonment because they undertake real self-donation to the other. Discipline hardly works without longing; all creation waits "with eager longing" (Rom 8:19). Sometimes we hear that same-sex couples should deny themselves and take up the cross. That misunderstands what Jesus did. With longing Jesus so loves the world, that he gives his life (Jn. 3:16). Jesus did not go to the cross by *denying* what he longed for: Jesus went to the cross by *following* his desire, because his love was for his bride. Jesus went to the cross by following his yearning, because he yearned for God. That is why marriage imitates the wedding of the Lamb, and initiates desire into charity: it practices the self-giving of a whole life to another. That is why Jesus prefers those whose desires run hot (Rev. 3:15) and avoids those whose desires grow cold (Mt. 24:12).

Marriage Rites Follow Ephesians 5, Where Marriage Embodies the Two Great Commandments, Signifying Love of God and Practicing Love of Neighbor

The marriage preface puts the discipline of the vows into a christological context and tells us straightforwardly what marriage means. Marriage "signifies the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church" (BCP 423). Referring to the miracle of the wine at Cana, the rite looks forward to Christ's own marital donation of his body at the Last Supper when he says, "This is my body, given for you." According to Catholic sacramentologist Bernard Cook, and based on the nuptial theology of John Paul II, those words of institution constitute Christ's *marital* vow, by which he donates himself in his body to humanity. As the familiar hymn explains: "The Church's one foundation/ Is Jesus Christ her Lord/ ... From heaven he came and sought her/ To be his holy *bride*;/ With his own blood he bought her,/And for her life he died." (Note that the hymn reverses patriarchal power relations: the man dies for the woman.) Thus the *Book of Common Prayer* constructs marriage as a means of grace for sinners not just individually but for the whole church. "The idea that marriage could work sanctification is hardly evident by nature," as Jenkins points out (2011); "it is a reality of the incarnation, by which the church hopes for its *own* salvation."

Neither Jesus nor Paul quotes "be fruitful and multiply" from Genesis 1. Some traditional exegesis, noticing that feature of Paul's quotations, argues that Paul associates "be fruitful and multiply" with what humans share with animals (procreation), rather than with what makes marriage. "The command 'be fruitful and multiply,' addressed alike to the animal world and the human being as 'male and female,' has caused western theologians completely to lose sight of the fundamental fact that the institutional word of marriage [the "one flesh" passage], addressed to the *human being* as man-woman *above the animal plane,* does not even mention procreation. It speaks of the 'solitude' of the nuptial communion (Gen. 2:18–24)" (Evdokimov 1985, 22). Likewise, Chrysostom (2002, 89–90) observes that the command "be fruitful and multiply" does not end there, but states a goal: "and fill the earth." The earth, he says, is full. The command, in the perfect tense, has been fulfilled. And that was in the fourth century.

Ephesians, chapter 5, summarizes this line of thought as follows. Marriage begins in *eros,* and ends in *caritas*. *Eros* refers to the "one flesh" for which one leaves father and mother (Eph. 5:31). *Caritas* refers to loving the other as one loves oneself (v. 32). Marriage thus converts *eros* into the two great commandments about the love of God and neighbor. It testifies to the love of God by signifying Christ and the church. It testifies to the love of neighbor by enacting it toward the spouse. Marriage models Christ and the church, Ephesians suggests, not as a 'state," but as a school for virtue. Same-sex and cross-sex couples can both witness to the love of Christ for the church, and they both need practice in love of neighbor.

The *Book of Common Prayer* follows the interpretation of Genesis in Ephesians 5, where marriage bears witness to both of the great commandments: it signifies the love of God, and it teaches love of neighbor. In turn, how and to whom the church offers marriage shows the great commandments' scope. Ephesians denies, therefore, that the model of Christ and the church could reduce to a man and woman standing before the altar in static tableau. Rather, modeling Christ and the church is a *moral* matter, an *activity,* a discipline or discipleship; it requires the couple to *practice* the love of the neighbor as oneself (5:32). Love is to be practiced, not every now and then, but every day: not at a distance, but in the closest quarters.

The typology of "Christ and the church" does not reduce to male-female complementarity, even if it uses gendered language. Men have always represented the bride of Christ as members of the church. Women have always represented the priesthood of Christ as believers. Recently, they have represented the priesthood of Christ as ordained. Members of either gender may serve as a sign or represent a "type." A "type," in Greek, is a sign of something else. Ephesians is not saying that we should take our understanding of Christ and the church from how our marriages work. It says that we should understand marriage from Christ and the church. Marriage forms do not limit the love of Christ for the church, but that love gives marriage more to mean. The church, traditionally gendered female as Christ's bride, embraces women and men. "The body of Christ," while gendered male as a human being, is gendered female as the church. Such shifts remind us why Ephesians calls marriage a *mysterion* and treats it as a sign. It points beyond itself. Types do not limit representation: they open it to God's work. That is why Paul, even if he could not have imagined same-sex marriage, restricts his advice on *who* should marry to the practical: "It is better to marry than to burn" (that is, with lust, 1 Cor. 7:9). He does not advise Christians to pair up male and female, in order to represent Christ and the church: he advises celibacy and marriage "if your passions are strong" (1 Cor. 7:36). Thus, both same- and cross-sex marriage may represent the marriage of Christ and the church, because Christ is a spouse to all believers.

Sexual Orientation Is a Christological Condition

A "christological condition" constructs sexual orientation as a more or less settled tendency by which Christ orients embodied desire toward himself, by orienting it toward another human being, taking up the body into the fulfillment of the commandments to love God and neighbor. In marriage we grow into wholehearted love of God, by practicing the love of nearest neighbor.

What is a sexual orientation? It is an orientation of desire. Since Christ "satisfies the desire of every living thing" (Ps. 145:16), a sexual orientation, theologically speaking, must be this: a more or less settled tendency by which Christ orients desire toward himself, through the desire for another human being. Stated another way, Christ, as God, is nearer to every creature than the creature is to itself. A sexual orientation is a way, a *tropos,* a turning-toward, in which the creature follows Christ to come as near to another person as a *creature* can come. Orienting desire to Christ makes sexual orientation a *moral* matter. The married know that they have learned the virtues – patience or temperance or courage, fidelity, hopefulness, and charity – because their spouse inspires a vulnerability that no one else could teach them. Eros makes a way to the heart; without the vulnerability it brings, charity grows cold. This is not a lesson of "sexual liberation," if that "liberation" evades commitment and discipline. This is a lesson of the *incarnation*. The yearning of God in the incarnation, and in the marriage that mirrors it, cannot be bypassed but must be taken up to provide the energy for moral healing and growth.

A sexually oriented person is thus someone who develops and is morally improved through a relationship with someone of the *apposite* sex, typically but not necessarily the *opposite* sex. Those called to same-sex relationships are those who need them *for their own sanctification*. They need this because neither opposite-sex relationships nor celibacy could get deep enough to promote lifelong commitment and growth – growth on the pattern of the incarnation. That means growth through and not without the creaturely limitations that Christ took on, the limits he took to use for our good: the limits of time and

the body. Moral growth takes time. Further, it takes place when we are brought up against the limits and the finitude of our bodies, of our creatureliness. It does not bypass the body. We learn anew with Adam that we are yet creatures, and not gods. Many queer people have learned this in trying and failing to "go straight." Finally, we learn anew with Christ to re-befriend our bodies, to see them as places for Christ to continue in us the incarnation's project of turning desire into charity and even sacrifice.

"Like other natural aptitudes," as Jenkins (2011) wrote, "sexual orientation is a christological condition; it shapes ways of participating in the body of Christ. God in Christ orients desire godward through various capacities to desire others." The Spirit hovers over the waters of the womb to prepare all persons for inclusion in the body of Christ. What the Spirit prepares in the wombs of all mothers images what the Spirit prepared in the womb of Mary and anticipates what the Spirit prepares in the womb of the font: persons meant to find their destiny in Christ's body. The Spirit distributes many and various ways to desire Christ, for the sexual differentiations and orientations that begin in the womb prepare us for "particular patterns of invitation" (Jenkins 2011) to put our bodies on the line for others.

Marriage Makes an Arena and Metaphor for the Atonement

The paradigm for the body in Christianity is Jesus's remark, "This is my body, given for you." With that, he subverts and redeploys a structure of violent oppression – the crucifixion – and turns it to a peaceful feast. He reverses the movement of the fall, which counted divinity a thing to be grasped. Jesus re-befriends the body, and creates the bread of heaven, by counting divinity *not* a thing to be grasped. At the Last Supper, he performs a deathbed wedding, as if he said: "You cannot violate my body." "Take," he says, "I give it to you."

Any couple might blame the fall on the body, if they saw the body as something Christians are saved *from*, rather than honoring the incarnation to see the body as something Christians are saved *by*. Instead, Genesis and Philippians agree, the original sin is wanting to be like God. Genesis 3:5 names the temptation: "you will be like God." They did not stoop too low, and then fall down: they reached too far up, and then fell over. They did not decline, they overreached. They did not drop, they toppled over (Moore 2002). In the Philippians hymn, the incarnation precisely reverses the fall: Christ "did not count equality with God a thing to be *grasped*." Christ *undoes* Adam's grasping after equality with God. Marriage teaches creatures to "have this in mind" (Good 2011): they participate in Christ's reversal of the fall by loving each other as Christ loved them.

Only after the first couple grasped after wanting "to be like God" (Gen. 3:5) were "their eyes opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gen. 3:7): They did not see that their bodies were *bad*, but that their bodies were *creaturely*. Their bodies told them *the truth*, *they were creatures,* and not God. Their bodies gave their overreach the lie. They felt shame because they failed to become God; they hated their bodies, because their bodies showed that they were creatures still. They *scorned* their bodies: but Christ, in the incarnation, took *on* a body, and re-befriended what Adam had scorned (Moore 2002).

Why did Jesus not climb down from the cross? – because he held himself accountable to put his body where his love was. Luke's last temptation is "if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down" from the temple, the place of sacrifice (4:9). That becomes Matthew's recommendation from the passers-by and thieves crucified with Jesus to "let him now come down from the cross ... let God deliver him" (Mt 27:42–43). Why would Jesus regard climbing down as a temptation? Because he has pledged his love in his body ("this is my body, given for you") precisely to *these,* to humankind the grasper, the criminal, the

thief: and because to climb down from the cross would be to abandon his solidarity with Luke's thief, the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–43), whom Christ took on a body to befriend.

To put one's body on the line in solidarity with another, for better or worse, in sickness and in health, till death do us part, is one place where couples daily and bodily receive and live out the atonement by which Christ re-befriends the body to overcome sin. They practice Christ's solidarity with his bride, the criminal, the thief on the cross. The gift of one's body "for better for worse," and the solidarity of one's body "till death do us part" are *not* practices that same-sex couples should be left out of, but practices that all couples need, and the church needs from them. Traditional Christians have no wish to deprive same-sex couples of their most promising source of help: yet on this account, the source of help is same-sex marriage, because it not only participates in Christ's atonement for sin, but does so "by daily practices of accountability far beyond what counseled celibacy can provide" (Jenkins 2011). Marriage for same-sex couples allows them to partake of Christ's solidarity with the thief on the cross whom he would not abandon, but did befriend, until death parted and paradise reunited them.

The final reversal of the fall is eucharistic, because redemption, like the fall, takes place by eating. Not only do Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the tree, but God then commands them that "in the sweat of your brow you shall *eat bread*" (Gen. 3:19). This command becomes the means of their redemption when Jesus gives his body as their bread, and the fruit of the vine for the fruit of the tree. That is why the marriage rite begins with Cana, which points forward to the Last Supper and the Wedding of the Lamb, and ends with the Eucharist, where "the newly married couple may present the offerings of bread and wine" (BCP 432). Their first married act follows Christ to reverse grasping by offering, and their first common bread replaces Adam's taking by force with receiving by gift. The gift that they receive – and that they may follow – is Christ's self-donation, his nuptial commitment to the church, to be where his body is.

The Third Vow Involves the Whole Community as Witnesses and Guarantors of the Marriage, Catching Them up into a Parable of the Trinitarian Life

However, there are not only two vows in the marriage rite. There are three. The third vow commits the people to uphold the couple. Marriage is not for the couple alone but also for the gathered church. The third vow saves marriage from *égoïsme à deux,* and delivers it to the Spirit who makes new witnesses.

Traditionalists invite us to consider the risks of including queer couples. But refusal to celebrate weddings incurs its own moral risk: "And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast to his son, and sent his servants to call those invited; but they would not come... Then he said to his servants, ... 'Go therefore into the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good: so the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there one who had no wedding garment; and he said, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And the guest was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind that one hand and foot, to cast into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Mt 22:1-3, 9-13, RSV modified).

The priest or minister therefore prompts a *third* vow: "Will you do everything in your power to uphold this couple in their marriage," and the people answer, "We will" (BCP, 425). "The kingdom of heaven is

like a wedding *feast*": the Spirit draws not the couple alone, but all who celebrate with them. One promises; the other returns the promise. That is not all. They do not promise by themselves. A congregation of witnesses promises also. In the third vow, not only the couple but also the witnesses participate in a relationship of promises. In this third promise, the Spirit draws not only the couple, but also the witnesses, into a parable of the Trinity, where there is one who gives a promise, one who returns a promise, and one who witnesses, upholds, guarantees, and celebrates the promise.

In this third vow, the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of fidelity, the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8) – catches up the whole people into its own proper office of bearing witness to love. In the Spirit of fidelity (8:15), who reunited the Son with the Father to prove that love is stronger than death, the witnesses at a wedding hope to reunite the couple in times of difficulty. In the Spirit of adoption (8:23) that makes additional children for the Father from virgins and stones, the witnesses at a wedding hope the promises will produce a couple and perhaps also adopted or biological children and that the couple will with groaning in travail, bear them into children of God.

In the Spirit of witness, those who make these promises – these third promises, these promises of witness – put on the wedding garment. Those who make these promises at same-sex weddings may put on wedding garments as invited guests, or in place of those who would not come. Those who make these promises – these third promises – strengthen all marriages, not only the one they witness, but also their own, and not only their own, but those of others, because in these promises they uphold fidelity, undertake hospitality, and celebrate love (BCP, 430).

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CHAPTER 148

New Religious Movements

Damon T. Berry

On March 26, 1997, at a mansion in Rancho Santa Fe, California, twenty-one women and eighteen men, all adults, all dressed identically, all members of a new religious movement known as Heaven's Gate, were found dead. They had poisoned themselves, and made videos explaining why. They explained that they were going to the "evolutionary level above human," and that to stay on Earth rather than to "leave" would have in fact been the real suicide. They were going to discard their earthly bodies and meet the spacecraft that was hidden in the tail of comet Hale-Bopp. Thereafter they would be in what they believed Christians had erroneously called Heaven, but was, in fact, a higher stage of human consciousness. These members of "The Heaven's Gate Away Team," borrowing the term from the Star Trek series that they were so fond of watching together, were pioneers in human evolution, not members of some "suicide cult."

These Heaven's Gate suicides came nearly twenty years after the atrocities in Guyana that came to be described as the "Jonestown massacre." The leader of the People's Temple, Jim Jones, lead nine hundred and nine members of the Temple to their deaths, most but not all from apparent cyanide poisoning, in an act of "revolutionary suicide." The deaths in Switzerland and Quebec, Canada, tied to Solar Temple in 1994 also shaped the public's reception of the discovery of the Heaven's Gate members. The Heaven's Gate suicides coincided with the height of the controversial and public trial of Dr. Jack Kevorkian's facilitation of assisted suicides. And at the center of both the Heaven's Gate incident and the Kevorkian trial were serious ethical questions concerning one's right to die. In fact, the two events were often referenced together in both the public imagination and in textbooks, as in the *Comprehensive Textbook of Suicidology* (Maris, Berman, and Silverman 2000).

This brief discussion of Heaven's Gate speaks to the ways in which new religious movements (NRMs) challenge ethical norms of the broader society and move to establish norms of their own. New religions often speak directly to larger ethical questions about personal agency, governmental control, and oversight over religious groups, and even how one describes such groups in scholarly work and in the media. As Hugh B. Urban, a historian of religions at Ohio State University, argues in *New Age, Neopagan, and New Religious Movements: Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary America* (2015), new religions offer specific and complex challenges to the academy, legal and regulatory institutions, and to broader society. It is those very challenges, some of which are explored here, that make the study of new religious movements in the context of ethics significant for all of us.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Ethical Challenges of NRMS to Scholarship

One of the ethical challenges that new religions offer to scholars of religion is the problem of defining them as religions. As scholars have debated for more than twenty years over even the possibility of providing a universal definition of religion, one that does not either present Protestant Christian categories as the measure of all that can be religious or in so doing exclude minority religious traditions, defining NRMs adds an additional layer of complexity to a question already heavy with ethical implications. The anthropologist Talal Asad, the cultural theorist Tomoko Masuzawa, and the scholar of religion Russell McCutcheon, for example, have each critiqued the field of religious studies concerning the role of normative assumptions and culturally biased perspectives in the very construction of the category "religion," and particularly questioning the role of the category of "belief" as one that is relied upon by Western scholars because of their predominantly Christian context in which belief is assumed to be the orienting concept for what religion is supposedly concerned. In other words, what are the ethical concerns in constructing "religion" as an object of study?

New religions add another layer of complexity to the problem of defining religion. For much of the history of the term "world religions" the assumption was that these traditions are ancient. Indeed, the very notion of religions as traditions seems to beg the assumption that they are always old. And for some scholars, like Huston Smith (1916–2016), for something to be considered a bona fide religion meant that it had to pass what he called the time test. A case in point was his defense of members of the Native American Church (NAC) participating in the ritual practice of ingesting peyote, a small cactus plant with hallucinogenic properties that grows in the regions of the American South West and Northern Mexico.

For members of the NAC peyote is a sacrament, for them very similar to Christians' views on the taking of bread or the communion wafer in services. It is taken to commune with the Creator, but also for the purposes of healing – spiritually and physically. Peyote is then often referred to in the NAC as medicine as well as a sacrament, in part because the ritual during which it is ingested is in fact a result of the historical fusion of traditional practices and Christianity.

The Huicholes, Cares, Tarahumaras, and the Lipan Apache had used peyote in rituals and for medicine for centuries. The Huicholes of the Sierra Madre Occidental mountain region had used peyote communally and in connection with the maize harvest, while other groups in the region where peyote practice had spread developed their own traditions. The ritual ingestion of peyote had been practiced and adapted to many cultural contexts for thousands of years, and had continued to spread to other Native American groups throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The NAC emerged out of such peyote practices as they were adapted by Quanah Parker (ca. 1852–1911), and others. Parker was the son of a White mother and Comanche father who had become the principal chief of the Comanche. By the middle of the 1870s the Comanche had developed a peyote tradition of their own, and Parker helped establish this as the basis for what eventually came to be called the NAC by the first decade of the twentieth century. Sometime later, a man named John Rave (ca. 1855–1917) introduced peyote rituals among the Winnebago, and with his fellow Winnebago, Albert Hensley, developed a strategy of legitimating peyote practice by adding Christian elements, particularly the language of the sacrament, to make the practice more recognizably religious to an extremely hostile American government. As Thomas C. Maroukis notes in *The Peyote Road: Religious Freedom and the Native American Church* (2010), Hensley avoided calling peyote by its traditional

names, preferring to describe it as "medicine" and insisting that they were ingesting Christ's body in part to ensure that the practice would be allowed to continue amid suppression of traditional practices targeted for extinction by American officials.

These efforts at achieving recognition as a religion were not always successful. As Maroukis demonstrates, there were persistent efforts by Catholic missionaries earlier in colonization of the region, and then later by the United States government after the Mexican–American War, to eradicate peyote religions. But the peyote traditions captured the attention of scholars precisely because of such concerted efforts by the American government to eliminate the practice. Some of these academics invested in defending the practice as well as recording the variants of practice. For example, the anthropologist James Mooney (1861–1921) had attended peyote rituals as early as 1891, and suggested to some of those practicing in Oklahoma that they incorporate so they might avail themselves of protections afforded to churches under the law. Some of them did in fact do so in 1918, calling themselves "Native American Church," again in part to obtain recognition as a "real" religious organization before the American government. This fight for recognition continued well into the late twentieth century, and one major battle was waged in the late 1980s; one that reached the Supreme Court and helped to reshape the American legal landscape on the issue of religious liberty.

Al Smith and Galen Black, both members of the NAC, were fired from their jobs at a drug rehabilitation center in Oregon for taking peyote as part of their religious practice. Peyote was still at that time considered an illegal substance. Smith and Black filed for unemployment compensation from the state of Oregon and were denied because they had been fired for, as the state saw it, "work related misconduct." They then sued the state of Oregon in 1987 in a state court under the First Amendment and lost. They appealed, and finally the Supreme Court heard the case as *Employment Division v. Smith* in 1989 (494, US 827, 1990). The Supreme Court ruled against Smith and Black in 1990, and in the majority opinion, written by Justice Scalia, stated:

> Conscientious scruples have not, in the course of the long struggle for religious toleration, relieved the individual from obedience to a general law not aimed at the promotion or restriction of religious beliefs. The mere possession of religious convictions which contradict the relevant concerns of a political society does not relieve the citizen from the discharge of political responsibilities.

Religious and civil liberty organizations alike were horrified by the decision, especially fearing for the implications for religious freedom in the United States. Scholars of religion soon joined the discussion as well. Huston Smith coauthored a book with Reuben Snake, a Native American leader and elder of the Winnebago people, celebrating the endurance of the NAC, and explained the long practice of the very traditions the Supreme Court seemed to disqualify. Before this book was published in 1996, Huston Smith and Reuben Snake, and even Al Smith himself, appeared in a film documenting the history of the NAC and the Smith case. In this film Huston Smith describes why he thinks the NAC is an authentic religion and ought to be treated as such. Applying what he called the "time test" Smith argued that if one considers the long practice of using peyote in rituals, one has to consider that the practices of the NAC are in fact quite ancient, which qualifies the NAC itself as an "authentic religion." In other words, what Al Smith and Galen Black were doing in ingesting peyote was in fact an authentic expression of religious conviction because they were enacting an ancient ritual that had endured centuries.

Given Huston Smith's statement concerning peyote use in the NAC, one is left to consider the consequences of such a standard for new religions that cannot avail themselves of a claim to long practice. Certainly we can sympathize with a defense of Native American practices long attacked by the federal government, but Smith's defense is not without its consequences. What are the possible outcomes of a more ubiquitous application of the "time test?" Such a standard not only challenges the validity of religions like Scientology, which was founded in the 1950s, but also perhaps Mormonism, which began in the nineteenth century, only decades before the NAC. Moreover, are we to say that Christianity and Islam were at some point in their histories not *real* religions, at least until their points of origin seemed far enough behind for them to be ancient?

The point is that the "time test" is arbitrary, illogical as a measure for categorizing something as "religious," and ultimately discriminatory. Scholars should consider the problematically normative and arbitrarily evaluative frame they establish in their study, especially the ways in which that frame serves in making a distinction between what religions are to be considered *real* and worthy of study, and those that are considered, at least implicitly, fake and unworthy of serious scholarly attention, or defense before the courts, or in the public discourse. Addressing the ethics of categorization in studying religion is therefore of significant importance. As scholars of religion continue to wrestle with the history of categories that had privileged predominantly Christian tropes, NRMs and the study of NRMs will continue to play a significant role in defining the kinds of questions concerning ethical practice in scholarship of religions.

NRMs and Ethics in Law and Government

In using the example of the NAC, we can already see that NRMs challenge not only scholars, but also legal and governmental institutions. To address the ruling against Smith and Black in 1990, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) easily passed in the US Congress, and was signed into law by President Clinton in 1993. This Act has in its own way come to challenge the legal boundaries of religious freedom in America, particularly concerning the future of statutes in the Affordable Care Act (2010) and even in antidiscrimination legislation at the state and federal levels. But the point here is that in the United States, Constitutional requirements, precedents in court rulings, and legislation like the RFRA all come to bear on how new religions can be at any given point in American history recognized as real religions, if they get tax exempt status, or if other privileges or protections afforded to religious actors apply to them equally. In this way ethical administration of justice in the courts is challenged by groups whose practices are not well known or understood by the very people charged with delivering impartial verdicts from juries and judges alike.

Religion is often the focus of governmental and legal oversight and regulation, and sometimes the object of specific restriction. In instances in which religious expression and membership are constrained by governing bodies, particularly significant ethical questions arise. For example, should governments restrict religious affiliation or activity that is thought to be harmful or if government officials deem a group dangerous. This question is raised in the context of extreme events like Jonestown, the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, and the deaths of people affiliated with Solar Temple. Should the government be doing more to protect individuals from seemingly predatory or dangerous religious groups? If they do, are they acting in a discriminatory way in restricting membership to targeted religious organizations or limiting non-threatening religious activities of their citizens?

The obvious concern is that claims acting to protect the public can be a claim made to cover other motives. For example, in the early 2000s the Russian government stated that Scientology could not be listed as a religious organization because it had not existed in the country for the minimum number of years to yet qualify as a real religion – fifteen years. When the ban was successfully challenged before the European Court of Human Rights in 2009, the Russian government listed Scientology as an extremist group, describing it as a threat to traditional spiritual values of the citizens of the Russian Federation. But the initial ban and then the later listing Scientology as an extremist group and a threat to the public needs to be contextualized within the other political interests that shaped these policy decisions. As professor of law Robert C. Blitt argued, the ban and the watch-listing of Scientology and other non-traditional religious groups in Russia signaled a broader trend of a growing relationship between the government and the Russian Orthodox Church that presented significant legal and ethical concerns as well.

The time test that Huston Smith used to argue that the NAC was in fact a religion to substantiate the broader claim that peyote practices of members of the church should be protected religious practice under the First Amendment of the Constitution was in the case of Scientology in Russia used to deny that Scientologists were practicing a real religion at all. Beyond that, Scientology was labeled a threat to the existing social and religious order in an extremely problematic context in which the national government overtly prefers the Orthodox Church. Some may find Scientology difficult to sympathize with, but the questions concerning the ethics of recognition, especially when the state can exercise supreme executive power to limit liberties based upon a lack of full recognition as a religion, makes the questions of how new religions are recognized or not by state bodies of concern regarding ethical governance. What also needs to be considered are the consequences of an organization being officially labeled a "cult" rather than a religion that can be severe. In China a controversy over banning one NRM on the basis that they were a "cult" has gotten even more global attention than the Scientology ban in Russia, in part because of the draconian response of the ruling government against the members of the NRM in question.

On October 30, 1999 the Chinese government announced through its embassy that the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress passed an anti-cult law "to prevent and combat cults such as the now banned Falun Gong sect" ("China Issues Anti-cult Law" 1999). The announcement elaborated: "Cult organizations that have destroyed normal social orders and stability through illegal gathering, led to the deaths of practitioners and rapes of women and swindled money should be dealt with severely." Political scientist Maria Hsia Chang (2004) and historian David Ownby (2008) both note in their books on Falun Gong, a NRM that emerged from the context of a revival in traditional Chinese practices in 1992, that the ban followed a protest in which approximately 10,000 members of the sect had peacefully conducted in April that year outside China's communist party headquarters, just a short distance from the site of democratic reform protests that were held in 1989 in Tiananmen Square.

The result of the ban was yet further protests, this time at Tiananmen Square itself, where thousands of unrepentant Falun Gong practitioners had gathered to express their opposition to what they saw as an unwarranted and violent repression of their freedom to engage in what was previously seen by the government as a harmless and indeed positive, traditionally Chinese meditative practice. The exercise that Falun Gong practitioners engage in are akin to Tai Chi, with slow choreographed movements of the arms and the body combined with breathing exercises. The goal of such exercises, called by other schools of the practice, qigong (pronounced, chee-gong) or "life energy cultivation," was an aid in one's daily life, helping with focus, concentration, and general health and positive emotional disposition. As such, the larger qigong movement, as Ownby notes, was seen as positive, especially as it was regarded as fundamentally apolitical.

Falun Gong, though much of its early development is not well documented, seemed to run afoul of the government with its growing popularity under the sect's leader, Li Hongzhi, who had differentiated between qigong practices that came before and Falun Gong. Li set out to purposefully build a national movement that was organized around himself as a teacher of great and ancient truths, and the focus, in some sense, of all Falun Gong practice. Over time this began to worry government officials. When Falun Gong practitioners organized protests openly, challenging the official government, the government saw them as a direct political threat. And a short time after this Falun Gong was then officially described as a threat to general morals and social order in China.

As countries seek to become part of the larger liberal political global order, what are the limits of government control over the religious rights of their citizens, especially when they organize in civil spaces for what could be seen as politically motivated causes? Furthermore, with the very short time after the Falun Gong protests that the anti-cult law was passed, one has to wonder how new religions are targeted by governments under the auspices of protecting the public from "dangerous cults." And in any case, what rights should a government have over the religious practice and organized activity, to say nothing over the right to peaceably address concerns that those citizens may have concerning their government's behavior? The ethical dilemmas in defining "religion" and administrating justice regarding "religious liberties" are bound by similar concerns of fairness and the equal application of justice, especially where interests of executive power shape what is referred to as a "religion" and what is labeled a "cult." And beyond the academy and the halls of executive power, much of this debate is happening in online and media spaces.

NRMs and Ethics in Media

Notions of fairness and the presumed right to free expression of religious belief, practice, and association, which are so central to the normative, liberal, political rationale that in many ways define a nation as either dictatorial or democratic, are put to the test when a new religion, often suspect in the minds of government officials and the general public, is targeted for repression. As later reports emerged concerning the imprisonment, torture, and murder of Falun Gong practitioners in China, and the possible selling of executed prisoners' organs on the black market by the government was discovered, the question concerning ethical governmental practice toward members of new religions took on new and international importance and urgency.

In North America, from Columbus, Ohio, to Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, and in other countries in Europe and in Australia, Falun Gong practitioners are often found publicly demonstrating their qi exercises, distributing literature about the healthful benefits of the practice, and criticizing the Chinese government for its brutal repression of the movement in the country of its birth. Falun Gong practitioners have also established media outlets and online resources to spread the practice, but also to criticize the Chinese government from abroad. One particular media organization, Flying Cloud Productions, has produced documentaries and feature films describing atrocities allegedly committed against Falun Gong members imprisoned by the Chinese government. One film, titled *The Bleeding Edge* (dir. Leon Lee, 2016), stars Anastasia Lin, Miss World Canada 2015 winner and Falun Gong practitioner. The director of this film, Leon Lee, previously directed a documentary for Flying Cloud on the harvesting of organs by Chinese prisons titled *Human Harvest* (2014), which won a Peabody Award in 2014.

With the use of celebrity and film media Falun Gong practitioners and advocates are able to make their criticism of the Chinese government quite public, and in a way the escapes the full control and censorship of the government, in part because most of this activity originates from the United States and Canada where Falun Gong practices and political speech against the Chinese government can be enjoyed with relatively little fear of reprisals from anyone. But we should remember that media spaces are not simply spaces where new religions can flourish unimpeded. In these spaces, news media, film, and on the Internet, questions about fair and equal access mingle with questions concerning the ethics of representation.

If we return a moment to the case of Scientology, we can see how contested media spaces are when dealing with new religions. As of 2017, A&E Network has aired the second season of Leah Remini's show, *Scientology and the Aftermath* (2016–2019). The show documents her own departure from the church of Scientology, of which she had been a member for most of her life since childhood, and features interviews with other former Scientologists who share their sometimes devastating experiences with abuses within the church. The church has responded by publishing its own website, leahreminiaftermath.com, attacking Remini and those who participate on the show with claims that "Remini's brand of hate and bigotry is funded by A&E," and that the show has led to vandalism against Scientology centers and threats of violence against Scientologists.

This is the latest battle in a longer war between Scientology and its critics. The "hacktivist" group Anonymous, for example released a YouTube video in 2008 announcing their war on Scientology, claiming "Anonymous has therefore decided that your organization should be destroyed. For the good of your followers, for the good of mankind, and for our own enjoyment, we shall proceed to expel you from the Internet and systematically dismantle the Church of Scientology in its present form" ("Message to Scientology 2008). More recently, as of 2016, the church and media mogul Rupert Murdoch have rekindled a feud that started in 1960 when Murdoch purchased *The Daily Mirror* and its sister publication *Truth*. In the pages of *Truth*, Murdoch attacked Scientology, especially in a piece called "Bunkumology," as sinister organization that was preying on the weak and gullible. Murdoch's media campaign led to public investigations in 1963, to which the head of the inquiry concluded his final report stating that Scientology was "evil" and "a serious threat to the community, medically, morally and socially; and its adherents sadly deluded and often mentally ill" (Urban 2015, 146). Shortly after that it was banned in Victoria, Australia, and later still in two other states, until the ban was later lifted in the 1970s.

It should matter that government action to ban Scientology in some states in Australia was instigated by tabloid journalism, and that such fights in public media still occur. Whatever one thinks of Scientology or the controversies that have always surrounded it, the events in Australia bring to our attention some serious ethical questions once again. For example, what kinds of representation in media create responses to new religions that perhaps are not expressed when outrages are committed by other organizations that are considered more authentically religious? The sex abuse scandals that still affect the Catholic Church have not resulted in a serious push to ban Catholicism in Australia or to revoke tax exempt status in the United States. The reactions to the news of abuses within Scientology and of abuses in the Catholic Church warrant investigation so that we might consider if the reactions concerning these cases have been shaped in part by the ways in which new religions are portrayed in the media. And just as we discussed at the beginning of this entry, where an extreme action, like Heaven's Gate occurs, associations are quickly made to other NRMs that seem to have done something similar, but not to religions that are imagined to be more mainstream. The mediation of information about new religions plays a part in the other concerns addressed in this entry. Scholars, legislators, and members of the broader public are all

subjected to the mediation of images and information that shapes our emotive responses that we describe as outrage. And where there is outrage, there is always already ethics.

Writing about new religious movements and ethics presents specific challenges. The category of NRMs is fraught, and abundant with the kinds of questions addressed briefly here. There is not really much that makes one new religion like another, except for the arbitrary designation of them being new, a criterion, as we have seen, riddled with ethical and intellectual problems. Does "new" mean having begun in the nineteenth century or later? Would this designation then only apply to new traditions that do not root their tradition in something older? Is Pentecostalism, which began in the first decade of the twentieth century, a new religion even if it emerged out of older Protestant practices? And if so, what exactly does it share in common with Scientology or Neopaganism? These questions are not rhetorical. They are the questions posed to us by the very category of NRMs, if one considers it with equity in mind as well as the ethics and consequences of recognition.

Finally, one cannot approach ethics in NRMs as one does in discussing ethics in Judaism, Islam, or Buddhism. Religions categorized as NRMs present a stunning diversity of doctrines and practices, mythologies, and positions on life and morality that do not always have historical relationships with one another. One is then left to consider the questions posed to academics, policy makers, and citizens by religious diversity, and to investigate the ways in which this diversity forces all of us to account for the normative assumptions we carry into debates about what constitutes religion, whose religion is protected, and how those religions are represented in the media.

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CHAPTER 149

Peacekeeping

Irene Oh

The major world religions have all addressed the topic of peace; peacekeeping, however, is a specific term that evolved in the twentieth century as a result of international diplomatic bodies' efforts to minimize the eruption of violence after conflict. While peace and peacekeeping and the phrase, "keeping the peace," are used interchangeably in colloquial conversation, it is important to emphasize that peacekeeping as used by major international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) refers to a highly orchestrated and specific outcome of warfare in a globalized society.

The UN describes peacekeeping as possessing "unique strengths, including legitimacy, burden sharing, and an ability to deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to advance multidimensional mandates. UN Peacekeepers provide security and the political and peacebuilding support to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace." This particular definition of peacekeeping incorporates multiple norms including the need for recognized authority, multi-lateral and cooperative processes, recognition of military and police force, participation of civilians, and post-conflict development. Peacekeeping is not limited to international conflict, but can also be found within nations following civil war, political revolutions, and massive social upheaval. Because post-conflict neutrality is an important aspect of peacekeeping, however, international personnel are often deployed in peacekeeping missions in order to maintain a sense of fairness and impartiality in the fragile period after a cease-fire has been achieved.

Although the definition of peacekeeping is broad and varies by organization, the general principles of peacekeeping set by the UN are widely accepted: 1) Consent of the parties; 2) Impartiality; 3) Non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate. The United States military refers to peacekeeping as a subset of "stability operations" and more generally under "peace operations," which indicates the very wide range of responsibilities of peacekeepers. Peacekeeping can also be understood within the larger context of preventative diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. As described by former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992, "Agenda for Peace," the multiple aspects of post-conflict peace are mutually reinforcing. He writes, "post-conflict peace-building-action to identify and support structures ... will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. Preventive diplomacy seeks to resolve disputes before violence breaks out; peacemaking and peace-keeping are required to halt conflicts and preserve peace once it is attained. If successful, they strengthen the opportunity for post-conflict peace-building, which can prevent the recurrence of violence among nations and peoples."

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

Peacekeeping efforts have evolved significantly since the initial attempts by the League of Nations after World War I to oversee the processes of local elections. While it is commonly accepted today that peacekeeping efforts should require the consent of involved parties, the winning Allied Powers at the time were far more concerned about supervising democratic elections in former Central Power states than ensuring neutral and balanced peacekeepers. Needless to say, the peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts following World War I were not long-lasting, and the advent of World War II, followed by the founding of the United Nations, resulted in significant changes to international peacekeeping efforts.

The first peacekeeping operation by the United Nations, the Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), was established in January 1949 to oversee the cease-fire between the two nations in the border regions of Jammu and Kashmir. Renewed tensions in the region in 1971 resulted in the continued presence of UN Peacekeepers, over 100 of whom remain there at present. The UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations are currently active in fourteen locations, predominantly in Africa and the Middle East. More than 100,000 personnel representing the military, police, and civilian populations from 125 countries serve in these locations at this time. In the past 70 years, over one million men and women have served as UN peacekeepers.

Although the UN is the dominant player in peacekeeping operations, a number of regional organizations, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the African Union, the Organization of American States, and the League of Arab States, have also fielded peacekeepers in various conflict zones. The multiple functions of peacekeeping suggest that local peacekeepers may have advantages that peacekeeping forces from across the globe may not. The attempts to bring in local knowledge, including knowledge of religious and moral customs, however, need to be balanced against perceptions of bias that foreign peacekeepers avoid. (The majority of UNMOGIP peacekeepers, for example, come from Croatia and Korea, countries that are unlikely to be perceived as biased in the India-Pakistan conflict.)

Particularly for what are referred to as "law and order" operations that go beyond observation and maintenance of ceasefire zones, cultural knowledge of the region can be of immense help to peacekeepers. Such types of operations include elections monitoring, police training, and humanitarian and relief efforts. These interventions, unlike observation or interposition of cease-fire lines, require extensive interaction with locals. The UN states that its peacekeeping personnel respect "local laws, customs, and practices." Particularly with regard to the observation of "local laws, customs, and practices," knowledge of religious beliefs, customs, and traditions would be necessary for peacekeepers when interacting with local peoples.

Training for peacekeepers with regard to local belief systems varies tremendously from operation to operation. While there are prominent UN initiatives, such as the 2015 Fez Declaration and its forerunner, the 2013 Rabat Plan of Action, that clearly encourage local religious leaders to become involved in the processes of preventing or reducing conflict, no specific mention is made of peacekeepers in either statement. Rather, the documents refer to peace broadly speaking and encourage religious leaders to support organizations with shared causes. Presumably, this means engaging with peacekeeping forces, but the lack of specific reference to peacekeepers may suggest that this engagement be directed to peacebuilding and preventative diplomacy, rather than peacemaking and peacekeeping.

Appealing to people's religious commitments may also provide motivation to move beyond conflict that takes into account not only political and economic justice, but also possibly forgiveness and reconciliation. The difficulty of incorporating religious traditions explicitly in peace processes lies in the fact that religious beliefs may be responsible – at least in part – for the conflict at hand. Those responsible for

peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding may believe that the most prudent course of action would be to ignore religion altogether. Because religious institutions and leaders have an intimate understanding of their communities' needs and possibilities, however, peacekeeping and peacebuilding are increasingly committed to finding ways to cooperate with local religious groups in order to fulfill their missions.

One possibility for bridging the gap between local religious leaders and peacekeeping is through religious nongovernmental organizations (RNGOs). These RNGOs are organizations that serve in the public interest at the national or international level and have an explicitly religious mission or affiliation. RNGOs have a long history of participating in the service of peace, if not explicitly peacekeeping. In 1947, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the American Friends Service Committee and the London-based Friends Service Committee for their work during the Second World War. Some of the largest and most well-known RNGOs today include the Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity International, and Catholic Relief Services.

Although RNGOs have played an influential role in shaping UN and international discourse on peace, RNGOs have largely been ignored, particularly in non-Western contexts. This reluctance to embrace fully RNGOs likely stems from the concern that RNGOs would use funds not for projects in the shared common interest, but rather to proselytize. Particularly in parts of the world where Christian organizations are viewed as circumspect due to their complicity with colonizing empires, funding agencies are reluctant to support RNGOs. Indeed, RNGOs that rely excessively upon governmental funding, as opposed to private donations, run the risk of becoming too closely allied with government interests and suffer both in terms of reputation and local effectiveness. Members of Pakistan's religious and political communities led a campaign against a number of NGOs, claiming that they were biased in favor of "Western" and Christian values. Along similar lines, funding agencies may be hesitant to support organizations, particularly Muslim ones, that may be perceived by donors as having ties to terrorist groups. Unfortunately, the fact that there are few Muslim RNGOs relative to their population in the world makes it far more difficult to accept the normalcy of non-Christian, and to some extent non-Jewish, RNGOs. Buddhist RNGOs, because they are few in number and due to the stereotype of Buddhists as peace-loving, tend not to attract controversy.

RNGOs vary tremendously in terms of both their scope of work and the type of services they provide. While many of the activities they pursue are not directly related to peacekeeping, other activities could be considered operational peacekeeping or peacebuilding. At the very least, many RNGOs focus on monitoring, or keeping track of developments in particular communities as they relate to the specific services that RNGOs provide. These services are typically oriented towards education, relief, and social services; some RNGOs may also lobby governments and international agencies such as the UN on behalf of issues such as debt relief or food distribution, which affect conditions for peacekeepers. In their monitoring and provision of services, RNGOs would be able to partner with peacekeepers in order to identify key religious leaders within communities to facilitate efforts by peacekeepers and peacebuilders to create and maintain conditions for peace. These projects would include supporting religious schools in the development of curricula that promote non-violent inter-religious engagement, providing financial and logistical aid to ecumenical organizations that provide relief services, and encouraging truth and reconciliation forums with commitments to long-term just peace.

Although there is ample evidence of religions' role in promoting violence, religions also undoubtedly function in the service of peacemaking and peacebuilding. Religious institutions, so long as they are able

to admit to and confront their complicity and culpability in violent conflict and the perpetuation of injustice, can become a force for just peace. As partners with other institutions, religious organizations can draw from rich theological and spiritual resources to develop profound and persuasive arguments for economic, social, and political justice. Religious institutions and leaders, as they reflect changing norms of justice, can issue powerful statements about the importance of human rights, gender equality, and environmental protections in the establishment of just and lasting peace. Perhaps more importantly, they can also use their considerable resources to promote people and organizations that support these ideals.

Each of the major world religions finds ample support in their seminal texts and sources to promote peacekeeping, broadly speaking. Because rich interpretive traditions can be found in all of these traditions, texts can be revisited over time to provide meaning and significance to address current needs, whether they be to encourage violence or to uphold peace. The Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have in common vibrant histories of scriptural interpretation that can be applied to the topic of peacekeeping. Many writings regarding principles of warfare that come out of these traditions also have relevance to peacekeeping. Finally, when writing about religious ethics and peacekeeping, one must keep in mind how easily religious beliefs and texts can be interpreted to justify war and violence; ignoring these aspects of interpretive traditions in discussions of peacekeeping – or claiming that such interpretations are inaccurate – are likely to be viewed as biased apologetics. This perception of bias weakens the persuasiveness of arguments for peacekeeping. The fact of the matter is unfortunately that while many would prefer to categorize religions as inherently peaceful, this has not been the case empirically. Interpretation alone has repeatedly failed to end conflict and to promote peace. Rather, interpretation in the service of action and at the level of institutional change appears to be the most meaningful way to integrate religious ethics into peace processes.

Each of the major world religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam – offers resources for peacekeeping. In addition to localized knowledge of religious beliefs, practices, and rituals that may be important for peacebuilding, religious institutions also provide ways of encountering the peace process beyond militaristic considerations. Religious texts and teachings take into account the very human needs of a community in order to move beyond conflict and towards the possibility for forgiveness and reconciliation. Religious leadership can also articulate the parameters of social and economic justice post-conflict within a theological framework. Perhaps most importantly, religious traditions often appeal to a transcendent ideal – whether it be divine or rooted in humanity – that encourages communities to push past the conflict at hand and to put in place concrete measures that build towards a shared vision.

Mohandas K. Gandhi's teachings on *satyagraha* and *swaraj* emerge out of his meditations on Hinduism and other religious and philosophical traditions. These concepts take into account the full cycle of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. Translated as "truth force," *satyagraha* is the theoretical basis of a nonviolent strategy for change that is rooted in a commitment to seek the truth not just for oneself, but for interconnected life. Truth, in Gandhi's understanding of the term, emerges from a profound knowledge of what is actual reality as opposed to false desires – themes that can be found in the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. We actualize this truth by seeking justice for all in a nonviolent way (*ahimsa*). One's commitment to *ahimsa* reflects the acceptance of interconnectedness because harm to others is in essence harm to oneself. (On a practical level, change that is brought about by nonviolent resistance and protest has historically proven to be longer lasting and more effective than change that is

brought about through violent revolution.) *Swaraj*, commonly associated with India's self-governance and economic independence after colonial rule, is similarly founded upon the seeking of true equality among peoples, including the ability to see one's own peoples as capable and deserving of autonomy. The remarkably peaceful transition of India from colonial rule to independence under Gandhi's leadership is a model for peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. The theoretical basis for the transition to independence emerged out of familiar religious and philosophical narratives for Indians is particularly noteworthy when analyzing religious ethics and peacekeeping. Because every conflict has its unique aspects, peace plans are most effective when they are crafted for the particular communities affected; that is, the meaningfulness of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding needs to be tied into deeper cultural and religious values in order for peace to be more persuasive than war.

Although tremendous diversity exists within Buddhism, the different schools of Buddhist thought agree upon the importance of compassion and the example of the Buddha. Both of these have implications for political and social justice broadly speaking, and for peace processes more specifically. Deeply critical of the Hindu caste system, the Buddha rejected his own royal status and sought to find a means for all persons, regardless of the circumstances into which they were born, to achieve liberation from suffering. Buddhism at its core could thus be considered a very democratic belief system in its rejection of discrimination and embrace of all of humanity. The Buddhist ideal of compassion for others, especially one's enemy, can be profoundly motivating during peace processes. Even if such a lofty goal cannot be attained, the possibility of compassion becomes a yardstick for peacebuilding.

While many aspects of Buddhism speak to peace, the "engaged Buddhism" movement initiated by the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, during the height of the Vietnam War is perhaps the most closely aligned with the work of peacekeeping. Hanh and other engaged Buddhists tie meditative practice and mindfulness with social justice and development work. Nhat Hanh teaches that in order for conflict to end peacefully and to establish a just community, members of that community need to be at peace not just with each other but with themselves. The interconnectedness of individuals to social peace is reflected in what Nhat Hanh calls "interbeing," or the awareness of how all aspects of existence are one and the same; as such, when we care for others, including animals and the environment, we care for ourselves. This deep and rich understanding of peace is necessary if communities are to move beyond peacekeeping and to engage meaningfully in peacebuilding.

In the case of Judaism, any discussion of peacekeeping would necessarily need to address the role of Israel in the Middle East conflict. The state of Israel presents a very complicated, highly contested situation for peacekeeping. Recent pronouncements declaring Israel a "nation-state of the Jewish people" have been raising concerns about prioritizing religious-ethnic identity over democratic principles. This move by the Israeli government, while intended to preserve a people that have suffered and continue to suffer persecution and discrimination, also potentially compromises fundamental values of equality. Whether such a declaration will accelerate a two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians has yet to be determined.

Jewish religious texts do not address directly the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but they do speak to the broader issues of justice and preservation. Politicians and religious scholars have mined biblical sources as well as rabbinical teachings to argue for a just peace in a region mired in cycles of violence and corruption. Unfortunately, these same texts have been used to justify policies that perpetuate human rights abuses and prevent the peaceful stabilization of the region. One could argue that the idea of *shalom* should guide followers of Judaism in navigating the complex politics and history of the region.

Shalom refers not just to the absence of violence, but to a sense of well-being and wholeness made possible by the existence of a just society. Taken in this way, *shalom* reflects the goals of peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

In Christian thought, the just war tradition provides rich resources for thinking about peacekeeping. Just war theory, which describes ethical considerations regarding decisions to enter into war (*jus ad bellum*) and conduct during war (*jus in bello*), might be considered precursors to the possibility of peacekeeping and peacebuilding (*jus post bellum*). Indeed, peacekeeping and peacebuilding extend some of the ideas behind just war theory; the former are much more likely to be successfully carried out when affected parties believe that conflict was entered into justly and warfare conducted honorably. When affected parties believe that the conflict was unjustly entered into and that the rules of wartime conduct have been egregiously violated, peacekeeping is far more fragile and peacebuilding becomes a monumental challenge.

Even when atrocities have been committed and conflict has been clearly unjust, there are theological resources within Christianity to enable believers to move beyond conflict and into possible peacemaking, peacekeeping, and eventually peacebuilding. When Archbishop Desmond Tutu was named chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995 following the end of apartheid, he played a pivotal role in making forgiveness the primary objective of the inquiry. While not stated in explicitly Christian terms, forgiveness as the main goal of the TRC clearly drew from Christian beliefs: Jesus died to forgive all of humanity's sins. In order for South Africa to move forward, the truth had to documented, appropriate amnesty and punishment meted out, and forgiveness and reparations awarded. While not without flaws, South Africa's TRC was considered to be very successful in large part because its prioritization of forgiveness over (but not eliminating) punishment encouraged perpetrators to participate in the commissions so that the harms of apartheid could be acknowledged. Forgiveness in the TRC was understood not simply as altruistic, but also in everyone's self-interest. Forgiveness not only allowed perpetrators of violence the possibility of amnesty, but the structure of the TRC recognized the power of the victims of apartheid, black South Africans, to forgive their white fellow citizens. The peacebuilding of South Africa could now begin.

Of course, within the immense diversity of the Christian tradition, a wide range of beliefs on war, violence, conflict, and peace exists. Although most Christian denominations accept the occasional need to use force to end conflict, there are several denominations that have long traditions of nonviolence. These denominations, including the Society of Friends (Quakers), Mennonites, and Church of the Brethren, believe that war violates Christian beliefs, and its members have often sought conscientious objector status in wartime. The refusal to bear arms and to kill another human being, however, does not preclude participation in other wartime efforts. As such, they have committed themselves to relief and reconstruction efforts during and after conflict. Their work is born out of the belief that the divine exists in all human beings and forms the basis for their decision to provide services to persons and communities during and after conflict regardless of their role in the conflict. This stance is ideal for the position of neutrality that is expected of peacekeepers.

Compared to the other major world religions, Islam in our post-9/11 world received a tremendous amount of attention in both the mass media and in scholarly work. As with the other world religions, Islam has resources that can speak to the many virtues of peace and justice. Indeed, Islam, literally translated as submission to God, shares the same etymological root as the Jewish term *shalom*. However, since 9/11, much of the focus has been on the ways in which violent terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have used verses of the Qur'an and *hadith* (reports about the Prophet Muhammad) to justify horrific violence against humans, the destruction of art and historic monuments, and illegal possession of large swaths of territory. Although scholars debate whether some verses, such as the "sword verse," Sura 9:5 urging Muslims to kill polytheists and idolators unless they convert to Islam, should be abrogated because of the highly specific context in which the verse emerged, the mere existence of the verse in the Qur'an weakens arguments against its validity. The Qur'an is considered by many Muslims to be perfect and unchanging, so the presence of verses such as 9:5 cannot easily be interpreted away, even as there are other verses in the Qur'an, such as Sura 2:256 ("there is no compulsion in religion") acknowledging that conversion to Islam under duress is invalid and should be discouraged.

The example of the Prophet Muhammad, described in *hadith*, can also be manipulated to encourage violence and to justify the acts of groups like ISIS. Muhammad was a religious, political, and military leader, and Muslims can point to his militaristic conquests of parts of Arabia to encourage a "return" to the early days of Islam. However, Muhammad was also by all accounts a diplomatic leader who in many ways improved the lives of girls and women and showed respect and compassion for non-Muslims. In theory, early Muslim rule was relatively tolerant and allowed the *ahl al-kitab*, or the People of the Book, meaning Jews and Christians, to practice their religions freely. Needless to say, these examples are not persuasive to the members of violent extremists, but as with the other world religions, these aspects of the tradition when thoughtfully integrated into policies and institutions championed by Muslim leaders themselves, can play a vital role in peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Inter-religious dialogue is a popular, but not necessarily effective, strategy in peacekeeping. While peacekeepers and peacebuilders stand to benefit by learning about the religious traditions and ethical codes of the specific communities affected by conflict, the most powerful examples of religious ethics in peacekeeping and peacebuilding involve peace processes led by religious leaders, often with the support of their institutions, who are able to harness the power of religious commitment to create a just peace within their own communities.

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2 Challenges

CHAPTER 150

Religion and Religious War

John Kelsay

The Political Context of War

Human beings are reason seekers and reason givers. Moral discourse seems to require that people engaged in certain behaviors respond to queries by giving reasons that justify their actions.

War provides a particularly good example of this seeking and giving of reasons. The term is most properly used in connection with violence between established political communities. With some qualifications, it may also be used to describe violence within political communities ("civil" war) or conflicts between established communities and "non-state" actors (for example, terrorist groups.) Given this connection with politics, it is not surprising that the reason seeking and reason giving connected with war typically reflect political interests. Those who engage in war usually seek to fulfill political aims; for example, defending territory or protecting citizens' rights. Augustine of Hippo wrote: "No one goes to war except with the goal of attaining peace." For Augustine, all human communities may be described as the embodiment of some balance between peace, order, and justice. War is thus a political activity, carried out with the aim of establishing, maintaining, or defending the *pax-ordo-iustitia* connected with particular political communities.

The Ancient Connections Between Religion and War

With this in mind, the ancient association of religion and war hardly seems strange. Religious activity, like war, has political dimensions. War is a means to political ends, while religion provides a kind of cosmic foundation to political life. Images of the divine as king, judge, or warrior point to the relation of religion and politics. As one of the oldest texts in the Bible has it, "The Lord is a man of war." Or, in a very different cosmic setting, the Ṛg Veda speaks of Indra, "best of warriors," the "thunder-armed." Phrases like these depict deities as defenders of justice. As such, notions of divinity provide models for human agents who strive on behalf of a just social order. Even as war is a political act, it also becomes a matter of religious practice.

Examples of "religious war" abound in ancient religious texts. Some of the most important in shaping discussions of religion and war occur in the biblical story of the Israelite exodus from Egypt and the conquest of the "promised land." The book of Exodus relates the story by which God delivers an enslaved people from oppression. In Exodus 15, the people celebrate God's victory over Pharaoh:

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

I will sing to the Lord,
For he has triumphed gloriously;
Horse and rider he has thrown into the sea ...

As the story continues, the people of Israel wander through the wilderness, struggling yet protected by their divine defender. When they finally enter Canaan, the land promised to their ancestors, the Israelites fight to take possession from the inhabitants. It is crucial that they do so at the order of God, who fights for and with them, so long as they honor God's directive. As each city is taken, "all that is in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction" (Joshua 6:17). The book of Joshua presents this "ban" as an aspect of worship (see Niditch 1993). The lives and property of the enemy are thus offered as a sacrifice, which is considered God's "portion" as the protector of the people. In other traditions, the ban seems more a condition for the preservation of a just political order. Deuteronomy 20, for example, sets forth rules of war that distinguish between "the towns that are very far from you" and those "that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance ... [in which] you must not let anything that breathes remain alive ... so that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods, and you thus sin against the Lord your God."

Such stories did much to entrench the notion that religion and war should be intimately related. For Christian theologians like Ambrose and Augustine, the Hebrew or Old Testament traditions seemed in one sense the prototype of a *just war*. In another sense, however, the Israelite stories presented a problem. For the New Testament depicted Christ as saying: "Do not resist an evildoer ... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you ... Be perfect, therefore, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5: 38–48). In the writings of these Christians, we find the beginnings of a way of thinking about war that specifies considerations governing the justification of war (the *ius ad bellum*) and the conduct of war (the *ius in bello*.)

A full and formal statement of "just war criteria" would not be developed until some centuries later. Even at this point, however, one may consider that the justification of war required such things as (1) authorization by legitimate public officials; (2) a just cause; (3) righteous intent; and (4) a conscientious estimate with respect to (a) the proportionality of damages done to the good achieved or the evil avoided, (b) the prospects for success, (c) the possibility that means other than war might attain the desired goal, and (d) the likelihood that war will establish, maintain, or defend peace (that is, the *pax-ordo-iustitia* of a political community). With respect to the conduct of war, one may further consider that just fighting required (1) avoiding direct attacks against noncombatants and (2) avoidance of weapons or war strategies that inflict disproportionate harm. In expressing such concerns, Ambrose and Augustine helped to found a tradition that informs Christian practice to the present. Historical studies trace developments by which the various criteria governing the justification and limitation of war received specification through the efforts of canon lawyers, church councils, political leaders, military commanders, diplomats, and other contributors to Western civilization (see Russell 1975; Johnson 1999).

War in the Modern Age: A Plurality of Traditions

The just war tradition first emerged in the West as an aspect of Christian practice, specifically with respect to the civilizing mission of the church in Europe. As the church divided into the churches, and Christendom into the nations of Western Europe, just war thinking took its place as one of several ways

of reflecting on the morality of war. Of these, the set of concerns associated with international law present the closest analogue to just war tradition. But various forms of pacifism are also important, as is the just war thinking of non-Christian religious and cultural traditions (Kelsay 1993; Bartholomeusz 2002).

International Law

The modern notion of international law owes much to ancient and medieval ideas about the *jus gentium* or "law of nations." The idea was that the practice of existing communities reflected a set of norms that should guide thinking about the justification and conduct of war. Formal treaties were one source of the law of nations, as was the less formal "customary practice" observed among the nations of Europe. These sources speak to the possibility of third-party mediation as means of avoiding war, of agreements to forego the use of certain types of weaponry, and of conventions governing attacks on cities and the treatment of prisoners of war. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, writers like the Protestant Grotius and the Catholic Vitoria argued for the extension of these notions to the world as a whole. Vitoria in particular made the case that considerations of justice developed among Christians should be relevant to dealings with the natives of the Americas. For him, as for Grotius, the law of nations had universal significance and should guide relations between all the peoples of the world.

Many contemporary writers agree. One of the strongest trends in modern political thought focuses on the development of international institutions able to put into practice the ideal of a universal law of nations. Following World War II, the Charter of the United Nations expressed this hope, reserving the right of war to the international community, except in cases of national self-defense. The Geneva Conventions and attached protocols codified norms governing the protection of noncombatants, treatment of prisoners of war, and the use of weapons of mass destruction. Representatives of all major religious and cultural traditions have expressed ideas consonant with the judgment that disputes among nations should be referred to international authorities whenever possible, and that war should only be justified as a last resort: for individual states, in cases where established borders are violated or threatened; for all other cases, as determined by the UN or its Security Council.

Despite such support, many questions remain unanswered. Some of these bear on the relationship between just war and international law traditions. Some argue that just war tradition assigns the right of war to particular political communities, each embodying a particular *pax-ordo-iustitia* (Ramsey 1983). While the UN provides a useful forum for these communities to deliberate about common interests, and for diplomacy intended to mediate disputes, it does not embody an actual order capable of replacing the *pax-ordo-iustitia* of particular communities. Until it does (Ramsey argued) no state can or should give up the right to employ military force in order to secure its interests, defined in terms of the *pax-ordo-iustitia* it embodies.

Paul Ramsey made this argument in the context of the Cold War, when US–Soviet competition often rendered the UN unable to act in accord with the mandate expressed in its Charter. However, even after the end of the Cold War, many express similar judgments. US-led action aimed at regime change in Iraq in 2003 is but one of a number of events that raise questions regarding the possibility of the UN as the *locus* of authority for an international rule of law. Arguments regarding humanitarian intervention and the proper means of dealing with international terrorism also indicate important points of contention between the just war and international law traditions.

Pacifism

Pacifist perspectives also present an alternative to the just war tradition. Here, one should note that the term "pacifism" is apparently a modern invention, dating from political debates in Edwardian England ca. 1900. It has come, however, to stand in general for attitudes of opposition to war or to participation in war. In that sense, the phenomenon is longstanding, and many contemporary pacifists find inspiration in early Christian or other religious texts.

Many such ancient examples are controversial, in the sense that it is often unclear whether opposition to war is based on the judgment that killing is wrong, or whether it is really based on other factors (for example, early Christian judgments that service in the Roman army involved idolatry). A later Christian writer like Erasmus of Rotterdam, whose arguments focus on the terrible waste engendered by war, presents a similarly "qualified" pacifism, in the sense that his opposition to war is not absolute. Contemporary opposition to war is often of this type. It rejects war for most purposes, but preserves military action as a last resort for national self-defense or the prevention of genocide, albeit only with international authorization.

More thoroughgoing forms of pacifism may be found, first, among advocates of non-violent political action, and second, among Christian writers who find inspiration in the political ethics of the Radical Reformation of the sixteenth century. With respect to the first, the examples of Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. provide important guides. Here, the idea is that action for justice should involve "strong persuasion" in the form of an appeal to the conscience of those involved in injustice. This action should be non-violent, since military force does not appeal to conscience, but to fear. In the short run, non-violent action may not yield the desirable results, but the "long arc of the universe" is on the side of those who consider it better to suffer injustice than to inflict it. With respect to Radical Reformation pacifism, some writers insist that the refusal to bear arms is a constitutive aspect of Christian discipleship. The way of Jesus is the way of suffering love. Any use of military force violates Christian vocation, as the example of Jesus shows that the proper role for human beings involves the practice of suffering love in humble reliance on God (Hauerwas 1992; Yoder 1994).

In their 1983 pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace*, the US Catholic bishops said that both pacifism and just war tradition are valid expressions of Christian discipleship. Nevertheless, the bishops' argument suggests that just war tradition remains primary, for at least the following reasons: (1) the peace for which Christians hope is eschatological, meaning that it is fully revealed at the end of days, when the Kingdom of God is fully revealed; (2) until the end, political action takes place in a world where justice requires the defense of innocents against aggressors; (3) while non-violent forms of defense have a certain prima facie desirability, those who would act for justice must be prepared to use armed force, or else become complicit in the suffering of victims of aggression; (4) when force is required, it should be governed by norms of justice, as indicated by the just war tradition (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1983).

Islamic Thinking

Non-Christian traditions also provide an important source for thinking about war in the modern age. Recent studies indicate the strong affinities of the Islamic "judgments concerning armed force" with just war tradition (see Kelsay 1993; Johnson 1997). Historic judgments by Islamic scholars indicate that war

should be considered in the context of political ethics and that it should be authorized by legitimate public authorities for the cause of establishing, defending, or maintaining a just public order. The tradition also requires righteous intention on the part of those fighting. Further judgments indicate that war should be undertaken following an assessment of the likelihood that other measures will not work, that costs will be proportionate to benefits, and that there is a reasonable hope of success, in the sense that fighting will yield a more satisfactory balance between peace, order, and justice. *Ius in bello* criteria are reflected as well: Muslim fighters are to avoid direct attacks on noncombatants, and discussion of particular weapons and tactics indicates a concern to avoid disproportionate damage to one's enemy. As with the just war tradition, Islamic judgments concerning armed force develop over time, in connection with specific military and political contexts. It seems clear that the Islamic and just war traditions have much in common, however, which makes it all the more critical to understand why, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, conflict between Western and Islamic societies seems so ubiquitous. We shall return to this point in a moment.

It is worth noting that inquiry into the war thinking of a number of other traditions is only beginning. The work of the late Tessa Bartholomeusz (2002) suggests some directions for inquiries into a Buddhist just war tradition. More systematic inquiries with respect to Hindu, Confucian, and other great traditions are sorely needed to provide a more complete picture of the relations between religion, politics, and war.

Contemporary Issues

For most of the twentieth century, advocates of the just war and other traditions were preoccupied with conflicts related to the Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union. In this context, discussions of ethics focused on policies of deterrence, especially those involving nuclear weapons, or on counter-intervention, for example in Vietnam. In the post-Cold War era, discussion quickly turned to the occurrence of an exceptional number of bloody "civil" wars. In some cases, these seemed an ironic result of the end of the US–USSR competition for influence. In Yugoslavia, for example, Soviet influence had been important in sustaining policies intended to suppress religious and ethnic rivalries. For a variety of reasons, these lost strength in the early 1980s. Shortly after the 1991 collapse of the USSR old rivalries between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims reemerged, at times with genocidal intent, as Yugoslavia dissolved into a number of independent states.

In this and similar cases, most discussion focused on questions of intervention. According to the UN Charter, intervention within the borders of a sovereign state should only be undertaken when internal conflicts threaten to "spill over" into neighboring states. Even in these cases, UN authorization is required. The Soviet–US rivalry rendered this point moot during the Cold War, as each power possessed the right to veto any intervention contrary to its interests. With the end of the Cold War, however, the UN sent forces into one part of the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia-Hercegovina). While the forces were constrained by rules of engagement in ways that led to much criticism, they were nevertheless critical in separating the warring parties and beginning a process of disarmament. In another sector (Kosovo/a), however, a threatened veto by Russia prevented UN action, and the US turned to NATO in order to orchestrate an effective intervention. While many questioned the legality of this action, in the end most agreed that intervention was necessary to prevent genocide, and that the result (regime change in Serbia) was a desirable end. As the discussion about US-led action aimed at regime change in Iraq shows,

questions about intervention (when it is appropriate, how it should be organized, and, above all, who authorizes it) remain critical matters for religious and moral reflection.

The attacks on New York and Washington, DC on September 11, 2001, seem to put discussions of intervention in a different light. In particular, the statement on national security strategy issued by the Bush administration in October 2002 indicated that US policy will include an option of preemptive military action in cases where states may be considered hostile and are known to have programs for the development of weapons of mass destruction. Advocates of just war, international law, and other traditions responded by indicating that preemptive action requires that the threat from an enemy be imminent. The arguments of the Bush Administration make clear, however, that the events of September 11, 2001 mean that US policy must be set in the context of an ongoing struggle with "terrorist groups of global reach." This means that the enemy is not confined to or governed by the political–territorial institutions of an established state. Rather, groups like al-Qa'ida view the world as a battlefield, so that the various states are really more or less useable "centers for operations" in an ongoing war against the United States and its allies. Given this, the Bush "doctrine" of preemption appears to mean "striking while there is time" to prevent al-Qa'ida and other groups from taking advantage of the resources provided by states hostile to the US. Defenders of the Bush administration's policy stress that at a time when hostile forces have the capacity to use chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, the notion of imminent threat takes on a new meaning (see Elshtain 2003).

Post-Cold War conflicts also raise important questions with respect to what might be called "the return of religious war." Fighting in the former Yugoslavia and ongoing struggles with al-Qa'ida seem to many to bring back the kind of warfare where fighting is commanded by a deity which itself joins in the fighting. Thus much evidence suggests that Serbs understood themselves as the protectors of the borders of Christian civilization, seeking to rid their land of a Muslim intruder. Al-Qa'ida's rhetoric suggests that policies advocated by the US are understood to violate Islamic tradition. Even in cases where the role of deity is quite different, the return of religious war seems evident. In Sri Lanka, for example, the Sinhala majority construes struggles with Tamil rebels as a defense of territory necessary for the preservation of true Buddhist practice. In the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, Israelis who settle in Palestinian territory often speak in ways that suggest they are reclaiming the land promised to their (biblical) ancestors. Some Palestinians, in turn, speak of the land from the Red Sea to the Jordan as a trust given by God to the Muslims until the Day of Judgment, and say that no human being has the right to negotiate or otherwise give it away.

Religion and Total War?

Given the longstanding relations between religion and war outlined in this entry, such arguments are not surprising. Religion and war meet in connection with the drive to establish, maintain, and protect the order associated with particular political communities. War is a means to attain such goals. Religion provides an important source of legitimation for the *pax-ordo-iusititia* embodied by particular communities.

Despite such ancient links, many find the association of religion and war disturbing. For example, Pope John Paul II speaks of religious war as the worst form of idolatry. The pope's judgment certainly points to changes in the conception of deity from ancient to modern times. It also points to shifts in

Christian political thought, whereby the spiritual aims of faith and the temporal purposes of political order are distinguished more clearly than in ancient times. The pope's statement also resonates with a judgment common to modern thought: that "war is more humane when God is left out." Modern thinking about war is built on the memory of Europe's Wars of Religion, in which the tactics of various groups mirrored the biblical "ban." Given this, many interpreters of just war and other religious–moral traditions consider that those who believe themselves fighters for God are prone to war without mercy.

Whether the judgment "religious war equals total war" is justified is a matter for further inquiry. Much Islamic thought suggests that placing war in a religious context, in which those who fight for God's cause must observe God's limits, is the surest way to attain the goals of honorable combat. And even the biblical notion of the ban must be read in the context of rules that indicate that most wars are fought according to *ius in bello* limits (as, for example, in engagements with cities "far off" in Deuteronomy 20, or in the pronouncement of judgments against those who kill indiscriminately in war in Amos 1 and 2). Even the 1998 *Declaration concerning armed struggle against Jews and Crusaders*, in which leaders of al-Qa'ida and other groups argued that contemporary political conditions require Muslims to fight Americans and their allies without distinguishing civilian and military targets, probably does not provide evidence for a simple equation between religious war and total war. If this is the case, there may be reason for advocates of *ius in bello* restraints to focus less on the fact of religious justifications for war, and more on the limits that particular religious traditions stress must always be an aspect of the conduct of just and limited war.

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CHAPTER 151

Censorship, Disclosures, and Privacy

Jonathan Rothchild

Framing the Debate

Debates about censorship, disclosure, and privacy typically address competing claims involving rights and goods, including perspectives concerning individual privacy rights and rights to free speech, considerations of public safety, a public right to information, state power, and wider claims about transparency, efficiency, and decency. Such debates engage long-standing, theological and ethical questions involving human agency, the common good, responsibility, and the rule of law, but they are also shaped by shifting legal and cultural interpretations of rapid changes in technology and emerging forms of social media. A right to privacy helps preserve our human dignity and sense of moral autonomy, but no right to privacy – whether framed in terms of a right to be left alone, a right to one's space for moral deliberation, a right to be free from governmental intrusion, or a right to determine the best ways to live out one's own (and perhaps one's own family's) life – is absolute. The 1974 United Privacy Act restricts disclosures without consent, but it includes twelve permissible exceptions. Key questions in the debates about censorship, disclosure, and privacy include: What are the reasonable expectations to a right to privacy? In what ways do one's actions, say, participating in a public rally, using social media, or entering an abortion clinic, impact one's right to privacy with respect to state interests and public safety? Do corporations have a right to disclose information (and benefit financially from such a disclosure) about consumers' preferences and patterns of behavior? Do governments have a political mandate and legal permissiveness to become surveillance states that track all digital selves at all times? If data monitoring yields precise drone missile strikes or the arrests and convictions of gang members, do we celebrate these achievements or worry that they have come at the cost of the eclipse of privacy in our society?

Signs of the Times: Disclosure, Privacy, Power, and Social Media

An estimated 2.5 billion people worldwide use the Internet on a given day. Internet searches leave indelible footprints that others can use for a range of purposes. Employing "cookies" to collect information related to website searches, companies can marshal this information to improve user efficiency and convenience (e.g. easily reloaded web pages commonly visited by the consumer, retrieval of saved passwords, and consumer information such as credit card numbers). Companies can additionally develop algorithms based on search preferences and credit card purchases to direct consumers to targeted advertisements and recommended

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sites and other information that may be of interest to consumers based on these preferences. To what extent are consumers willing to have companies anticipate their needs and provide market-driven options at the potential cost of eroding parts of their privacy and agency? Companies are legally compelled to protect consumers' privacy (through privacy policies that disclose the ways in which a corporation collects, uses, and shares the data of customers or clients), but the selling of consumers' information to third parties as part of a data mining industry (consisting, for example, of consumers' reading habits, clothing preferences, food choices, and other information) has increasingly become an accepted practice.

Evaluations of these factors must consider perceptions and practices regarding the sharing and collecting of information. In George Orwell's dystopian novel, *1984* (1949) individuals attempted to evade the watchful eye of Big Brother. Philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) envisioned the panopticon as a mechanism for a single corrections officer to observe numerous prisoners without their knowledge. Michel Foucault (1926–1984) held that such surveillance – as knowledge is power – becomes the basis for disciplinary control, normalization, and manipulation of docile bodies. These perspectives identify social control as a critical implication of information gained about an individual. Questions about social control emerge, for example, through "stop and frisk" techniques used by police officers. Are such techniques legitimate forms of information gathering that reveal illegal activity and promote social order? Or, are such techniques forms of social control that are highly racialized (and tantamount to racial profiling) violations of privacy rights and result in disproportionate numbers of persons of color entering into the criminal justice system?

Important shifts have occurred in the proliferation of social media postings on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and other forms of communication and media. Voluntary disclosures about one's own life or opinions about world events, celebrities, politicians, and other persons suggest that many individuals intentionally seek to share information with as many people as possible. Users voluntarily share intimate information about their health (e.g. by wearing an Apple Watch) or proudly display their most embarrassing moments (e.g. by uploading a video on YouTube). The perception among social media users appears to be that the one who informs – rather than the one who receives the information – holds the power. By posting information about oneself or others one elicits responses (e.g. through Facebook likes or trending numbers on Twitter) that sustain more intimate relationships but also help to shape wider (potentially global) discourse. This sense of power has been occasionally exercised in hyperbolic and nefarious ways. Several shocking examples include individuals brazenly using Facebook Live to broadcast their carrying out of physical assaults and other crimes in a celebratory fashion. Yet, in whatever form it is exercised, this power of sharing information is often undercut by the recognition of how little control users have over the information that they and others post on social media. In entering into digital space and participating in ever-evolving forms of discourse, individuals relinquish various degrees of their privacy and become data sets that can potentially become exposed, instrumentalized, and manipulated.

Other privacy issues arise in the era of social media and new systems of information. Privacy settings exist for platforms such as Facebook in order to limit the recipients of communication between users, but other aspects of privacy – such as using a Twitter handle that allows one to be anonymous, at least publicly – can encourage online bullying, forms of shaming, and inflammatory and socially destructive comments. Social media can facilitate social cooperation, form online communities around shared concerns, and express collective moral outrage against a broad range of political, legal, and social injustices. Moreover, many argue that free speech rights should be extended to social media in the same way as

traditional forms of communications and media, without imposing a range of censorship options (e.g. blocking or deactivating accounts, requiring persons to self-identify). However, social media can also attenuate interpersonal communication and create emotional and psychological harm by recipients of criticism. Online users can hide their identities, for example, to generate negative publicity about a competitor's business, to lure minors into illegal sexual encounters, and to beguile vulnerable persons into disclosing sensitive financial information (through phishing scams and other schemes). By hiding their identities, or, as increasingly became common during the Trump presidency, *intentionally* using one's real identity online users are empowered to spread information ("alternative facts") that may misrepresent the truth about themselves and the world. For these reasons, the relationship between the disclosure of information (in terms of the one who discloses, what is disclosed, and how this disclosure can empower or disempower the discloser and individuals impacted by the disclosure) and privacy will increasingly become complicated and contentious.

Censorship and Disclosure: Contested Claims about Privacy, Security, and Power

Notions of censorship historically have been linked to exercises of state power, usually a totalitarian or fascist regime, to limit or deny the free expression of individuals, communities, and other entities, particularly in response to public statements critiquing the state. Censorship typically has related to the purity of ideas and doctrines (political or religious/antireligious) and conformity to expected norms and practices where the government suppresses free speech and silences forms of resistance. Censorship can be interpreted as a betrayal of the liberal state whose primary purpose is to remain a neutral arbiter and protector of human rights, whereas others contend that censorship operates as a regulatory instrument that can properly guide state intervention in the face of politically and socially destructive speech such as hate speech. Some forms of censorship – that is, restrictions on the disclosure of information and freedom of speech – may in fact protect individual privacy. For example, in the 1989 case of *Department of Justice v. Reporters Committee for the Freedom of Press* (489 US 749), the Supreme Court held that the refusal to disclose an individual's personal FBI crime record to a third party is justifiable under the personal privacy invasion exemption of the Freedom of Information Act. Recent approaches to censorship have reconfigured censorship not as a political response to and constraint against speech but rather constitutive of it and mediated by social dimensions. Analyzing the relationship between censorship and social forms, gender theorist Judith Butler (1977) argues that censorship produces speech that is not merely privative but formative as well.

At a broader level regarding censorship and disclosure, does the American public have a right to access to information about the activities of the United States government? Much debate centers on WikiLeaks, a non-profit organization founded in 2006 by Julian Assange that releases classified information and publishes news leaks, diplomatic cables, and other information. Information released by WikiLeaks has addressed issues such as the war in Afghanistan, prisoners detained in Guantanamo Bay detention camp, and, during the 2016 presidential election campaign, emails from the Democratic National Committee and members of Hilary Clinton's campaign. Some view WikiLeaks as providing news and information that the public has a right to know as a matter of democratic transparency. Others contend that WikiLeaks violates individual privacy rights (e.g. by disseminating personal information such as social security numbers, phone numbers, etc.) and potentially destabilizes political structures and unfairly disrupts political processes.

Another massive disclosure of classified information was leaked by Edward Snowden in 2013. A former contractor for the United States government, Snowden disseminated information pertaining to the National Security Agency's (NSA) global surveillance programs (code-named PRISM) which had been administered in cooperation with telecommunication companies and European governments. Some praise Snowden as a patriot, whereas others view him as a traitor. Information disclosed by Snowden painted a picture of the immense scope and the detailed precision of the surveillance carried out by the NSA. Using NSA's programs such as XKeyscore, an analyst nearly has real-time access to the contents of any user's emails, web searches, and Facebook posts; it is estimated that there nearly one trillion call and Internet records stored in NSA databases. The documents released by Snowden indicate that the NSA monitors ordinary citizens – not just those who are suspected threats to national security. This monitoring, which appears to realize Orwell's dystopian vision, has betrayed public trust even if it has not generated widespread resistance among the general public.

Wiretapping and Searches and Seizures

A number of Supreme Court cases pertaining to wiretapping and domestic surveillance have shaped the scope of privacy laws. In a 1928 landmark decision, the Supreme Court ruled in *Olmstead v. United States* (277 US 438) that an unauthorized wiretap did not violate the constitutional rights provided by the Fourth Amendment (a right to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against illegal search and seizures) and Fifth Amendment (a right not to be compelled to self-incriminate in criminal cases). In the majority opinion, Chief Justice Taft noted the deleterious effects – including a negative impact on society and greater immunity for criminals – of disallowing evidence gained through unauthorized wiretaps. In an important dissent, Justice Brandeis voiced concerned over the implications of the decision for "the sanctities of a man's home and the privacies of life."

The majority's opinion in *Olmstead* held forth until a series of cases in the 1960s. In 1961, in *Mapp v. Ohio* (367 US 643), the Supreme Court determined that evidence obtained in violation of the Fourth Amendment may not be used in state law criminal prosecutions in state courts. Moreover, in 1967, in *Katz v. United States* (389 US 347) the court reversed *Olmstead*, holding that persons can expect a reasonable expectation of privacy in places such as a public phone booth and that wiretapping in such places violated the Fourth Amendment. In the 2012 case of *United States v. Jones* (565 US 400), the Supreme Court considered the legality of installing a global positioning system (GPS) tracking device on a vehicle and using that device to monitor the vehicle's movements. The court unanimously concluded that such a device constituted a search under the Fourth Amendment, where the majority determined that by physically installing the GPS the police had trespassed against the defendant's "personal effects."

Domestic Surveillance, the War on Terror, and Religious Freedom

Edward Snowden's leaking of information and other disclosures, including the so-called "torture memos" and other declassified information, have generated debates regarding the legal limits of mechanisms designed to confront the new paradigm of the war on terror. These debates consider issues such as prisoner treatment, harsh interrogation practices, and extraordinary rendition. Can the threat of an imminent

terrorist attack, sometimes referred to as the "ticking time-bomb scenario," justify harsh interrogation techniques and torture that violate a person's right to privacy but might disclose valuable information? There are competing teleological (typically framed in terms of goods such as the utility of information that may preserve human life or promote political objectives) and deontological (commonly conceived in terms of the limits of information gathering in light of moral boundaries and rules) arguments regarding torture. Elaine Scarry repudiates torture in terms of privacy and dignity: torture deconstructs a person's humanness and makes the tortured speak the torturer's words instead of his or her own.

Did the September 11th attacks necessitate a reevaluation of privacy rights and governmental duties to override them on the grounds of national security? President Bush cited presidential prerogative and military necessity to argue that the executive possesses privileges protected by constitutional and statutory authorities, among them the congressionally passed Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) (September 18, 2001). Among various provisions, the AUMF includes the authority to order warrantless foreign intelligence surveillance within the United States. In 1978, Congress passed the Federal Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) which authorized special court orders for four purposes: electronic surveillance; physical searches; installation and use of pen registers/trap and trace devices; and orders to disclose tangible items. The electronic surveillance portion of FISA created a procedure for judicially supervised electronic surveillance (wiretapping) conducted for foreign intelligence gathering purposes. The Bush administration held that the statutory provisions of FISA permitted exemptions that allowed for presidential discretion without judicial approval to implement strategies as necessitated by security exigencies. The FISA Amendments Act of 2008 amended the original FISA act and placed limits on the scope and rationale for surveillance. The USA Freedom Act, enacted on June 2, 2015 to ratify but amend the USA Patriot Act (October 26, 2001), imposed new limits on the bulk collection of telecommunication metadata on US citizens by American intelligence agencies, including the NSA. It also restored authorization for roving wiretaps and tracking so-called lone wolf terrorists.

Such surveillance is designed to gather sensitive security information for utilitarian ends. Would not such utility of information justify surveillance and outweigh any concerns about individual privacy rights? Some perspectives express concerns about deeper issues around political duties and religious liberties that appear neglected in the current conversations. For example, the government infiltrated the Truth Project, a group that met in a Quaker meeting house to discuss nonviolent ways of countering military recruitment in high schools. The formal religious character of the project is not the primary concern; what is at issue for critics is the Truth Project's contrarian perspective, which challenges the status quo through nonviolent means – thus resonating with the prophetic religious critiques of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Paul Tillich, two theologians monitored by government agencies. Opponents of surveillance affirm that the exercise of religious freedom to interrogate, gainsay, and counter government policies has been compromised by political mechanisms such as spying and planting agents in mosques, churches, and political action groups. In addressing these issues, is there a way to achieve balance between state interests in security and order with fundamental rights and freedoms held by individual citizens?

Religious communities have also been both the proponents and recipients of censorship. Recent studies of letter writing in late antiquity, for example, demonstrate the ways in which Christian letter writers employed strategies of secrecy and self-censorship to elude political and ecclesiastical forms of censorship. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Catholic Church conducted means of interrogation such as the Inquisition through the Congregation for the Index of Prohibited Books. The Inquisition safeguarded orthodoxy by investigating and prohibiting the dissemination of heretical texts

and heterodox ideas. During the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Catholic Church acknowledged the unfortunate nature of the Inquisition. In *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Declaration on Religious Freedom promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, the Council defended religious freedom as a vital expression of an individual that has its foundation in the dignity of the person and is expressed through revelation and reason. There are debates among current Catholic theologians as to whether or not the magisterium can and should censure a theologian or believer who exercises dissent – as an exercise of one's own (private) conscience – in response to official Catholic teaching. There are global threats to the freedom of religion, including, for example, China's banning of the spiritual movement of Falun Gong since 1999.

Obscenity, Disclosure, and Privacy

Pornography websites have been prevalent since the origins of the Internet. In the last two decades, new technology has evolved pornography into more interactive sites, where performers stream live via webcam and can respond to a viewer's specific requests through immediate payments. However, legal questions about privacy rights and public decency concerns existed long before the creation of the Internet. The writings of seminal authors such as Flaubert, Baudelaire, Zola, Lawrence, Joyce, and Nabokov all received censure for writing material judged to be obscene. An 1868 English case *Regina v. Hicklin* determined that any material that could corrupt was deemed obscene and therefore could be banned. The Comstock Law was passed in 1873 in the United States and furthered this view of suppressing the trade and circulation of obscene literature and articles of immoral use. In *Ex Parte Jackson* (96 US 727, 1878), the Supreme Court ruled that provisions of the Comstock Act that prohibited the mailing of certain items were constitutional, but it also held that the government could not open an individual's correspondence unless it had a warrant pursuant to the Fourth Amendment. The provisions of the Comstock Act were further upheld in 1957 when the Supreme Court ruled in *Roth v. United States* (354 US 476) that obscenity – that is, material deemed to be obscene such as nude photography and literary erotica – is not protected by the First Amendment.

Would such a broad definition of obscenity infringe on individual rights? How would such a definition comport with changing cultural perspectives on sexuality and individual freedom? In 1973, in *Miller v. California* (413 US 15), the Supreme Court developed a three-prong test that appealed to an average person's sense and adult community standards to evaluate if the material appealed to prurient interests, depicted sexual conduct in a patently offensive way, or lacked serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. Some interpreters argue that the *Miller* test is overly conservative and presumes a narrowly heteronormative conception of sexuality. In the 1997 case of *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union* (521 US 844), the Supreme Court unanimously struck down provisions of the 1996 Communications Decency Act (CDA) pertaining to "indecent transmission" and "patently offensive display" because it abridges First Amendment speech rights. Other thinkers, such as feminist theorist Andrea Dworkin, differentiate between obscenity and pornography, where the latter is much more pernicious as it functions as a system of sexual exploitation that dehumanizes, subordinates, and abuses women.

A related set of privacy–decency considerations pertain to sexual practices, bioethical issues, and forms of punishment. In 1965, the Supreme Court ruled in *Griswold v. Connecticut* (381 US 479) that

Connecticut's ban on the use of contraceptives violated the right to marital privacy. Drawing on Justice Brandeis's dissenting opinion in the *Olmstead* case, the court found that marital privacy precedes the political basis for a right to privacy. Some commentators have expressed concerns about this construal of marital privacy, noting the potential violent sides of privacy and the necessity of state intervention in cases of domestic abuse. In 2003 in *Lawrence v. Texas* (539 US 558), the Supreme Court struck down the sodomy law in Texas (and, by extension, invalidated such laws in other states) on the grounds of a right to privacy. Various courts have also upheld the right to privacy as the basis for right to consult with an attorney and a right against self-incrimination (*Miranda v. Arizona* [384 US 436, 1966]), a right to abortion (*Roe v. Wade* [410 US 113, 1973], and a right to refuse medical treatment such as a ventilator (*In re Quinlan* [70 NJ 10, 1976]). Are there public order and safety reasons for overriding rights to privacy? The Health Insurance Probability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule recognizes the legitimate need for public health authorities and others responsible for ensuring public health and safety to have access to protected health information to carry out their public health mission. In weighing privacy and threats to public safety, courts have upheld the requirements that convicted sex offenders register with local governments (to comply with the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act). Other cases have involved public shaming punishments for offenders (e.g. requiring signs such as "I am a delinquent child support payer" or "I drove drunk"). Do such public forms of shaming encourage offender accountability and rehabilitation or do they constitute cruel and unusual forms of social sanctions?

Conclusion

Debates regarding the relationship between censorship, disclosure, and privacy will continue to be informed by evolving social, ethical, political, and legal interpretations about the functions of the state and political life, the meanings of individual agency and rights, and the pursuit of commonly-shared values and goods. Privacy rights shield individuals from obtrusive political and social structures, but, as feminist thinkers and others have increasingly argued, the boundaries between the personal and political are fluid. States have duties to intervene to protect privacy rights. Does censorship affirm or obviate those rights? Do government surveillance programs offer security at the expense of privacy rights, including the right to exercise religious freedom? Does government censorship of materials deemed obscene protect common decency or impose social norms on individuals? New forms of social media and related shifts in perceptions and practices of information sharing will continue to raise these and other questions.

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CHAPTER 152

Civil Rights and Protest Movements

Tobin Miller Shearer

Religious involvement in civil rights and protest movements raises important issues about violence and nonviolence, church–state relations, how social change happens, and the ways in which religious groups shape and are shaped by social protest initiatives. Scholars have long explored the role civil rights and social protest movements have played in society but only recently begun to examine the particular role that religious communities have played in those protest movements. Given the often-volatile nature of protest movements, scholars have also started to analyze the relationship between violence and religious groups who take to the streets in pursuit of social justice.

Social Movement Theory

Social movement scholars have articulated numerous theories in their efforts to explain how social movements arise, spread, and collapse. *Resource mobilization theory* suggests that movements rise and fall according to their ability to muster the economic, institutional, political, and social resources needed to change human practices, perspectives, and policies. *Structural-functionalist theory* posits that all social systems seek a stable state of equilibrium. Social protests arise in response to disruptions to that equilibrium in hopes of achieving a new stable state. *Political process theory* suggests that movements consist largely of rational actors pursuing state-sponsored change in moments when internal divisions or breaks in oppression open the possibility of state advocacy. The state-focused nature of this theory has highlighted conflict and social movements' external interactions.

Additional theories offer more direct explanations. *Relative depravation theory*, for example, simply contends that those who recognize they are being treated unjustly in comparison to others may rise up to change that inequity. Likewise, *authority conflict theory* suggests that movements arise in response to assertions that current power holders are illegitimate. Other theoretical approaches focus on the reasons that people take risks to join social protest movements, how ideas for change spread through social networks, the role of the elite, and the emotional conditions that keep movement members engaged.

Theories that examine cultural dynamics, however, offer particular insight into religion's role in social movements. Whereas many prior theories had treated protestors as rational actors focused on achieving their stated goals, cultural resource theory highlights the symbolic, rhetorical, and identity elements of protest actions. Organizers also design symbols to represent their cause, fashion arguments to awaken

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people to their grievances, and foster solidarity to create a sense of collective identity. Religion offers resources to support all these ends. For example, religious symbols have figured prominently in the anti-abortion movement, religious arguments have underpinned many of the arguments articulated by abolitionists in their attempt to win over the broader public, and religious commitments have figured prominently in developing a collective civil rights movement identity. Although religious groups and actors contribute multiple resources to social protest movements, cultural elements predominate due to the particular affinity of religious action to symbolic discourse, moral argument, and collective bonding.

These theories have proven helpful in analyzing how social movements have unfolded in the past and to a degree how they continue to unfold in the present, but they have not yet been able to predict when and where new social protest movements will arise in the future. Even more problematically, the theories thus far discussed rarely address or take into consideration the particular dynamics of religious community members and their engagement with social change movements. With few exceptions, even in the case of cultural resource theory, social movement scholars have more often focused on art than on religious ritual, on poetry than on scripture. Yet, the evidence from civil rights and social protest movements as far-flung as the base ecclesial communities of Brazil and the water protectors of South Dakota make clear that religion often figures prominently in determining how those movements unfold and the degree to which they achieve the ends sought.

Central Tensions

To understand the particular role played by religion in civil rights and protest movements, one central tension requires examination. It is this: protest is inherently conflictual, but religion, in its most general sense, finds conflict problematic. As social institutions focused on the transcendent, religious communities aim to put their adherents in touch with the divine. In most instances, that transcendent connection between believers and the divine results in a resolution of conflict rather than the creation thereof. Religious communities thus tend to foster acceptance of the status quo except in those cases where the fundamental values of the community conflict with those of the social or political settings in which they find themselves. Despite the prominence of fundamentalist protest movements, the most common experience of religious practitioners is dampening conflict rather than exacerbating it. As such there has been at best an uneasy relationship between the practice of religion and social protest.

That fundamental tension is likewise present in religious groups' relationship to the state. By their very nature, social process protest movements are prone to incite or be associated with violence because they challenge both the state's goal of maintaining authority and its ability to sanction violence. Even in those instances where social change movements do not directly challenge the exercise of state-sponsored violence, their oppositional stance heightens tensions that can trigger a violent response. When religious communities bring their moral mandate to bear on state-sponsored violence or other social inequities, the state pushes back. When faced with state opposition, religious groups then confront the limits of their relative dependence on or freedom from a comfortable relationship with the state or the status quo more generally. Religious historians have long observed that, in the case of established religious groups, the largest story is one of religious communities being unable to sustain an oppositional stance to the state given their need to remain financially and organizationally solvent.

This is not to say that religious practitioners have avoided social protest movements entirely. Take, for example, the preponderance of religious leaders in the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement in the United States. Ordained clergy abounded. Churches provided space for mass gatherings, logistical support, and a rhetoric capable of spurring people to take risks, critique the status quo, and mobilize the human potential necessary to overturn racial segregation. Members of religious communities have also been involved in the abolition movement in Britain and the United States, the movement against the Vietnam War in the United States, and the solidarity movement in Poland. Issues of transcendence aside, religion is no stranger to social protest.

Religion and Violence

Amid these tensions about religion's role in social conflict the particular question of religion's relationship to violence emerges as both central and enduring. Here again, religious scholars differ in their assessment. Most famously, historian and philosopher René Girard argued in his "mimetic theory" that violence is so central to human interactions that it gives rise to the sacrifice of a ritual victim or scapegoat to keep more widespread violence at bay, a ritual that serves as the basis of religion and then, over time, the criminal justice system. From this Girardian perspective, religion forestalls violence even as it engages in it (Girard 1979). Roger Friedland's and Richard Hecht's study of contested sacred centers in Jerusalem, Israel, and Ayodhya, India, suggests that religion invites violence as competing groups set up contradictory truth claims and sacred spaces (Friedland and Hecht 1998). By contrast, well-known religious studies author Karen Armstrong argues that religion is not inherently violent in the sense that is popularly understood in the West. Rather, it is most often political pursuits in the interest of empire that have caused those conflicts blamed on religion. Armstrong contends that religion has been just as likely to encourage values of community and mitigate violence as it has been to destroy community and encourage violence (Armstrong 2015).

These broad theoretical claims provide a framework for examining the more focused topic of the ways in which religious groups have promoted violence or nonviolence in social protest movements. Many religious communities hold nonviolent values as part of their core commitments. In addition to the historic peace churches in the West such as the Mennonites, Amish, and Quakers, many Eastern religious communities such as Buddhists, Hindus, and the Jain, promote nonviolent values. Others demand that practitioners be prepared to engage in violence for protection of the religious community and promotion of its values. Mainline Protestant denominations, for example, have regularly encouraged their members to participate in the military in support of colonial or capitalist initiatives. In addition to these Christian groups, some Islamic and Jewish communities have fostered animosity toward regional neighbors. Suffice it to say that religious practitioners have a mixed record on the perpetuation or diminishment of violence.

In the case of the civil rights movement, an emerging body of evidence suggests that those who brought religious resources into public spaces – such as the demonstrators who knelt in prayer in the midst of marches or rallies – actually increased the possibility of violence rather than decreased it. Likewise, those who sang, wore religious vestments, or recited liturgies during the height of 1950s and 1960s activism were as likely to anger their opponents as convince them of their ways and bring them into the fold. In the same way, in the movement for Indian independence from Great Britain led by

Mahatma Gandhi, the nonviolent principles of satyagraha and ahimsa did not always promote less violence, at least in the interim. So, too, when the pope spoke to the solidarity movement in Poland, his words did as much at points to increase foment as reduce it.

In the midst of negotiating questions of institutional solvency when in conflict with the state, religious communities have also had to make decisions about how they will respond to violence associated with their oppositional stance. In situations where a given social change movement has broad public support, violence is less likely to erupt. But when protestors employ tactics perceived by the general public as illegitimate – such as happened in 1969 when Black Power advocate James Forman demanded reparations from the white churches who had participated so readily in the campaign to pass the 1964 Civil Rights Act – violence often increases, thereby forcing religious communities to decide whether they will participate in, separate from, or lend their support to violent means.

Religious communities have chosen a variety of paths. In Nicaragua in the 1970s, some Roman Catholics celebrated a pro-revolutionary mass known as the "Misa Campesina Nicaragüense" even as the Catholic hierarchy moved to prohibit it. Through its subsequent underground celebration and dissemination, the mass generated popular support for the Sandinista revolutionaries who then overthrew the Somoza family dictatorship. In a similar manner, base ecclesial communities throughout South America have fostered opposition and resistance, some of it violent, to dictatorships in their region. By contrast, during the Nazi regime, the more radical members of the Confessing Church in Germany opposed anti-Semitism but did so nonviolently. Most specifically, recent scholarship has called into question the widely asserted claim that the well-known theologian and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer participated in an assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler. Likewise, Islamic leaders from across the globe condemned the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. No single path has defined religious communities' decision about how to participate in or eschew violence.

Civil Rights Movement as Case Study

The scholarly debate about US civil rights movement strategies highlights many of the unresolved questions regarding the use of violence by religious community members. The dominant narrative about the civil rights movement emphasizes the ethic and principles of nonviolence promoted by Martin Luther King, Jr. History books feature images of famed Montgomery bus boycott icon Rosa Parks meekly cooperating with law enforcement officers, young protestors being spun around by fire hoses, and marchers falling to the ground as helmeted men sprayed tear gas and brandished batons. Even members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the radical, youth-led, frontline shock troops of the Black Freedom Struggle, stayed true to their name and practiced nonviolent principles even as white Southerners murdered, beat, and imprisoned their colleagues. Nonviolence, whether strategically adopted or religiously grounded, did indeed dominate the most public and high-profile organizations and leaders of the civil rights era.

Recent scholarship has, however, begun to challenge this nonviolence narrative. In his aptly titled book, *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible*, journalist, professor, and former SNCC activist Charles E. Cobb, Jr., argues that not only did armed self-defense reduce the loss of black life in the South during this period, but that rural blacks did not perceive a contradiction between their support of nonviolence and their practice of armed self-defense. In fact

Cobb argues that many individuals at the grassroots joined in the civil rights struggle because of its nonviolence and felt that they should use their weapons to protect those who practiced nonviolence in order to further their radical agenda (Charles E. Cobb 2014). Cobb's findings buttress similar arguments made about other proponents of armed self-defense such as Robert F. Williams, Gloria Richardson, and the Deacons for Defense. Although an ethic of nonviolence permeated civil rights movement organizations, in many instances nonviolent groups and individuals were able to organize voter registration campaigns, speak out against segregation, and challenge elected officials because white Southerners opposed to integration knew that many members of the black community had rifles and shotguns and would shoot back if shot at.

An ethical determination of whether armed self-defense or active nonviolence proves more effective at achieving civil rights and other social protest goals seems less important than the recognition that, at least in the case of the black freedom struggle in the South during the 1950s and 1960s, the two approaches could prove mutually reinforcing. In the desegregation movement in Birmingham, Alabama, for example, some of the same individuals who attended nonviolence-focused mass meetings would then escort home leaders like Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth in cars bristling with guns. Rosa Parks, the very icon of passive nonviolence, spoke with deep appreciation for the life and witness of Robert F. Williams, the author of the highly influential book *Negroes with Guns*, at his funeral. Regardless of how passionate and articulate proponents of nonviolence like King, James Lawson, Diane Nash, and Bayard Rustin could be, the religiously based arguments for nonviolence did not always convince gun owners to lay down their weapons and march without an armed escort.

Recurring Tensions

And yet a tension remains. Some scholars emphasize the ambiguous role of religion in social conflict, noting that established religious organizations in particular aim to attract as broad an audience as possible and therefore will back away from social conflict even while being critical of the status quo. Others contend that religion in general and ritual in particular empower adherents to engage in social conflict through their resistance to the dominant social order. Still others, such as widely respected scholar of religion Martin Marty, argue that religious communities are far more likely to be changed by social conflict than to change society in the midst of conflict (Marty 1964). In the end, the question is not so much whether religious adherents will be engaged in social protest, but rather how their religious engagement will change social protest movements – and themselves – when so involved.

The religiously based civil rights groups who proved so influential though not definitive in promoting nonviolence also demonstrate this reciprocal relationship between religious communities and social change movements. King's Dexter Avenue Baptist church in Montgomery and the National Baptist Convention (NBC), the country's largest black religious organization, show how black religious groups experienced significant internal change even as they sought to change society. Dexter Avenue congregants repurposed old hymns with new lyrics as they inspired supporters of the 1955–1956 bus boycott. At the same time, despite encouraging, praying for, and guarding King's parsonage after white supremacists bombed the building, King's parishioners realized that their church was no longer thriving. They had, in effect, lost their pastor to the national civil rights struggle. Even though they understood that nonviolence afforded many benefits, they also recognized the cost it exacted on those placed at its fulcrum.

At the national level, debates over civil rights issues in society also changed church organizations. King backed a candidate for the presidency of the NBC who was supportive of the activist methods employed by groups like King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The incumbent NBC president, J. H. Jackson, publicly criticized the direct-action methods adopted by the Freedom Riders in 1961 in their bid to integrate interstate bus transportation in the South. His criticism of the Freedom Riders, and through that of King himself, led to Jackson's reelection in Kansas City, Kansas, that same year. So contentious were the debates in Kansas City, that delegates came to blows and one member sustained injuries so severe that he died from them a short while later. In the aftermath, King's supporters led a walkout from the convention that eventually resulted in the formation of a separate organization, the Progressive NBC. Eventually removed from his leadership position in the NBC, King participated in the new organization. Once again, protest movements had changed a religious group.

A very different kind of change takes place when activists protest against religious groups themselves. Emblematic of the issues that emerge when religious groups become the focal point of protest action are the kneel-in demonstrations held at segregated white churches in the US South. In response to white congregants' refusal to welcome black worshippers to their congregations, by April 1961 as many as two hundred separate demonstrations took place at segregated white churches across the country. Although in some instances, demonstrators succeeded in integrating the targeted congregations, in far more settings, white deacons turned away black visitors and their white allies, often calling the police to support their efforts. Amid the high drama that unfolded on church entryways and front steps, much of the debate turned on the perceived sincerity of the integrationists. Those defending segregation accused the demonstrators of insincerity, of just wanting to cause trouble, and of not really being intent on worship. In return, the integrationists declared that those blocking their entry were the true hypocrites. The unresolved debates over perceptions of insincerity and respectability, with all their racial baggage, helped maintain racial divisions in the Christian community even after many of the previously segregated congregations rescinded their official segregationist policies.

Range of Protest Involvement

Yet, such activism directed at religious groups has been far rarer than those instances where religious communities join in activism focused on political targets. A few case studies make evident the breadth of issues emerging when religious groups join in the demonstrations. Examples from the US civil rights movement and India's bid for independence from Britain have already made evident the range of possible approaches. More examples abound. At the individual level, South African Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu played a central leadership role in the anti-apartheid struggle during the 1970s and 1980s. Tutu credited the several hours that he spent praying every day as key to his long-term participation in the difficult and risky work of overturning racial segregation. In this case, his religious commitments emboldened and strengthened his participation in social protest despite opposition from some of his co-religionists.

At the corporate level, members of the base ecclesial movement in Latin America opposed military dictatorships. Emboldened by a practice of grassroots bible study, many base community members in countries like Brazil spoke out against military dictatorships during the 1960s. Amid heavy governmental

oppression, the base communities fostered community ties, risk-taking, and a belief in the possibility of change. As in the case of Bishop Tutu, religious practices emboldened and sustained religious community members to critique and undermine anti-humanitarian policies and practices in the face of violent and deadly reprisals by both the military and extrajudicial death squads.

Gender, Religion, and Social Change

The relationship of religious communities to social protest movements has also been shaped by gender. Religious studies scholars have explored patriarchy and sexism at length, often noting – at least in the context of the United States – women's lay leadership in the midst of a clergy dominated by men. In the midst of that patriarchy, women have found multiple ways to raise their voices and exercise leadership. One of the arenas in which that leadership has been expressed has been that of social protest.

Taking the black church in the United States as an example, African-American women have pushed past male dominance in the midst of challenging racial discrimination. Historian Evelyn Higginbotham, for example, has documented the multiple ways that members of the NBC's women's auxiliary criticized the US government for supporting Jim Crow, reached out to collaborate with white women in joint evangelism efforts, and fostered leadership skills within their own sphere of influence (Higginbotham 1997). In great migration-era Chicago, charismatic congregational leaders like Elder Lucy Smith and Mary Evans not only subverted gender norms through their dress and pastoral styles but also, as historian Wallace D. Best has shown, through their support of those rural black southerners who had relocated to the North and found themselves still confronting white racism (Best 2005). Likewise, Ella Baker, the woman who was almost single-handedly responsible for the civil rights era organizing success of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), SCLC, and SNCC, drew on the religious teachings of her youth as she worked to overturn the sexism internal to the male-dominated civil rights organizations and the racism and prejudice of society.

Transcendence and Social Roles

It is religious groups' interest in the transcendent that sets them aside from other social groups such as unions, political parties, and social clubs. To be certain many religious communities embody political and social dimensions. For example, the black church in the United States has served multiple roles given that it was one of the few black institutions that survived amid the oppression of slavery and Jim Crow. Simultaneously a center of worship, a venue for political organizing, and the premier social location for maintaining healthy community networks, the black church was both a social and religious hub. But even when religious communities hold multiple, socially dense roles, the transcendent, and its connection to religious adherents, remains primary. The means, motives, and modes of engaging with social change movements will, in the end, turn on how any given religious community understands their position in the sacred universe and the resultant obligations for pursuing justice and social equity in the present moment.

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CHAPTER 153

Domestic Violence

Shannon Dunn

Domestic violence (DV) refers to physical and mental abuse perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. While DV is distinct from other types of violence, DV should not be viewed in isolation from social practices of domination that are often structural and systematic in nature, for example, sexism and racism. While physical and psychological abuse can be perpetrated by either a spouse or domestic partner regardless of gender or identity, the focus of this entry is on the physical abuse of women in the heterosexual marital relationship. One reason for this pertains to the relative historical continuity of DV as a moral and legal problem within several religious traditions. This entry focuses on Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions in particular. How do practitioners interpret, and justify their interpretations of, sacred texts and traditions on wife-beating? In addition to focusing on textual hermeneutics and conceptions of authority, we must examine the role of modern secular legal systems in regulating DV and the role of women in the family more generally. How have ethical discourses involving DV evolved in various religious and secular legal traditions pertaining to marriage and divorce?

Contemporary feminist theologies and legal theories have played a critical role in challenging and reforming religious teachings on DV. Feminist critique, broadly defined to include secular as well as religious voices, has identified underlying ideological and social causes for DV, as well as paths toward reducing and eventually ending such violence. Some of the most comprehensive scholarship on religion and DV points to the need for an intersectional approach. Such an approach entails examining violence in relation to multiple factors of identity and community, including gender, race, religion, and class.

The Jewish Tradition

Jewish feminist thinkers have connected the phenomenon of wife-beating and its historical acceptance as a practice in Jewish communities – with the inequality of women within the Jewish tradition. Naomi Graetz (2013) has argued that Jewish texts and scholars have dealt with DV for thousands of years, but often in terms of apologetics and denial. Although women are ascribed spiritual or ontological equality with men, they occupy a lower place in the social hierarchy. Additionally, the community's lack of protections for women in such situations also reflects socially embedded patriarchal assumptions and privilege.

A major governing framework for marital relations in biblical times was the ownership of the wife by the husband, following the teaching in Genesis 3:16, "the husband shall rule over the wife." Graetz

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

points out that the women-as-property theme is continued in Exodus through the commandment that forbids coveting the neighbor's wife, and the transfer of women from fathers to husbands (Deuteronomy 24:1). Rachel Biale (1995) notes that according to the Halakhah (Jewish law) women are "acquired" by men through money, deed, or by intercourse. A woman can "acquire" herself by divorce or death of the husband. Acquisition implies the purchase of property, and the transfer of money. Biale explains, however, that the acquisition of a woman in marriage is not equivalent to the purchase of property since marriage designates a sacred act of setting aside the wife for the husband only (1995, 48). Monogamy is not presupposed on the part of the husband. Jewish feminist scholars have argued that the traditional legal language for Jewish marriage is fundamentally incompatible with egalitarian relationships.

Marriage has historically played an important role in the life and perpetuation of the Jewish community. For those persons who transgressed laws regulating marriage in biblical and postbiblical times the consequences could be severe. Since the covenant of marriage transcends the commercial nature of acquisition, and belongs also to the realm of the sacred and holy, transgressors (adulterers) could be punished with execution. Historically, divorce was permitted, but often discouraged. Husbands had the sole power to release the wife in divorce (give a *get*).

Graetz identifies various arguments with regard to the permissibility of wife-beating in different historical and cultural periods. Early rabbinic sources treat the injured wife as a form of damage to the husband's property. This could lead to an odd scenario in which monetary reparations go to the husband, since the husband already owns what belongs to the wife (2013, 313). Not all rabbis were comfortable with the prospect of a man benefiting from his ill-treatment of his own wife, given that the wife occupied this ambiguous space between property and covenanted partner. Additionally, the rabbis permitted limited wife-beating under Jewish law for a wife's bad behavior, which included not performing household duties correctly and refusing sexual intercourse with the husband. Later, rabbis sometimes forbade wife-beating in all cases, while others allowed it for "educational" purposes. Graetz explains that while Jewish scholars today disagree on the permissibility of wife-beating, dominant interpretations of Halakhah in the twenty-first century give men more authority than women (2013, 323).

Jews in the contemporary North American context may inhabit both halakhic and secular socio-legal worlds, which can lead to difficulty in resolving conflicts within the family. Jewish groups that do not recognize the legitimacy of secular courts in dealing with family law may provide further obstacles to abused wives seeking justice. Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews may decide not to utilize secular courts to resolve marital issues, and insist on the authority of the religious divorce, or *get*. The *get* is the sole prerogative of the husband. If he is an abusive person, he may refuse to give his wife a *get*, making her an estranged *agunah*, a highly stigmatized figure in the Orthodox Jewish community. The agunah may not remarry without the *get*, and is "chained" to her husband.

In addition to abused women encountering discrimination within the Jewish community, they may face additional discrimination from secular state law enforcement officials. Adam Koblenz explains that many Jewish women may be afraid to report DV to law enforcement. (2009, 269). Some Jews are concerned that "airing the dirty laundry" of the Jewish community will increase anti-Semitic prejudice. Domestic violence is severely underreported among American Jews, and Orthodox women in particular have concealed incidents of DV for the sake of maintaining the appearance of a peaceful home or *beit shalom*.

Feminist interpreters of the Jewish tradition, such as Adler (1998) and Plaskow (1991), have brought teachings about gender equality into sustained conversations with major tenets of Judaism. In doing so, they have helped to make visible the contrast between the governing assumptions about gender, community, and

conceptions of the sacred, in the premodern world and those in the contemporary period in North America. Among the most pronounced differences today are: the moral conviction that women should have equal rights and opportunities to men; the idea that religion is a matter of the private sphere, and that secular law is privileged over religious law in many aspects; and a view of sacred texts' meaning and authority as constituted by interaction with the reader and reader's community over time and place (hermeneutics). In light of these changes, these scholars find it urgent to identify past assumptions that gave license to wife-beating, argue against them, and utilize frameworks with which to construct a just sexual and relational ethic.

The Islamic Tradition

Several factors have shaped Islamic discourses on DV in North America and elsewhere. These include ideas about gender equality, the reality of modern state secularity and the relative privatization of religious belief, and questions related to the authority and interpretation of sacred texts and traditions. Scholarship on gender in classical and contemporary Islamic legal traditions has illuminated the different epistemological frameworks for premodern and modern Muslims, as well as the ways that male-dominated gender hierarchies have functioned historically in each. Susannah Heschel (2015) observes that Muslim and Jewish feminists share more in common than with Christian feminists, owing to the roots of their respective religious traditions in legal systems. Moreover, like Jews, Muslims living in the United States also face prejudice on account of their religious and ethnic backgrounds. In the aftermath of 9/11 and the war on terror, a large number of Americans have uncritically accepted the stereotype that Muslim men are more violent than other men. Many Muslim communities are wary of exposing Muslims to additional scrutiny from law enforcement. This fear has created a conundrum for community advocates working to end DV, who work from within the tradition to condemn violence within the Muslim community but also fight against harmful stereotypes about Muslims.

Within Islamic sacred texts and traditions, there exist teachings that sanction gender inequality. The most infamous is verse 4:34 of the Qur'an, which appears to allow a man to hit his wife if she expresses disobedience toward her husband. While scholars of Islam have debated the exact meaning of this verse, it is generally understood to reflect a hierarchical relationship between men and women, in which men are the guardians of women and women are to be obedient to men. Ayesha Chaudhry's (2015) exhaustive treatment of the history of Muslim exegetical work on Qur'an 4:34 is helpful in showing how precolonial and postcolonial cosmologies differ with regard to gender. The precolonial cosmology is marked by a gendered hierarchy in which men stand above women, closer to God. The postcolonial cosmology envisions greater parity between men and women, who are equidistant from God. Global socio political trends gave rise to the development of Muslim feminist theology and the ideal of egalitarian gender relationships. Prior to Chaudhry, progressive Muslims like Amina Wadud (1999) argued against the hierarchical gender scheme that 4:34 presupposes and reinforces.

In classical Islamic jurisprudence, the major paradigm structuring gender relationships was that of the male ownership (*milk*) of females through marriage, slavery, and concubinage (Ali 2010). In drawing a comparison with premodern Jewish traditions, DV may have been justified in terms of its disciplinary function. Similar to late antique Jewish thought, free women were not, strictly speaking, the property of men, even though they were not exactly considered autonomous individuals. Hina Azam (2015) argues that free women in the Sunnī Islamic classical legal framework were, in essence, the synthesis of person/thing,

or property/proprietor. Women, like men, were answerable before God and therefore had a capacity for moral agency as well as inherent dignity, which is distinct from a Muslim feminist argument for gender equality that we find in the postcolonial context. Although Azam's work deals with sexual violation in classical Sunnī Islam, this insight can provide further reasoning for why Muslim interpreters of 4:34 historically experienced discomfort with the practice of wife-beating and frequently sought in their arguments to restrict it.

In the postcolonial context, intra-Muslim arguments about the permissibility of wife-beating occur within a milieu of questions about Islamic identity, and the rejection, acceptance, and/or modification of Western gender norms, such as gender egalitarianism, to suit the needs of Islamic communities. These negotiations take place both within Western democratic countries governed by secular law and Muslim-majority nations in which religious law (shari'a) is dominant. Lisa Hajjar (2006) maintains that since the 1970s, state governance constitutes the most significant factor in whether DV is taken seriously as a crime. Muslim-majority states that have implemented some form of Shari'a often interpret it in ways that restrict women's rights, which is not necessarily concordant with the Islamic tradition as a whole, but rather central to the political goals of ruling elites. Hajjar observes that ruling elites in modern Islamic states often seek to placate Islamic hardliners who hold patriarchal worldviews, and thus they fail to criminalize activities like DV. This leads, among other things, to the conflation of the tenets of "true Islam" with practices of violence against women in popular imagination (in both Islamic and Western contexts). In order to effectively address DV in such contexts, Hajjar argues for the importance of using Islamic arguments about human dignity instead of secular feminist arguments about equality. The rhetoric of dignity does not necessarily disrupt gender hierarchies, for example, and may appear less threatening to elites and hardliners. Practically speaking, however, there seems to be significant overlap in how the concepts of dignity and equality are interpreted in the context of anti-DV arguments.

In the United States, Juliane Hammer (2013) questions the use of feminist rhetoric of equality as the best solution for dealing with DV in Muslim communities. Hammer examines several Muslim organizations that raise awareness and provide tools to deal with DV. Groups like the Peaceful Families Project (PFP) in Virginia employ language of gender complementarity, in which men and women have distinct biological as well as social roles. While Hammer argues that secular feminist methods may be inadequate for solving DV in Muslim communities, she finds it interesting that Muslim activists often eschew feminist methods on the basis of antipathy toward Western secularism, but actually end up adopting techniques of interpreting the tradition similar to those employed by Muslim feminists (2013, 246). For example, PFP engages in a re-reading of Qur'anic verses, like 30:21, which states that God established love and mercy between spouses, in order to argue that God's plan for men and women precludes violence.

In light of these findings, we ought to consider that male/female inequality plays a role in domestic violence, but more specifically that multiple and intersecting experiences of inequality may increase the likelihood of abuse, or compound the problem of DV. People use religious ideas to justify hierarchical relationships, including economic and racial hierarchies. Inversely, people may employ religious ideas and practices to resist violence. Women living in political contexts in which women's rights are not fully recognized, and ideas of hypermasculinity are normative, may be more vulnerable to abuse. Women who are marginalized on account of their minority status based on race, religion, and/or class, are likely to be targets of violence – both within the home and outside of it. The underreporting of DV in Muslim and Jewish communities offers proof of intersectional conditions of oppression. It is therefore necessary to

connect the violence experienced by communities as a result of licit or illicit discrimination with practices of violence against women. The section "The Christian Tradition" discusses DV in the Christian tradition, highlighting the experience of African-American and Native American women in this context as well.

The Christian Tradition

The Christian tradition was also forged in a patriarchal context in which men were understood to be superior to women. Despite some inclusion of women in the ministry of Jesus, for example, early church fathers used Genesis 3:16 to argue for the subservience of women to men. Historical justifications for wife-beating and other forms of violence against women within the tradition frequently relied on a God-ordained conception of male dominance and female submission. The frequent conflation of men's power with divine authority influenced legal reasoning about the acceptability of DV, especially with regard to rules around marriage and divorce. An emphasis on gender equality in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anglo-American culture, in part as a result of the first wave of the feminist movement, altered how American Christians justified the practice of DV.

Reva Siegel's article (1996) examines a shift from the way Anglo-Americans viewed wife-beating as a practice permissible for a wife's chastisement to a practice shielded by notions of privacy in marriage. The rise of companionate marriage undermined the authority-based marital status regime of common law, and along with that, the master's practice of chastising his wife (1996, 2144). Due to the advancement of an ideal of gender equality in marriage, the idea of the husband-as-master fell into disfavor. Gender-hierarchical language was replaced with the language of privacy. The focus on privacy in the home, however, meant that the state did not routinely intervene in DV complaints (this changed as late as the 1970s in the United States). Siegel argues that practices of DV continued through a process of transformation. The Victorian discourse of the private sphere allowed practices of DV to continue, relatively unchallenged, by the white elite Christian men who benefited from the practice. Siegel notes that the wife-beater became a demonized figure in the late nineteenth century, and statutes against wife-beating were more consistently enforced among African-Americans and immigrants than against whites.

Ann Taves (1995) observes that the people at the top of the social hierarchy get to define what counts as violence. "Because the Euro-Christian tradition in its dominant forms has legitimated, indeed tended to sanctify, social relationships which are simultaneously patriarchal, Eurocentric, and heterosexist, violence has traditionally been defined rather narrowly within mainstream Christianity" (1995, 263). In Christian empires but also in places where, despite secularization, Christianity retains cultural hegemony, this statement implies that women have consistently faced the threat of DV. The threat of such violence has been magnified for non-white and non-Christian women, whose communities often suffered from other forms of violence.

Dolores S. Williams (1994) maintains that any robust analysis of DV against African-American women must account for the history of slavery, the denial of economic opportunity for African-American men postslavery, and practices of police brutality that have persisted into the twenty-first century. African-American women have historically experienced high levels of interpersonal violence, whether inflicted by slave masters, police, or their partners. This experience of violence on multiple levels is distinct from the experience of most white women. Williams connects the lack of control experienced by African-American men with their consequent need to exert control over the private sphere. She writes that

patriarchal societies "sanction men's feelings that they have the right to control their families, including women" (1994, 40). For male members of an oppressed group, acts of DV may express feelings of helplessness and anger.

Another minority population within the United States that has experienced high levels of violence by the state and by domestic partners is Native American women. With regard to DV, non-Native men have assaulted Native women on reservations in high numbers. A 1978 US Supreme Court ruling, *Oliphant*, determined that Native tribes with their own courts were not allowed to charge non-Natives for criminal activity in this area. Thus, non-Native men could abuse Native women largely without legal consequence. In 2013, Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and allowed tribal courts jurisdiction over a limited amount of domestic and dating crimes committed by non-Natives on reservations – a change that DV activists have largely regarded as positive.

The discussion of DV and Native women should also be placed in the larger history of European colonization and domination of Native people. Under colonization, Native Americans were frequently forced to relocate, which alienated them from traditional kin structures, and cultural practices and norms. Moreover, they were denied opportunities for employment and education, resulting in poverty and psychological hardship. Hart and Lowther (2008) argue that as a consequence of colonization, Native women internalized ideas of themselves as "dirty" and "uncivilized," which contributed to the difficulty in getting women to report abuse, but also more fundamentally to expect better treatment in intimate relationships.

The variation of practices related to gender and authority among Native tribes makes it hard to find any singular solution to the problem of DV for Native women. Sherry Hamby argues that because of the distinct nature of each of the over 500 Native tribes, more empirical research must be conducted in order to produce more "culturally congruent violence research and more active programs against domestic violence with American Indians" (2005, 191). The 2013 renewal of VAWA with the new provision is a corrective step for the federal legal protection of Native women on reservations.

Three observations seem germane to this discussion. First, DV refers distinctly to violence in the private sphere of household and private property, but is inseparable from wider social practices of domination and violence, whether legal or illegal, visible or covert. Second, following Taves's observation, marginalized communities and groups, while frequent recipients of violence, often lack the power to authoritatively name violence as such. In the antebellum slaveholding Southern United States, for example, the law reflected the white slave owner's view that enslavement of African-Americans could not constitute violence. For many years, federal law has deprived Native American women the right to prosecute non-Native men for DV. Finally, Christian teachings, like those of other religious traditions, can be used in the service of maintaining a hierarchical social order based on gender, race, and class, or can be employed to challenge such an order.

Patterns and Other Observations

This entry addresses DV in the context of three religious groups in North America, and thus omits information about DV in other traditions and cultures. The major reason for this editorial choice is to focus on common themes and patterns in response to the problem of DV. In particular, these groups engage with premodern texts and traditions that unambiguously grant privileges to men, such as those that permit a husband to physically discipline his wife. The rereading and ongoing interpretation of

these texts, and the canons of which they are a part, constitutes an important facet of religious identity for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. This frame allows for greater emphasis on the common historical and social questions posed to analyses of DV in the twenty-first century related to secularism, feminism, democracy, colonialism, and racism. The question of who gets to define the actions that constitute violence is as necessary to think about in our contemporary context as it is when we study earlier periods. Members of the dominant social group are often reluctant to recognize their power in defining violence, not to mention in deploying it against other groups. It is imperative, then, for scholars to maintain a critical awareness of this power dynamic in analyses of DV in various cultures and subcultures.

When communities, including the state, can more fully recognize DV as a social problem with interlocking causes – such as sexism, poverty, racism, colonialism, and substance abuse – they will be able to address it more effectively. Thoughtful advocacy work will take into account the concrete realities of the community experiencing DV, including sexism, classism, and racism. The work of creating gender egalitarianism, in which men and women have equal opportunities and recognition before the law, is still integral to the solution. In addition to seeking the criminalization of perpetrators, a society has to be willing to offer educational resources, offer community rehabilitation programs for offenders, and work toward justice beyond a crime-and-punishment model of treatment.

Practices of domination, abuse, and control are unfortunately features of many cultures, whether religious or not. We need to conceptualize DV not strictly as a personal or private phenomenon, or as limited to certain communities, but as a problem that the wider public has a stake in ending. By adopting a more comprehensive view of the ways that DV is connected to other forms of violence, scholars of religious ethics have an opportunity to better analyze the factors that lead to DV within specific communities, and identify possible solutions that are appropriate to those communities.

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CHAPTER 154

Gender Discrimination

Rosemary Kellison

As extensive scholarship on gender and religion has shown, gender discrimination – specifically, discrimination against women or against persons who in one way or another fail to conform to social norms of masculinity, femininity, or the rigid line between the two – has been practiced in a wide diversity of religious communities. As other entries in this encyclopedia show, such discrimination has taken a wide variety of forms including, among others, highly gendered definitions of appropriate social and familial roles; practices of marriage and sex that reflect male ownership of or dominance over women; systematic exclusion of women from positions of authority in religion, government, and the workplace; and widespread homophobia and transphobia. These forms of discrimination have commonly been justified by invoking authoritative resources from religious traditions. Indeed, as Kecia Ali (2006) points out, practices related to gender are often some of the most jealously guarded by tradition given their centrality to identity and thus to the boundaries communities draw around themselves. One might therefore assume that the study of gender discrimination would have a long history in the field of religious ethics. To the contrary, however, the field of religious ethics itself has not been immune to practices of gender discrimination. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the field's flagship *Journal of Religious Ethics* (JRE), Barbara Andolsen (1997) published a piece in which she pointed out the relative dearth of JRE articles discussing issues related to gender discrimination or feminism; even more striking was the complete absence of any articles on womanism. It was another eighteen years before the JRE published its first focus issue on feminist ethics, the introduction to which echoed Andolsen's critique but also noted that in the past several years, there had been a significant increase in the number of works devoted to issues of gender and feminism, not only in the JRE but in other venues as well.

This entry examines some of the different strategies that religious ethicists have employed in their analyses of gender discrimination, particularly in the contexts of Muslim and Christian traditions in the West, as well as some of the debates that have subsequently arisen. Religious ethicists' interest in gender discrimination has specifically to do with how communities' particular ways of understanding and enacting the relationship between bodies on the one hand and identity, social roles, and behavior on the other come to be seen as good or bad, moral or immoral, normal or abnormal – and how such socially shared understandings work to develop, and to privilege or disadvantage, certain kinds of persons. In particular, ethicists analyze the practices by which these norms are constructed, justified, enforced, and challenged. Historically, ethicists have tended to focus their attention on those practices related to the making and exchanging of moral arguments. Taking gender seriously, however, expands the range of

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

practices relevant to ethical analysis to include, among others, those related to worship, politics, and governmental and other institutions, as well as those related to realms often designated as "private" or "bodily": marriage and parenting, household chores, hygiene, and dress. All of these practices are part of the means by which gender is constructed and enforced, at the levels of both individual selves and broader social and political structures.

Increasing attention to gender in the study of religious ethics has not only revealed gender discrimination within the communities studied (though there has been a significant amount of scholarship that has done just that, in the context of a diverse range of religious traditions) but also within the academic field itself. Additionally, the resulting focus on embodied practices and the particular contexts in which they are enacted has also significantly impacted both how religious ethics is studied and the substantive conclusions religious ethicists reach. For example, Andolsen authored one of the few early JRE entries in which gender plays a central role. Her article on the Protestant virtue of agape made clear that awareness of gender has a profound impact on ethical analysis. Andolsen (1981) showed that agape, interpreted as other-regard or self-sacrifice for others, has significantly different implications for women, given the pervasiveness of women's practices of caring and sacrificing for others; in fact, she argued, cultivation of this virtue may in some cases do harm to the women who practice it. More recently, a number of scholars have followed Andolsen's example, arguing that studying the practical experiences of diverse women, including their experiences of discrimination and violence, as well as of persons who identify as intersex, trans, or non-binary, leads to new understandings of central ethical categories including human rights, moral agency, and intention. Methodology, too, can be transformed by analysis of gender. The emphasis on practice and its relationship to the cultivation of particular kinds of gendered selves, for example, has motivated new interest in ethnography as a method for religious ethics.

That increased attention to gender results in these expansions of the boundaries of religious ethics and challenges to its central concepts is evidence of the centrality of gender in humans' moral lives. Given how fundamental gender has been to the organization of human societies, to understandings of the body and personhood, and thus to the construction and maintenance of moral norms, studies of ethics that neglect the role of gender are incomplete. Moreover, such accounts can themselves perpetuate gender discrimination; by failing to critically analyze its existence, ethicists contribute to the process whereby gender is made to seem natural and therefore unchallengeable.

While there is widespread agreement among ethicists studying gender on these points, significant debates persist. In particular, this entry focuses on different ways of interpreting moral traditions and their authority. The authority of religious traditions has often been invoked to justify gender discrimination. The gender-constituting practices described above have histories; they emerge from traditions and are justified with reference to traditions, whether as continuations of or challenges to them. In the context of religion, these traditions are often understood by their adherents to be founded in texts of divine or otherwise transcendent provenance, practices of persons or communities seen as bearers of special authority, and the history or customs of a community passed down over time. The centrality of tradition and its authority for gender discrimination raises several important questions for religious ethicists. Can (and should) analysis of gender proceed independently of any particular tradition? To what extent can traditions be reinterpreted or rewritten? Given that analytical concepts and theories too emerge from particular traditions, how can such frames be applied in comparative analysis involving more than one religious tradition and/or cultural context? How might these approaches affect other areas of ethical inquiry outside questions specifically tied to gender? Which

way of approaching tradition affords the most liberatory possibilities for challenging or dismantling gender – and is such an objective an appropriate goal for scholarly work?

Because of the role traditional authority has played in constructing and justifying gendered practices like these, some liberal feminist scholars have been skeptical of, or even hostile to, traditions. In their view, moral inquiry is most likely to arrive at just conclusions when it proceeds independently of any particular tradition. Susan Moller Okin (1989), for instance, advised skepticism about theories of justice that arise from cultural or religious traditions. She argued that though such theories are often characterized as dealing with universal justice, they are in fact representative not merely of the perspective of a particular culture, but only of a particular segment of that culture: elite men. In her chapter "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" (1999), Okin considered the impact of this particularism on the specific issue of gender discrimination. She argued not only that the world's cultural and religious traditions are inherently gendered, but that most make men's control of women a central goal.

Seyla Benhabib (2002), another liberal feminist, criticizes Okin for essentializing cultures – presenting them as unified wholes without internal differentiation and debate. This approach leads scholars to overlook important instances of contestation and diversity within traditions. For example, while Western scholars sometimes refer to hijab (veiling) as a single practice in which Muslim women either do or do not engage, Benhabib argues that in reality there are a wide variety of veiling practices representing a wide range of interpretations of not only hijab itself but also broader political and theological issues. In spite of this critique, Benhabib follows Okin in opposing a tradition-based approach to the study of gender and justice. Benhabib suggests that social agreements emerging from traditions do not reflect genuine (that is, rational and free) consensus. Building on Okin's point that positions presented as characterizing a whole tradition's single perspective are often reflective of the views of only a powerful few, Benhabib argues that taking a tradition-based approach can therefore make scholars complicit in the enforcing of authority structures.

For these reasons, both Okin and Benhabib argue that gender discrimination is best addressed not from the perspective of any particular cultural or religious tradition but rather by appealing to universal norms, which may conflict with the gendered norms and practices of particular communities. For example, Okin (1999) noted the potential for conflict between specific groups' norms and the liberal norm of gender equality. Benhabib similarly contrasts the gendered practices of many "traditional cultures" with the "universalist moral language, which is context independent," of women's rights (2002, 40). This idea of "context independence" is central to the liberal feminist argument. While both Okin and Benhabib urge careful attention to particular context, criticizing other liberal philosophers for abstractness that fails to connect philosophy to real persons' lived experiences, both also suggest the possibility of transcending local, gendered conceptions of justice with a universal one that promotes gender equality.

Both Okin and Benhabib endorse a content-rich definition of liberal feminism as consisting of certain norms, such as gender equality or universal respect. However, the idea that any norm is truly context independent is hard to defend. Even liberal feminist norms that claim universal applicability arise from a particular (modern Western) context. Recognition of this fact is especially important for religious ethicists engaged in comparative or cross-traditional work. Assuming that liberal feminism is a universal response to gender discrimination may lead scholars either to force distinctive practices and arguments into familiar categories or to overlook culturally specific practices and arguments by which gender is complicated or challenged.

Elizabeth Bucar argues that anthropological study of Iranian Shiʿi Muslim women reveals the cultural specificity of many of liberal feminism's central concepts, which are inadequate and even inaccurate in describing the practices by which these women affirm and challenge gender norms. Not only do some of the women she studies explicitly reject the label of "feminist," but their praxis is best described, Bucar (2011) argues, not as an example of the autonomy at which liberal feminism aims but as an example of "dianomy," wherein both oneself and traditional sources are considered morally authoritative. Similarly, in her study of Egyptian Sunnī women, Saba Mahmood (2005) argues that liberal feminist conceptions of agency and freedom are so specific that they leave feminists unable to recognize many examples of women's flourishing. Moreover, the goals of women engaged in practices that challenge or reconstitute gender are not necessarily the same goals assumed by liberal feminism. Bucar's and Mahmood's ethnographies thus raise the possibility that scholars' use of a liberal feminist framework may lead to the same kind of reinforcement of existing power structures of which Benhabib warns, though between Western and non-Western societies rather than within a particular community. It is in part for this reason that both of their projects are much less explicitly prescriptive than those of liberal feminists, whose work is premised on the notion of universal norms, like gender equality, at which both scholarship and activism ought to aim.

Both Bucar and Mahmood argue that critical analysis of gender requires attention to the contextually particular embodied practices by which the self is formed, including those by which gender is constructed, enforced, and sometimes reimagined. It is in part through their focus on practice that they are able to identify gaps between the praxis of the women they study and gender norms of those women's communities as well as central concepts of feminist discourse. Their recognition that such gaps exist is significant for the ethical study of gender, as these kinds of inconsistencies between practice and stated norms are often the sites at which norms are contested. To ignore them is thus to produce only a truncated analysis of the workings of gender. Bucar's and Mahmood's methodologies are thus in part a response to the work of ethicists who engage in analysis solely of moral discourse as found in such disciplines as theology, law, ethics, and philosophy.

A second kind of response to the liberal feminist approach has come from scholars for whom the context of a particular tradition is a central aspect of their studies of gender and gender discrimination. Rather than seeking a universally applicable moral framework with which to examine and critique gender, immanent critics analyze gender in particular communities using concepts and critical methods derived from those communities' traditions themselves. The method of immanent critique follows from the recognition of two points: first, that moral norms and concepts emerge from traditions considered authoritative within particular communities, and second, that traditions are susceptible to reinterpretation and reconstruction. Immanent critique thus shares with the anthropological approach an emphasis on the particularity of contexts and the diversity of means by which gender discrimination is enforced and contested, but differs in its greater focus on authoritative traditions within those contexts. Additionally, though they share the suspicion of universal normative aims, many ethicists have employed immanent critique to make contextualized normative arguments intended to challenge gender discrimination. Whereas liberal feminists worry that a focus on traditional discourse may result in the reinforcement of such discourse's justification of norms and practices resulting in gender discrimination, immanent critics see appeals to tradition as a possible source of liberation. For these thinkers, it is *because* of tradition's authority, coupled with tradition's flexibility and reinterpretability, that grounding one's argument against gender discrimination in traditional sources is so effective.

In many religious communities in which scripture or other sacred texts are regarded as foundationally authoritative, gendered norms and practices are justified by particular interpretations of those texts. So, for example, women's exclusion from pastoral roles in some Christian communities may be justified by referring to Paul's disapproval of women teaching men as expressed in a New Testament epistle, or the practice of hijab among some Muslim women may be explained by hadiths in which Muhammad advises veiling of postpubescent women. Rather than denying the authority of those texts, some scholars seeking to subvert the authority of these practices instead reinterpret them, attempting to show that when read properly – that is, informed by the texts' particular historical contexts and with a priority on the texts' principal themes and values – these sources do not encourage gender discrimination. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1994), for example, focusing on details of Paul's historical context and on his statement that in Christ there is "no longer male and female," denies that his writings are essentially patriarchal. Lisa Cahill (1996) offers a similar "liberative" rereading of the New Testament on gender. Amina Wadud (1999) and Asma Barlas (2002) argue for a "holistic" interpretation of the Qur'an based on its overarching principles and historical context rather than the details of specific verses. On the issue of veiling, then, Wadud concludes that cultivation of the underlying Qur'anic virtue of modesty is what matters, not any one historically specific practice.

Immanent critiques result in the endorsement of normative aims that are particular to, and justified by, specific religious traditions. By appealing to foundational texts to support their arguments against gender discrimination, these critics implicitly accept the premise that such texts are the most authoritative moral sources for the communities of which they write. At the same time, however, they seek to challenge traditional forms of authority by contrasting the principles of these reinterpreted texts with historical practices they understand as resulting from misreading of those texts. In other words, this style of argument identifies certain sources (typically, scripture or other sacred texts and examples from the lives of sacred figures) as communicating a set of values fundamental to a given religious tradition; historical deviations from those values may be judged as failures to enact "true" Christianity, "true" Islam, and so forth. For this reason, this style of argument has been criticized by some as resulting in the same kind of essentialism of which Okin was accused. Ali (2006), for example, argues against attempts to determine what counts as "legitimate" or "authentic" Islam. For one, though Ali agrees that predominant trends in the Sharīʿa legal tradition and resulting social practices have supported gender discrimination, she adds that the tradition also contains precedents pushing in other directions; allowing only the Qur'an and Sunna to stand in for "Islam" itself thus closes off resources that could be useful to immanent critics. Moreover, she suggests that such arguments exhibit a certain kind of dishonesty in their failure to grapple with the complexities and difficulties of the texts they cite. For instance, she notes that egalitarian and androcentric accounts of marriage coexist in the Qur'an. These inconsistencies mean that even an interpretive approach that emphasizes the Qur'anic principle of justice over particular social practices will require confronting difficult questions about what justice entails. Wadud herself has in more recent work moved in this direction by "say[ing] 'no'" to Qur'anic verses that deeply contradict contemporary understandings of gender justice – understandings that, she emphasizes, are themselves informed by the Qur'an (2006, 202–203).

Practitioners of immanent critique see it as a means of disrupting traditional understandings by providing alternative ways of interpreting authoritative sources, thus answering Benhabib's fear that ethics done from the perspective of a particular tradition necessarily ends up reinforcing existing gender hierarchies. But for some ethicists, grounding one's arguments in reinterpreted authoritative sources

does not go far enough toward dismantling gender hierarchy, given that those traditional sources were almost all written by men and thus fail to represent the experiences of women in general and non-elite women in particular. Thus, part of the project of these immanent critics is to recover and treat as authoritative other sources – particularly, the practices and experiences of ordinary women – within the traditions they study. Ali's and Wadud's comments above, critiquing the Qur'an using a language of justice shaped by the Qur'an itself as well as by contemporary women's experiences, provide one example. In her elaboration of womanist theology, Katie Cannon (1995) argues that the particular experiences of Black American women (of slavery, sexual and economic exploitation, and marginalization) become sources for their immanent critique of American Christianity, leading them to become prophetic figures working to realize the Bible's promise of justice and simultaneously exposing the hypocrisy of white Christians. Because these lived experiences are often incongruent with predominant stereotypes about black women, Emilie Townes (2006) calls their retrieval part of a project of "countermemory" that helps to challenge the authoritative essentialism that makes traditions so amenable to the promotion of gender- and race-based discrimination. These projects demonstrate the importance of intersectionality in the study of gender discrimination in religious ethics, as they highlight how its experience is shaped by other aspects of identity including race.

The recovery of ordinary women's experiences as authoritative traditional sources is consistent with Okin's and Benhabib's call for normative projects that are connected to concrete human practices and experiences. It has therefore been a productive approach for ethicists who support the project of elaborating universal, or at least widely shared, norms of gender justice, but disagree that context independence is necessary (or possible) for achieving that goal. One way of making this argument is to demonstrate how, once expanded to include women's experiences, particular traditions can be invoked to contribute to a shared understanding of gender justice. Several ethicists working on both the Christian and Muslim traditions have in recent years argued for the ways in which the particular experiences of women and the particular resources of their moral and religious traditions might support (and also critically improve) shared discourses of human rights and gender equality.

Others argue that analysis of the particular lived experiences of women in different communities shows that some aspects of those experiences (such as motherhood, care, or conflict resolution) are very widely shared, enabling them to serve as a starting point for shared conceptions of justice. Cahill (1996) describes sex and reproduction as shared human experiences that, though "institutionalized" differently in different communities, are promoted by the same values (such as sexual equality) in those different contexts. Importantly, Cahill argues, it is only through the recognition of others' particularity – and especially, their particular embodiment – that these shared experiences can be identified. Moreover, promotion of the values emerging from those experiences is likely to look quite different in different cultural and traditional contexts. But, she emphasizes, such diversity in application does not prevent the judgment that some practice or norm is better or worse at promoting these values in a particular setting.

The study of gender in religious ethics has grown dramatically in recent years, but more work is needed, particularly in the context of non-Abrahamic traditions and with greater attention to the diverse ways in which gender discrimination interacts with discrimination against racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, queer and trans persons, and persons from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The variety of approaches to this work that have been developed illuminate important questions regarding tradition and authority that are relevant beyond the issue of gender, but in which gender plays a fundamental role. In contrast to liberal feminist philosophers, religious ethicists tend to contextualize their studies in rela-

tion to the specific traditions from which norms and practices of gender emerge and with reference to which those norms and practices are justified. Those who take an anthropological approach focus on the practices of ordinary women and are wary of universalizing normative claims. Immanent critics, by contrast, often make normative arguments that are justified by appealing to new interpretations of traditionally authoritative sources or by expanding the canon of traditional sources to include ordinary women's experiences. In spite of these differences, there is widespread agreement among religious ethicists writing about gender that gender discrimination is a regular and pervasive feature of the traditions and communities we study; that, consequently, religious ethicists ought to employ gender as a central category in their analyses; and that when they do so, both their methodology and their conclusions will be substantively affected.

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CHAPTER 155

Genocide

Atalia Omer and Ernesto Verdeja

What does it mean to think of genocide in terms of religious ethics? This question immediately highlights the need for contextuality, to avoid limiting the analysis to the question of theodicy and thus positing the relation between religious ethics and genocide as one of reaction. The other mode of connecting religion and genocide appears inconceivable because surely religious traditions do not condone or cause the destruction of human communities. Neither a discussion of otherworldly caused calamity nor vague assumptions about the essential prosocial and humanistic impulses inscribed in religious traditions will help us think about genocide through religious ethics. Indeed, we need to reverse the question: what can we learn about religious ethics through a contextual examination of genocidal events? On the one hand, genocide stands in obvious contrast to the ethics of religious traditions. On the other, religious people and institutions certainly participate in genocidal practices, justifications, and rhetoric. Indeed, functionalist and sociological accounts of religion illuminate the centrality of violence to defining communal boundaries, social cohesion, and morality (e.g. Durkheim 1915; Girard 1977, 1986; Strachey and Freud 1961). While religious traditions have a long history of authorizing force and targeted killings, the focus of this entry is limited to the question of religious ethics and genocide in modernity.

Genocide does not just happen. Its occurrence is always explicable in terms of human agency and the systems of meanings and justifications that humans weave. To the degree that religion and genocide are linked, human actions and their ideological underpinnings constitute the main targets of analysis. Certainly, the study of religious ethics cannot rest on the presumption that religious traditions offer countervailing forces to collectivistic genocidal proclivities. In addition to identifying the complicity of religion with genocidal practices, also relevant are explicitly religious actors' responses to atrocities that reach the depths of traditions' ethical commands and spiritual practices in challenging chauvinistic ethics of solidarity through an articulation of universalistic concerns with humans as humans. Religiosity, in other words, is both implicated in genocidal violence and in resistance to mass targeted murder and other forms of communal destruction, as well as in resources for transgenerational healing processes. Indeed, the discussion of genocide and religious traditions illuminates the need to examine religion within its historical (and, in this instance, genocidal) contexts. This entails paying careful attention to nationalist and imperial/colonial discourses, along with their embeddedness within modernity and secularity as well as their Christian- and Eurocentric legacies (Anidjar 2003, 2014). This entry proceeds in several steps. First, what is meant by genocide is examined, then an exploration of complicit actors and institutions in genocidal contexts is given, and finally the place of religious resistance to genocide is considered.

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

What Is Genocide?

It is crucial to clarify the legal working definition of genocide. According to Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (United Nations 1948), genocide is defined as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical [*sic*], racial or religious group." A wide array of practices qualify. The timing of the convention, like the timing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is not incidental, but rather denotes the impact of World War II. While recent scholarship on human rights challenges the centrality of the Holocaust and European fascism on the birth of the human rights regime (Moyn 2010, 2015), the Holocaust is pivotal in the background – through the person and work of Raphael Lemkin – of the UN convention and its definitional work and applicability, both globally and comparatively. Lemkin's legacy has been conscripted into a variety of agendas (e.g. Dirk Moses 2010; Loeffler 2017). His contested legacy indicates that enshrining genocide as a category of crime in international law does not solve the fluidity of its interpretation as encompassing not only obvious instances of mass killing, but also a whole spectrum of practices (such as systematic rape or the forced removal of children for the objective of "cultural assimilation") intended to destroy entire communities.

Indeed, genocide studies, as a scholarly field, has grappled with the Holocaust. One set of conversations interprets the genocides of the twentieth century as "intrinsic" and integral to broader world developments. These include the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the European imperial order, and its eventual disintegration into totalitarian and dictatorial regimes (Levene 2014, 5; see also Snyder 2010). Or it examines the Holocaust within the broader story of European colonization and racial (e.g. *Lebensraum*) and frontier imperialism (Kakel III 2013; Kay 2006; Madley 2016). Another set of conversations lessens the uniqueness of the Holocaust through a global comparative study of analogous cases that likewise challenge the conceptual and empirical boundaries of genocide by questioning whether the Holocaust should constitute the metric according to which all other cases are measured (e.g. Dirk Moses 2013). This line of critical genocide studies also investigates hidden and forgotten genocides, identifying biases as well as sociocultural and political mechanisms that enable sites of remembering and forgetting (Bloxham and Moses 2010; Hinton et al. 2013; Lemarchand 2011). In particular, the fluidity of the conceptual and empirical boundaries of genocide manifests in efforts to differentiate it from other practices such as "ethnic cleansing," broadly understood as the forced removal (through terror and killing) of civilian populations from their land, which is a central mechanism in exclusionary nationalist programs. The difficulty of differentiating "ethnicity" from "religious identity," as in the Balkans, illuminates why the analysis of religion and genocide immediately works against the abstraction of religion from ethnicity, nationality, and cultural contextuality. This is regardless of whether the Bosniak Muslim or Orthodox Serb actually operates within any theological depth or belief.

A scholarly exchange between Shaw and Bartov (2010) reveals this complexity. In response to Bartov's complaint that counting "ethnic cleansing" as genocide dilutes the meaning, Shaw retorts that "the idea of 'ethnic cleansing' is contaminated by perpetrator assumptions (the idea that removing and murdering people 'cleans' society, the opposite of any genuine idea of purity in social relations)" (2010, 249). Indeed, Lemkin's awareness of the potential convergence of genocide studies with politicized scholarship on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict led him to distance himself from his pre-World

War II political Zionist identification in order to promote the more universal concept of genocide (Loeffler 2017). The question of whether the "ethnic cleansing" of Palestinians in 1948 constituted genocide points us back to nationalism, colonialism, and modernity as key to the analysis of religious ethics and genocide. Now, it is important to catalog a few instances where religious institutions, authorities, narratives, and people were deeply implicated in articulating mass killings, as well as other forms of communal destruction, as morally justifiable and even "benevolent." This is to avoid theorizing religion as a force countering the logic of modern secular genocides. Succumbing to such logic would entail an unreconstructed modernist account of "religion" as interiorized and individualized in terms of "belief," cognition, and choice, and as neatly differentiable from ethnicity, nationality, culture, and other identity markers.

Religious Institutions and Actors within Genocidal Contexts: Complicity

The topic of genocide and religious ethics is linked to a broad examination of religion and violence and is consistent with exclusionary nationalist rhetoric and practices. The study of genocide, in particular, however foregrounds the relevance of religion to "state-organized murder" (Bartov and Mack 2001, 1), clearly evidenced in modern cases, including those of the Armenian, Jewish, and Rwandan genocides. Authoritative religious experts such as Kittle in Nazi Germany (Ericksen 2001) or others who partook in the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence of German Religious Life (Heschel 2008) actively worked on manufacturing and disseminating so-called "Aryan Christianity." This enhanced the respectability of Nazism and its genocidal practices (Bartov and Mack 2001, 5), which were sanctioned down to low-level military chaplains who offered spiritual refuge and comfort to foot soldiers at the ground zero of a murderous regime (Bergen 2001). Indeed, Bartov and Mack (2001) conclude that, with some exceptions, German churches during World War II exhibited "a combination of resentment, approval, silent indifference, or narrow-minded concentration on religious piety resulting in moral numbing in the face of widespread inhumanity" (6).

There is nothing particularly unique about the case of Nazified Christianity. Nor did it emerge out of nowhere. The groundwork had been prepared by antecedent philosophical and theological developments from Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century (Lawrence 2014; Mack 2003) and his positing of the "Jew" as a foil to his conceptions of rationality and autonomy, to the founding comparative religious studies scholar Max Müller in the nineteenth. A product of his era, Müller differentiated Judaism and Christianity through the mechanism of philological and racial theories, thereby disrupting, but cohering with, classical anti-Jewish interpretations of supersessionism. This detour to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is to stress that the manifestation of atrocities does not signal the absence, but rather the presence, of various intellectual and theopolitical scaffolding, which contributed to the apparent morality and/or justifiability of their occurrence.

Years after the Holocaust, in 1994 Rwanda, churches turned into killing chambers and some church leaders into executioners. Longman (2010) writes:

> Organizers of the genocide, exploited the historic concept of sanctuary to lure tens of thousands of Tutsi into church buildings with false promises of protection; then Hutu militia and soldiers

> systematically slaughtered the unfortunate people who had sought refuge, firing guns and tossing grenades into the crowds gathered in church sanctuaries and school buildings, and methodically finishing off survivors with machetes, pruning hooks, and knives.
>
> (4–5)

In addition, in some locations, "clergy, catechists, and other church employees used their knowledge of the local population to identify Tutsi for elimination. In other cases, church personnel actively participated in the killing" (Longman 2010, 5). Like the military chaplains in Nazi Germany, the appearance that churches supported the genocidal regime was further strengthened when death squads held masses before killing episodes. "In some cases militia members apparently paused in the frenzy of killing to kneel and pray at the altar" (Longman 2010). Indeed, "practicing Christians could kill their neighbors without feeling that they were acting inconsistently with their faith" (Longman 2010, 191).

How can the practice of genocide and killing be consistent with religious ethics? This is the question. And it can only be confronted contextually by resisting the abstraction of religion and religiosity, along with religious ethics, from an examination of power and other substantive variables associated with identity, such as ethnicity, race, and nationality. The overwhelming evidence of active participation and the enabling of genocide by religious leaders notwithstanding, official responses of the Catholic Church attributed blame to individual sinfulness of clerics rather than the church writ large (Longman 2010, 7). Still, *Nostra Aetate* or the Declaration of the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions (also referred to as Vatican II), which was promulgated in 1965 by Pope Paul VI, presented an effort to grapple with the Christian sin of the Holocaust and to reassess the Church's relations with Jews and other faith communities (see also Ochs 2011). Even while the Nazis distanced themselves from religious institutions, their capacity to implement racial policies drew strength and public traction from centuries of Christian anti-Semitism.

That the Nazification of Christianity drew on established intellectual patterns of racializing religion has also been noted. The Christian process of atonement for the one sin against Jews (the Holocaust), Jewish Palestinian liberation theologian Ellis (1997) contended, has been pivotal for rendering the suffering of Palestinians invisible and inaudible (see also Magid 2017). The invisibility and inaudibility of Palestinians illuminate the relevance of interrogating religion and the ethics of confronting the memory of genocide on the level of discourse, with a special emphasis on the endurance of orientalism in authorizing communal-targeted violence. Certainly, the case of Palestine has become a site for contesting genocide's definitional boundaries (e.g. Shaw and Bartov 2010) as well as for highlighting the complex ways in which religious meanings, institutions, and people inform, in the *longue durée*, the possibility for murderous policies to be enacted and publicly supported as morally justifiable. This is where the fields of critical genocide studies and religious studies could converge in expanding the interpretive scope of the analysis of religion's relation to genocide. Anti-Semitism's religious roots are as relevant to a comparative analysis of religion and genocide as is orientalism and the othering of Muslims. Indeed, these two discourses are related and coextensive with the construction of Christian modernity (Anidjar 2014).

The disciplinary convergence of orientalism and anti-Semitism in underwriting Christian modern coloniality illuminates that the relevance of religion to an underpinning discourse informing the ground zero of genocidal episodes is broader than the story of Nazi Germany. As orientalism authorizes the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, beyond the immediacy of examining why religious actors and institutions became engrained with the Hutu's genocidal agenda, the events of 1994 in Rwanda illuminate the

enduring colonial legacy of churches and their long-term relevance to modern genocides and policies of ethnic cleansing. Indeed, the very classification of the inhabitants of Burundi and Rwanda into distinct ethnic groups was manufactured by Belgian and French colonialisms and sanctioned by churches (de Lespinay 2001) and missionaries who had complex and mutually benefiting relationships with colonial authorities. That years later the Hutu–Tutsi distinction constituted the boundaries along which genocide occurred stresses the long-term impact of colonialism, which itself was authorized and sanctioned by claims to religio-cultural superiority, racial imperialism, and civilizational mission. Accordingly, settler colonialism, dispossession, classification, and elimination of human communities were necessary for "progress" and modern-state making.

The colonial legacy, likewise, tells the stories of multiple (and eventually hidden) genocides and communal destruction in the form of the transatlantic slave trade, for example (see Hinton et al. 2013). Like the South African regime of apartheid, the American institution of slavery was authorized with religious warrants, allowing for high consistency between slaveholding and Christian beliefs (Rae 2018). Of course, this institution was likewise challenged by, among other paths, reclaiming Christianity from slaveholders' interpretations as were the religious warrants employed openly to authorize the apartheid era (Villa-Vicencio 1977, 1992).

At the time of its ratification, the Genocide Convention's definitional scope resonated, for many activists such as W. E. B. Du Bois, with the legacy of slavery and its endurance in Jim Crow laws as well as the ghettoization and segregation of African-Americans. Such activists pointed to the interrelation between an analysis of race and racialization, colonialism, and the practices of genocide (Civil Rights Congress 1951). Such practices always involve power and knowledge production that determine patterns of perpetuating, remembering, and forgetting, where some atrocities are remembered and others are hidden or construed as necessary stages in teleological conceptions of modernity and progress (Hinton et al. 2013).

Indeed, employing genocide as a comparative term intersects with intellectual and political processes of decolonization, which delineate the intersections of race and religion in the taxonomies of exclusionary nationalisms and imperial programs. These processes also involve examining, as Du Bois had done, the modern logic of what Foucault calls "biopolitics" and how its grammar underpins both Jim Crow America and the Warsaw Ghetto in that it seeks to control life and death in their totality. Following Agamben's (1998) notion of the "bare life" and resonating with Arendt's discussion of naked and disposable humanity in Nazi concentration camps (1973, 296), Du Bois (1952) recognizes the Warsaw Ghetto and the death camp as highly consistent with a broader racial geography that underpins modernity.

Biopolitics, as a central technology of modernity (Agamben 1998, 123) is more aptly captured in Achile Mbembe's concept of "necropolitics" (2019) denoting the power to dictate death. This conveys the relevance of race and colonialism to the discussion of genocide, a policy often targeting racialized religious communities framed also along and through national and ethnic lines of identification. This point returns us to the complex relations between "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" (Mojzes 2011) and how religious symbols, vocabularies, historical narratives, and textual sources are employed to construct exclusionary interpretations of nationalisms, which contain the potentiality for genocidal policies.

Sells (1998), for example, examines the emergence and consolidation of the national mythology of Christo-Slavism or "the premise that Slavs are by essence Christian and that conversion to another religion is a betrayal of the people or race" (51). Accordingly, and consistent with any other forms of ethnoreligious nationalism's invocation of authenticity through mythologizing and converging narratives of religious and national existential threats, Muslims in the Balkans are merely the product of forced

conversion and thus alien to the land. Through his examination of Christo-Slavism, Sells explains that the Bosnian genocide "was religiously motivated and religiously justified. Religious symbols, mythologies, myths of origin (pure Serb race), symbol of passion (Lazar's death), and eschatological longings (the resurrection of Lazar) were used by religious nationalists" (Sells 1998, 89). Political entrepreneurs in the late 1980s and leading up to the war in the 1990s manipulated the story of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo and the martyrdom of Prince Lazar in his fight against the Ottomans. The battle supposedly denotes the martyrdom of the Serbian nation in the name of Christendom. The politicians of the 1980s did not invent this mythology. Indeed, Sells shows how already in the nineteenth century, artistic works portray Prince Lazar as a Christ-like figure, a symptom of the reliance of Serb nationalism on this long circulating mythology in constructing its identity.

The question of the relation between religion and genocide will need to examine the role of religion in such nationalist mythologizing. This is especially the case considering that political entrepreneurs and manipulators do not invent such myths *ex nihilo* and that they resonate culturally, even if not through simplistic conceptions of causality. The trajectory between the consolidation of such exclusionary mythologies and, in the case of Bosnia, the events of, say, Srebrenica in July 1995, when more than 8,000 Muslim Bosniaks (mostly men and boys) were systematically massacred by the Bosnian Serb forces, defies reductive accounts of religion that seek its isolation as either a dependent (epiphenomenal) or independent (causal) variable. Religion interacts with the production and reproduction of national ideologies in myriad complex ways.

In addition to this clear case of genocide targeting Muslims, many regions in the former Yugoslavia were "ethnically cleansed" as a result of the wars, presenting particular challenges for religious leaders as potential instruments of healing. Decades later, the Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, Jews, and others in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), for instance, remain deeply segregated in terms of education, residence, and so forth. Further, the memories of cohabitation and intermingling are distant, and communal and ethnic markers are synonymized with religious ones. The synonymy of ethnicity and religion, once again, highlights the biologizing of religious modes of identification: to be a Muslim means to be a Bosniak – an ethnic and thus biologically (racially) inscribed identity, whose sustainability supposedly depends upon the logic of biopolitics/necropolitics. One of the ironies of genocidal histories is their capacities to "transform ... an imaginary community into a 'real' one by attempting to obliterate the members of the imagined group" (Hinton et al. 2013, 9). The boundaries between Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, and Jew in BiH are real in this regard. Religion explicitly participates in such geographies.

Indeed, one common denominator of modern genocides – one directly related to the legacy of religion as a comparative category of taxonomy employed within colonial structures (Chidester 1996, 2014) – is the construction of religious groups in racial and cultural terms rather than in terms of theologies and/or contents and intricacies (as well as internal pluralities) of beliefs and methods of learning. "People were murdered," Bartov and Mack (2001) write, "because they were Jews or Armenians or Bosnian Muslims, regardless of whether or not they (or their killers) actually believed in Jewish, Christian, or Muslim precepts" (2–3). The dynamics and structures of modern nationalisms signaled the transformation of religiosity into "culture" and "heritage" or "our values" (e.g. Roy 2010), which are nevertheless presented as causes worth dying, discriminating, or killing for. The conflation of religion and other markers of political, cultural, and social identification allows for the supposed subordination of ethics to the logic of realpolitik. It does so in ways that facilitate the sanctioning of violence, regardless of genocidal intent, by religious authorities as well as other manipulators of religio-cultural symbols and meanings,

whether these are the theologians of the Nazi regime, the priests of the Hutu-directed genocide in Rwanda, or the Serbian paramilitary leaders of the former Yugoslavia.

Nationalisms themselves and their claims of authenticity (and a sense of existential threat, martyrdom, and/or civilizational mission) rely on mythologizing communal coherence, often by targeting supposedly inauthentic communal elements (Marx 2003). Indeed, the language of authenticity does not constitute a perversion of modern nationalism (Fein 1990). It is highly consistent with this modern political mode of imagining social organizations in terms of the biological metaphor of "pollution." Nationalist mythologizing should not simply be accepted as given, but rather always be open for hermeneutical scrutiny and contextual power analysis that examines why, how, and by whom religious meanings, institutions, and people become conscripted onto exclusionary schemes with potential genocidal outcomes.

The reverse processes, or how religion disentangles from and challenges chauvinistic patterns, is also relevant and demands that we scrutinize what counts as "religious" to begin with. This category fluidly intersects with race, ethnicity, nationality, and other markers that work to flatten and essentialize "religion" (often through ethnicization and racialization) as identity, often without any theological or ethical depth. In fact, what is "ethical" for leaders such as Ratko Mladić in Srebrenica or for Théoneste Bagosora, in Rwanda, is subordinated to the logic of colonialism and biopolitics/necropolitics (segregation, division, classification). In the case of the former Yugoslavia, such flattening is understood in terms of a selective retrieval of religious motifs in the construction of national mythologies, without dismissing the many other variables that contributed to the emergence of chauvinistic interpretations of national identities. In the case of Rwanda, religion's complicity needs to be primarily understood, as noted, in terms of the churches' links to colonization and the invention of ethnic divides in Rwanda.

Notably, in all the cases touched upon above, from transatlantic slavery and the Holocaust to Bosnia and Rwanda, extensive discourses involving religion operate in a variety of forms, including in terms of institutional support and theologizing the justness of "purification" and sanctity of slavery. These modes of involvement contribute to authorizing the atrocities of genocide or their potentiality. Their sanctification is framed as both ethical and necessary for the survival of nations (often interlaced in the mythologizing of ethnoreligious nationalism with the apparent threat to the survival of religious traditions themselves) and for their self-actualization and/or promulgation of manifest destiny or "progress."

Religious Resistance

The complexity of the discussion of religion, and specifically religious ethics and genocide, relates to the fact that religious leaders and religiosity also have a strong record of resisting genocidal or potentially genocidal regimes and policies (e.g. Doughty and Ntambara 2005). Authoritative interpreters of traditions have the hermeneutical capacity to tap into constructive memories of cohabitation and resources promoting tolerance in the same ways that they can access divisive and violence promoting cultural currents (Dulin 2017). The religious fields, however, always intersect with and are populated by multiple and fragmented authorities. What counts as an "authoritative" interpretation of religious tradition is not always self-evident. Nor are such authorities confined to traditional religious institutions and their modes of training and reasoning.

Still, stories of bravery and actions of resistance grounded in religious convictions abound. In Hungary, during the Nazi era, Margit Schlachta, who founded (in 1923) and led the Roman Catholic Society of the Sisters of Social Service (Sheetz-Nguyen 2001), publicly condemned anti-Jewish laws as soon as they passed. To resist the forced removal, deportation, and eventual elimination of Jews, the Sisters sheltered many Jews. They likewise supplied Jews with baptismal certificates. Consequently, "they were willing to de-value a specific Christian sacrament and practice for the sake of universal charity ... motivated by a universal interpretation of religious dogma" (Bartov and Mack 2001, 9). Ironically, it was often the recognition of the human as human, regardless of their various affiliations, that generated an urgent moral requirement to respond to their suffering and prevent their destruction. This is "ironic" in that seeing human in their nakedness and looming perishability is not only the essence of biopolitics/necropolitics, but it also deepened humanistic compassion and courage grounded in religiosity as interpreted in embodied and embedded ways. In the case of the Sisters of Social Service, the supposed "devaluation" of the sacrament of baptism indeed denoted its sacralization through saving lives.

The ability of religious actors to respond with compassion, in ways that see humanity beyond narrow communal divisions, often invokes references to Emmanuel Levinas's discussion of the face of the other (e.g. Smith 2011) and his contention that relationality ought to be assessed in terms of ethical responsibility (e.g. Levinas 1995, 86). Levinas writes about an obligation to the other who is seen exposed in their defenselessness and dehumanization as a mechanism for asserting one's humanity, but often also as a mirror of one's murderous potential (1997, 294). In their powerlessness, the other embodies an "ethical resistance to power" (Smith 2011, 243). Thus, the relationality to the face "is incommensurable with the exercise of power" (Smith 2011, 243) and offers optimal resources to resist the logic of biopolitics/necropolitics. Levinas's phenomenology of the stranger conveys, therefore, that the face is "the primordial site for both moral goodness and radical evil" (Smith 2011, 244). Accordingly, Levinas employs religious tropes and imageries "to highlight the radical moral authority the Other possesses" (Smith 2011, 247) and to denote that the divine can be contemplated through this essential asymmetry (Smith 2011, 247). However, despite the appeals of Levinas's phenomenology as fundamentally ethical, religious actors are not particularly disposed to resist the murderous tendencies of chauvinistic politics demarcated along religious and/or ethnic lines. They can, as noted, offer their sanctuaries for the murderous acts and their prayers for the spiritual comfort of those engaged in such acts. Levinas himself failed to recognize the suffering of Palestinians by Zionist policies and actions, illuminating once again the need to examine the question of genocide and religion discursively and through the lenses of decolonization (see Slabodsky 2015, 93–114).

To conclude, comprehending the active participation and/or complicity of religious actors, institutions, and leaders with genocidal episodes requires that we contextualize religion within a broader analysis of nationalism, colonialism, modernity, and biopolitics/necropolitics. The insights from critical genocide studies, therefore, broadens the analysis of religion and genocide beyond the obvious acts of violence as mass killing to a deeper engagement with religion's complicity with discursive violence, including the elimination of religio-cultural diversity through conversion in the context of colonialism and racial imperialism. Understanding religion and resistance to genocide and acute violence illuminates religious actors' appeals to universal ethics, which enable them to see the suffering other as a human deserving life and, through this relationality, engage in ethical resistance to power. Of course, being Christian or Jewish or Muslim or otherwise religious can also be perfectly consistent with engaging with (and celebrating) the acts of enslavement and massacres as ethically sound or at least as requiring the suspension of ordinary ethics for the demands of realpolitik or messianic and apocalyptic scenarios.

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CHAPTER 156

Racial Discrimination

Jonathan Tran

This entry examines racial discrimination. It starts with a paradigmatic case which it then complicates in order to bring out complexities often associated with racial discrimination. After surveying conceptual distinctions surfaced by those complexities, the entry revisits a set of background meta-ethical difficulties related to issues of moral psychology and specifically the concept of intention. Because intention is given such a large role in ethical treatments of racial discrimination and because intention requires for its coherence a full-bodied moral psychology then conceptual clarity in our thinking will continue to elude us, a theoretical reality that reflects (and practically pales in comparison to) the day-to-day realities endured by those dealing with racial discrimination. It is, of course, not only treatments of discrimination that suffer conceptual confusion on this side of a developed moral psychology, but these offer particularly disastrous instances of that confusion. Religion finds a role in this entry through the suggestion that religion is one way moral communities develop psychologies of intention; thence, religious discourse represents at least a source for an important yet missing conceptual feature. Absent these developments, ideas of postracialism will present themselves as our best alternative, and several versions of this will be considered in conclusion.

A Paradigm Case

Let us begin with a paradigm case of racial discrimination. An African American man named Sam applies for a typing job at Typing Services R Us. A white candidate named Ben applies for the same job. Other than the fact that Sam is black and Ben is white, everything else so far as the job is concerned, including typing ability, is equal. The manager, Pat, chooses Ben over Sam just because Ben is white and Sam is black. Most would consider this a clear-cut case of racial discrimination: a situation where a choice, a discrimination, is made based on race, even more so when the manager offers the rationale, "white people make better employees than black people" (see Fryer and Levitt 2003).

In order to get at what is problematic about this case, consider two variations. The first has the manager, due to circumstances, completely unaware of Sam being black and Ben being white. As well, this variation has it that not everything else is equal – Ben scored better than Sam on the company's typing test. Pat chooses Ben and explains, "I chose Ben because all else being equal he types faster than Sam, and I need really fast typists since that's what we do at Typing Services R Us." In this case, the manager

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

chose Ben but as far as we can tell (we will return to this in a moment) the choice, the discrimination, was based on typing speed rather than race. Most would view this variation not only not illicit but properly prudent. This version of events furnishes us with our first distinction, that there is good and bad discrimination; it is the qualifier less than the discrimination as such that matters.

A second variation returns race to a determining role, but with a different end: the manager chooses Sam over Ben *because* Sam is black and Ben is white. Asked about the choice, the manager gives the following rationale: "black people do not have and have never had the opportunities, including typing training, white people have. In making my decision I definitely tried to do something about that." Race again plays a decisive role, but relative to the initial case reversed in terms of choice, consequence, and justification. Some will countenance this use of racial discrimination insofar as it benefits rather than harms African-Americans qua African-Americans. While others would say that there can be no situation where racial discrimination is good (benefits to some come at the cost of harm to others, they will say), at least some would identify this second variation and its attending rationale as one where racial discrimination can be good. Adding to our distinctions, then, we can say that just as there can be good and bad discrimination there can be, at least in some people's minds, good and bad racial discrimination.

To get at one last distinction let us return to the first variation. Recall that in this case Pat is not aware that Sam is black and Ben is white, and thinks the decision has been made simply – "all else being equal" – on the needs of the job, namely typing speed. Similar to the second variation Pat observed, however, there may exist circumstances that disadvantage some, and advantage others, in terms of relevant qualifications. If it is the case that African-Americans as a group are thusly disadvantaged for whatever reason, this would mean that Typing Services R Us and potentially every other industry company will – "all else being equal" – consistently hire white over black candidates: a past and present state of affairs that would, projecting into the future, systematically shut African-Americans out of the industry. Now imagine not just the typing industry but many more besides, and then the ensuing societal consequences for education, housing, health, and so forth. We then face a whole world unconducive to African-American success. Add to this the many other worlds (chattel slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, etc.) that African-Americans have already endured and we begin to see how the word "disadvantage" does not quite capture the severity of things. The phrase "all else being equal" when applied to African-Americans in comparison to whites begins to lose sense, or its sense coheres through willful ignorance (African-American achievement despite all things being *un*equal impresses all the more). Even though none of this resulted from the direct discrimination of the original scenario, by proxy discrimination still occurs for Bob and continues systematically down the line (see Alexander 1992). Another distinction then distinguishes between direct and indirect (proxy) racial discrimination where indirect discrimination is bad similarly to how direct discrimination is bad. Efforts like those articulated by the manager of the second variation are the attempt to affirmatively, rather than passively, repair these conditions through creative modes of redress (Graham 2002).

Our complicated case and its variations have established three important distinctions: good and bad discrimination, racial and non-racial discrimination, and direct and indirect bad racial discrimination. Other distinctions can be drawn, but sticking with these is sufficient to highlight an important point: not all discrimination is bad, and neither is all racial discrimination bad. We have seen how some discrimination is prudent, and we can expand this to say that most discrimination is necessary, natural, and non-racial. Even explicit racial discrimination can be used for good, as in the second variation where the manager sought to level a systemically and historically uneven playing field. None of these, in other

words, is racist unlike the original scenario where Pat did not hire Sam and offered racist reasons. If all that ethically mattered about racial discrimination was straightforward cases like that one then a paradigmatic definition could be issued and judgments rendered accordingly. This would be messy but not especially complicated work. However, the variations significantly complicate things. Now, in the rendering of moral judgments one must take into consideration how just these three distinctions (remember that there can be others) exponentially increase the number of ways a scenario can be morally described (Anscombe 1958a, 1979). Reexamining the first variation through the lens of indirect racial discrimination shows how something with no obvious relation to race turns out obviously racial – the supposedly racially-blind typing test used by Typing Services R Us resulted in sweeping racial consequences for Ben and everyone else down the line.

Consider also the second variation where the manager was aware of broader racial conditions and undertook reparative efforts. In seeking to address those conditions was Pat inadvertently continuing and even exacerbating them? As Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts famously said in rejecting similar affirmative actions, "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race" (551 US 701, 2007). Justice Roberts represents a broadly held view that does not explicitly deny racism's systemic and historic conditions, but only thinks the best way to address those conditions, the best reparative work to be done, is to think beyond racialized terms, to think beyond race. At least on policy matters, this view doubts the possibility of good racial discrimination. Others would respond to this argument by casting it in the same light they would the manager of the first variation, who presumed the possibility of race-neutral typing tests all the while acceding unwittingly to racial conditions.

Before turning to the role of intention in these matters, consider the real-life example of racial profiling routinely used in law enforcement. Here, police use race as part of a repertoire of preemptive measures. Potential crimes are profiled against racial types where an associational logic discriminates amongst possible perpetrators. Examples abound: terrorists tend to look Middle Eastern, ergo ...; serial killers have historically been white males, therefore ...; and so on. Is anything wrong with this kind of racial discrimination? Some have argued that racial profiling is only practically, but not necessarily, wrong, and that under the right conditions the practice can even be good since it protects innocents, and especially so when beneficial for those of the profiled group (Risse 2006; Risse and Zeckhauser 2004). Practically, it can be challenging for police officers to use the tactic without abuse and, practically, it can be tricky for racialized societies to use the tactic without prejudice. But, the argument goes, these are bad applications of an otherwise not necessarily bad tool. Others have responded by arguing that racial profiling is practically wrong *because* it is necessarily wrong; for them, there is no way to racially profile without continuing and exacerbating conditions necessarily entailed in racially conditioned societies (Lever 2005, 2007, 2009, 2017; Lippert-Rasmussen 2006, 2013). There is for our purposes no need to dive into these debates. It enough to bring in racial profiling as a lived example of the complexities revolving around racial discrimination, where its goods and ills have been argued for and against.

The Primacy of (and Trouble with) Intention

The initial case whereby the manager chose Ben over Sam based on race is for most people obviously wrong, and the wrongness is expressed in the rationale "white people make better employees than black people." Conversely, most would not consider wrong the manager's actions in the first variation,

especially because Pat did not know that Sam was black and Ben was white. Yet, there could be, even in that scenario, as already laid out, plausible racial effects. So how are we to think about this?

One significant approach has been to turn to intention: what did Pat intend? Seen in this light Pat in the initial case is culpable insofar as he acted with racist intent. Pat's actions intended to discriminate against Sam using Sam's race as the decisive factor. Treatments of racial discrimination that accordingly base normative judgment on intention and imagine intent as internal to persons (something like a mental state) assume investigatory postures: insofar as racial discriminatory intent is discovered we have a problem. Following that discovery, there may be further investigation into the moral status of that discrimination, as in our second variation; but tellingly, any such further investigation will also have to do with intent, "Is the intent behind this instance of racial discrimination good or bad?" The status of identified intent in this secondary investigation, just like the presence of intent in the first investigation, makes the whole case revolve around intent and intent as internal to persons.

The problem is that there are plenty of cases in which intent cannot be found, at least not as readily as in the paradigm case, and yet something still rightly strikes us as wrong. This was the case in the final scenario about systematic and historical conditions and their institutional effects on Sam and those down the line. If one is committed to intent as the primary consideration and racist intent cannot be discovered one faces several possibilities: there is no moral problem with discrimination in this case; we are working with too narrow a conception of intention; or, intention should not play the role we've assigned it (with the implication that the paradigm case is not so paradigmatic after all).

In an illuminating essay, legal theorist David Strauss examines "discriminatory intent" as the concept through which US courts have historically considered racial discrimination cases (Strauss 1989; see also Strauss 1986, 2013). He arrives at two startling conclusions. First, over the course of its history the American judiciary and specifically the Supreme Court have considered several versions of "racial discrimination" only one of which focused on intention as its guiding doctrine. Others considered things that we would now associate with indirect and institutional racism and its historic and systemic conditions and effects. These other versions included intent, but in those approaches intent is seen as expressive of action, intent as that which makes action intelligent, not something internal to persons and causally prior to action. Once the Supreme Court and thence every lower court settled on the narrow conception of intent as the doctrine by which discrimination was to be understood, all these other considerations became irrelevant. This background history helps us understand Chief Justice John Roberts' aforementioned comment about "stopping discrimination based on race." What seemed naive now makes sense – for Roberts and his colleagues precedent determined that discrimination only be understood the one way (Murakawa and Beckett 2010). The implications of this foundational narrowness would have it that not only is the manager in the initial case wrong (making that case truly paradigmatic) but so is the manager in the second variation so far as he sought racial redress racially.

The second conclusion Strauss draws out is that intention, now the principal doctrine for the judiciary's treatment of racial discrimination, is hopelessly speculative and ultimately incoherent. Let us deal with the incoherence first. According to Strauss, discriminatory intent is premised on a conceptualization of impartiality that proves absurd, mainly for the reason that impartiality, or what is often called colorblindness, can only obtain by ignoring race as a determining social fact of American life. Imagining racial impartiality as a standard and that standard as the starting point for all considerations of racial discrimination is, Strauss shows by analogy, tantamount to asking whether abortion negatively affects pregnant men the same way it negatively affects pregnant women. The absurdity lies in the fact that men

cannot be pregnant and to entertain that possibility, as the basis for law no less, is to ignore a basic fact of life. Likewise, to imagine racial impartiality as a starting point for how we think about racial relations and the role of discrimination in those relations is to ignore a basic fact of life. To be pregnant is to be a woman and to be black in America or to be white in America is to live down the line from chattel slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and so on; we might call this an anatomical fact of the body politic. Discriminatory intent as treated by the courts is premised on a blatant factual error leaving it incoherent as a concept. Every application following will show forth this incoherence.

Now on to the speculative character of intent and the peril of granting it so much weight. We came across this earlier when considering the investigatory posture assumed by internalized and causal formulations of intention. In most cases, individuals are not going to offer rationales of the kind, "white people make better employees than black people" so the search for intent will require further investigation. For instance, even expressed intentions, if the investigation gets that far, require interpretation. This is demonstrated simply by following the comment, "white people make better employees than black people" with the questions, "what might he have meant by that?" or "was that belief as decisive or as representative as we think?" Conceptualizing intention as internal allows it to become mysteriously abstract, leaving it inscrutable, perhaps a reason for its allure as an explanatory concept in cultures that prize individuality. But this leaves us confused when talking about social evils like racism: "Pat didn't really mean that" or "Pat's naiveté is culpably part of the problem." The confusions might not be immediately evident when surveying the word's ordinary and specialized uses. Ordinary people and Supreme Court justices just seem to know what they mean when they speak of intention. But what if one of the big reasons we have so little grasp of the moral significance of racial discrimination, racism, affirmative action, reparations, and racial profiling is because we discuss those things using a concept that has gotten away from us? This would at least offer some explanation for why we continue to wrestle so mightily with these issues. To be clear, the charge here is not about people having *lost* their concepts and therefore *no longer* making sense to one another, with the familiar nostalgic implications (Diamond 1988; Stout 2004). The issue is not that people do not make sense to each other, though certainly some people do not, but rather that they do make sense but the content of that sense is not substantive enough to bear things like serious moral notions. To explain this it helps to revisit some meta-ethical dilemmas.

In the 1950s British philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe presented a paper entitled "Modern Moral Philosophy" (Anscombe 1958b). Part of Anscombe's argument was that moral judgment is severely hampered, perhaps to the point of ruin, by the lack of an established moral psychology. What she meant was that until one had a picture of what human beings *are* it does no good to suppose how human beings *ought to be*, in matters of racial discrimination and whatever else. No moral judgment can work out if it does not stem from a full-bodied picture of what is being judged. Saying whether something is good or bad presumes knowledge of what that thing is supposed to be. It would, for instance, be ridiculous to expect of horses academic essays. Essay writing, academic or not, is not an attribute of those things we call horses. One would, however, be within one's rights to complain that an author's academic submission failed to meet standards, just like one might complain that a horse is too slow, too obstinate, and so forth. Without agreement around what is under consideration normative judgment (normative judgment being judgment under a description of how something normally ought to be) cannot get off the ground (Anscombe 1979).

When Anscombe spoke of the need of moral psychologies what she was after was a picture of what it means for humans to act so that we have a way to assess subsequent human actions. Such a picture

would need to include the various features that make up humanness (i.e. beliefs, desires, intentions, sociality, etc.) and theories of how those features worked in relation to one another. Anscombe herself provided one such account in *Intention*: obtaining what one desires puts one on a path that requires negotiating what one believes about the world in relation to others; intention is found on the surface of action and their retrospective descriptions (Anscombe 2000; Kovesi 1967; Pinches 2002; Ryan 2011). From that picture one gains a sense of what it means to be properly human, enabling judgment of specific actions relative to that picture.

In the absence of this kind of moral reflection, moral judgements will take on other forms, staking matters on things like political or social duty or more likely consequences. Anscombe's historical point was that moral treatment based on consequences, a mode of moral reasoning she described as "consequentialism," has, absent a moral psychology, taken over for how modern societies think about ethics. Part of the reason people were drawn to accounts of morality based on duty or consequence was that no consensus could be reached on the properties of humanness, and coincidentally moralities based on duty and consequence did not require them. Under the guidance of duty or consequence racial discrimination and other issues will be treated through considerations of contractual rights and obligations of citizenship or utilitarian consequentialist calculations of racial policies. Anscombe was not denying that such conversations could be had, but only that they had much to do with morality. If we should want to consider these things morally, we would need to look elsewhere than duty or consequence.

Contemporary considerations of racial discrimination dependent on concepts of intention then proceed without a sufficient sense of their central doctrine. This is a significant lacuna. It puts us in a situation where we know intention is important but do not know why and therefore remain unable to produce much beyond confused and confusing thinking: "Pat didn't really mean that *and* his naiveté is culpably part of the problem." The institutionalized results look something like the sorry history and reasoning pointed out by Strauss. Conceptually, we can understand the Supreme Court's odd thinking on discriminatory intent as the attempt to adapt the language of intention to the philosophical projects of duty and consequences, culminating in a situation where people do not understand their obligations (e.g. sanctimoniously demanding political correctness or angrily rejecting it) and in resignation turn to cost–benefit analyses in order to determine whether the various prescriptions are worth their while; one can predict the results. The legal history is both microcosm and precursor to societal and personal confusions on matters of race, racism, and racial discrimination. It is not simply the fact that these issues go on and on but also that we believe we have found a way forward when in actuality we are stuck. Having committed ourselves to that one way, we continue to face additionally two things: further entrenchment and forfeiture of other options. The point is not only that we need less abstract accounts of intention (see for instance Bratman 1984, 1999) but also that those accounts will only do what we need within broader moral frameworks. In this way our difficulties with treating racial discrimination is epiphenomenal for our difficulties with treating anything at all.

Anscombe is often associated with something called analytical Thomism. Part of what it means to so characterize her is to say that Thomas Aquinas's moral psychology availed for her the kind of moral judgment she found otherwise missing in modern moral philosophy. Of course, it is not only Christianity that subscribes to full-bodied accounts of practical reason as a theoretical basis of normativity. Remember that it was from Muslims that Christians received an Aristotelian philosophy that inscribed the moral life as ends-directed and it was first Islam that prioritized in the moral life practical rather than theoretical

reason. It can be argued that the Judaism from which Christianity came represented a way of getting on in the world that did not have as part of its philosophical infrastructure the speculative aspects of Greek philosophy. Thomas Aquinas's prioritization on human moral psychology returned to the form if not the content of the Judaism at the origins of Christianity. Regardless of how one understands Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in relation to one another (the abrupt history cobbled together here notwithstanding) there can be little doubt that all three religious traditions carry normative accounts of humanness. To be sure, internal and external debates about what counts as human comprise significant parts of their respective discursive histories, but these disputes demonstrate the importance of the matter, how centrally these communities place moral description in the corporate work of normativity (for one rendering of contemporary forms along these lines, see Burrell 1992, 2000, 2014). This is also what is missing in many modern moral treatments of racial discrimination.

The Roman Catholic philosopher Jorge Garcia attempts to follow Anscombe's lead by offering an account of racism that looks at the character of racial discrimination in terms of relational disregard. In his appropriately titled entry, "The Heart of Racism," Garcia argues from a moral psychology of human action whereby a person's respective wants guides that person's behavior; individual desire shapes the heart of one's actions, making it intelligent, and hence is the proper aim of moral assessment (Garcia 1996; see also Garcia 1997, 2001, 2003). In the case of our initial manager, Pat's hiring decision came from a place of disregard for Sam insofar as Sam was black. Against the anticipated objections, Garcia believes that his account can accommodate the historical, systematic, and institutional dimensions of racism which in this view begins as, and leads to, individual disregard. In an astute critique of Garcia's argument, Charles Mills demonstrates how Garcia's argument comes up short. While we cannot get into Mills's whole argument, it is enough to say that Garcia does not provide a robust enough picture of human action to account for the many contours of racism, leaving himself vulnerable to critiques by political theorists like Mills (Mills 2003; see also Faucher and Machery 2009; Shelby 2002). Garcia's account of the racist heart depends on an implausibly autonomous picture of persons. Human mutuality proves too complex to speak of individuals short of the realized conventions, including racial ones, that comprise personhood. In his attempt to establish the role of individual character as important for matters of race, Garcia ends up passing over the crucial roles history, systems, and institutions play in the constitution of one's character (Cavell 1999; Hauerwas 1975; Tran 2017). For our purposes, this limitation proves the rule: Garcia was not wrong for attending to humanness in his treatment of racism and racial discrimination; he simply did not go as far as his intuitions could have taken him (Garcia 1990, 1991, 1995, 1997, 2008, 2011).

The Consolation of Postracialism

In the absence of modes of ethical reflection that can help us think through things like racial discrimination some have taken a different tack: hope for a society where racial discrimination drops out because race no longer matters. This movement is often referred to as post-racialism, but it is not quite correct to refer to *a* movement since there are several versions (see Bantum 2016; Gilroy 2000; Gines 2014; Glaude 2008; Hollinger 2006, 2011; Shelby 2014; Sundstrom 2008; Taylor 2014; Winant 2006, Winters 2016). Consider briefly three and their respective implications for racial discrimination:

1) We have as a society matured to the extent that race no longer plays the deleterious role it once did. Where and if racial discrimination creeps up, it is simply the death cry of a bygone era.
2) As a consequence of intermarriage and immigration race is or will soon no longer be discernable; it may still have meaning, but its meaning will be far different than what it is now. Once races are no longer identifiable, racial discrimination will end.
3) While neither (1) nor (2) is currently the case, they one day will be and we might as well aspire to them. Expanding the spirit of Chief Justice Roberts's words, we should begin to act now as we want to be: the way to stop discriminating on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.

No matter the many and significant differences between the three or their respective plausibility, they are the same in imagining a world where racial discrimination ceases to be. Rather than treating racial discrimination as the significant moral issue that it is, we look to circumvent matters by dropping race out of the equation. Especially if Anscombe is to be believed that we lack the resources to know how to think about racism beyond duty and consequence, we should seek another way. Or so the thinking goes.

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CHAPTER 157

Religious Discrimination

Loren D. Lybarger

Introduction

Religious discrimination is a moral and legal concept as well as a sociological one. Morally and legally, it refers to a class of actions that violate religious freedom conventions and the associated value of tolerance. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance
> (United Nations General Assembly 1948)

This provision expands earlier similar concepts contained, for example, in Article X of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which links freedom of speech and assembly to the prohibition denying the right of the government to pass laws favoring ("establishing") any particular religion or preventing the practice of religion.

The freedom of religion stipulations in the laws of France and the United States drew on an older conception of "toleration" that evolved during and after the Wars of Religion. Beginning with the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and then finally with the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the institution of toleration required the Holy Roman Empire to recognize Lutheranism and Calvinism and the sovereignty of rulers embracing these Protestant movements. It also granted individuals associated with Lutheran, Calvinist, and Roman Catholic Churches the freedom to express their beliefs, practice their religions, and migrate to territories ruled by sovereigns supporting their respective creeds.

Sociologically, religious discrimination refers to boundary-setting practices through which religious traditions and their associated communities, cultic and national, establish a shared identity in relation to perceived distinctions with other, competing religious traditions and communities. In setting boundaries, discrimination practices create status hierarchies. The discriminating group perceives itself as orthodox, enlightened, and thus superior; it perceives the targets as heretical, ignorant, and therefore inferior. For purposes of this entry, "religion" refers to cultural systems that promise salvation in relation to crises in society, the human body, and nature (Riesebrodt 2010). This promise is embedded within first-order practices that presume the existence of superhuman powers and the capacity to communicate

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

with and obtain the assistance of those powers (Riesebrodt 2010). Religious traditions are second-order practices that comment on, delineate, recommend, and defend (against competitors) the first-order practices (Riesebrodt 2010).

Empirically, religious discrimination manifests in two interrelated forms: (1) legal handicaps imposed on specific religions and (2) culturally conditioned prejudice, whether held by a majority population or by a minority group, toward members of other religious communities deemed heretical, "unbelieving," and threatening. Legal handicaps can include "blasphemy" provisions as in Pakistan that serve to protect the status of the official state religion against the claims of competing sects. Pakistan's Constitution guarantees the right of other religions to engage in their practices but a later amendment, the so-called "blasphemy" clause, limits the freedom of these other groups, particularly Ahmadi Muslims, to express and practice their beliefs publicly (see the Second Amendment in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1974). The underlying rationale for the amendment is enforcement of the superior status of specifically Sunnī Islam, the state's established religion, and the declared source of Pakistan's laws.

Legal restrictions can take other, subtle forms. As in Pakistan, Denmark has an officially established religion, Lutheranism. The country does not limit the public expression of other recognized religions through blasphemy laws. It does discriminate, however, through the tax code. A percentage of the national income tax that all Danes pay goes to support the Lutheran Church. Danes also record all births and deaths through an online church-based registry although objections from non-Lutherans have led to the creation of an alternative registration process. No other recognized religion in Denmark receives similar state financial support or performs a similar bureaucratic function (Laegaard 2011).

In explicitly secular states, like the United States, in which the First Amendment to the Constitution bars the official establishment of religion, courts and administrative agencies nevertheless must adjudicate the question of what is and is not a religion. This question arises, for example, in relation to the exemption of religious organizations from federal and state taxation, an exceedingly complex area of law. The Internal Revenue Service can strip a religious organization of its tax exempt status if it determines that the organization, because of the political behavior of its leadership, for example, has become a political lobbying group primarily. The criteria, however, are not entirely straightforward and are often politically contested. In May 2017, in response to pressure from Evangelical supporters, for example, President Donald J. Trump announced guidelines relaxing the Internal Revenue Service's standards for determining the distinction between religious and political activity (Wagner and Bailey 2017).

The second type of religious discrimination, culturally conditioned prejudice, operates beyond the formal legal mechanisms of the state. Such discrimination can function, among other ways, through expectations of endogamy within religious communities. Various groups such as Orthodox Jews, Muslims, and Christians might institute actual prohibitions and exert reinforcing pressure through implicit community expectations or explicit sanctions (e.g. excommunication) against interreligious and even intra-religious marriages. If such marriages occur, often a community will require one or the other partner to renounce his or her prior religious loyalty and convert, thereby maintaining group cohesion.

Religious communities might also identify particular groups as threats and direct violence toward them in cases of extreme discrimination. The goal of violence in these cases is to reimpose status distinctions and hierarchies. Buddhist classifications of non-Buddhists in dehumanized terms – of Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka, for instance – have provided justifications for violence to reinforce Buddhist dominance in a given region (Jerryson 2016; Tambiah 1992). Since September 11, 2001, Muslims have encountered not only increased law enforcement scrutiny but also spiking anti-Muslim sentiment in US society

(Pew Research Center 2017). A majority of white Evangelicals, in particular, believe Muslims do not belong in the United States (Shellnut 2017). Assaults on mosques and individual Muslims have accompanied this broad anti-Muslim sentiment (Kishi 2016). Culturally conditioned prejudice and discriminatory laws typically intertwine: prejudice can provide the inspiration and impetus for legislation handicapping a particular religious group, and such laws can justify and reinforce prejudice in the society and culture at large.

The remainder of this entry describes quantitative research that utilizes the twofold sociological definition just described. This research has sought to document and explain the prevalence, scope, and causes of religious discrimination. Underlying these studies is an implicit concern to understand the phenomenon of religious discrimination so as to strengthen religious freedom provisions. Recently, however, the idea of religious freedom has come under sustained criticism for its putative incoherence, ethnocentrism, and use as ideological justification for violent interventions by the United States and other Western powers in the Middle East and Central Asia. This entry describes and assesses this criticism, concluding that although there are dangers inherent in a notion of religious freedom, the concept nevertheless remains necessary to the prevention of abuses of conscience and to the defense of vulnerable religious minorities.

Measuring the Prevalence of Discrimination

A recent series of quantitative studies has established strong correlations between discriminatory laws and cases of religious discrimination (e.g. Akbaba 2009; Akbaba and Fox 2011; Finke, Martin, and Fox 2017; Fox 2013; Fox, James, and Li 2009; Sarkissian, Fox, and Akbaba 2011). Utilizing the religion and state minorities dataset, the studies analyze a diverse range of cases against various indicators of religious discrimination defined as "state restrictions on the religious practices or institutions of religious minorities that are not placed on the majority religion" (Akbaba and Fox 2011, 454). Their results reveal that no society registers a complete absence of religious discrimination; rather, there exists a spectrum of discriminatory practices and experiences.

In an early study, Akbaba (2009) surveyed 32 countries from North America and Europe to the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia for the period between 1990 and 2004. The study utilized 24 indicators of discrimination, including:

> restrictions on public observance of religious services, festivals and/or holidays, including the Sabbath; restrictions on building, leasing, repairing and/or maintaining places of worship; restrictions on access to places of worship; forced observance of religious laws of another group; restrictions on formal religious organizations; restrictions on the running of religious schools and/or religious education in general.
>
> (Akbaba 2009, 329)

The study found that Western democracies, in which religious freedom guarantees were institutionalized, had significantly lower levels of discrimination compared with societies in other regions in which such provisions were weak or nonexistent. It found, as well, that although religious discrimination in the Middle East and North Africa was relatively high, it did not significantly exceed discrimination on average in Asian regions. Finally, the study found that despite the relatively low averages in Western

societies, rates of discrimination, especially against Muslims, had intensified after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Akbaba and Fox (2011) and Fox (2013) followed up on the Akbaba (2009) findings by analyzing religious discrimination in Christian-majority states in Europe, the former Soviet Bloc, and North America, and Muslim-majority states in the Middle East and North Africa region, respectively. These studies used the same dataset and a similar list of discrimination indicators as Akbaba (2009). Akbaba and Fox (2011) sought to determine, in particular, not only the overall level of discrimination against religious minorities in Christian-majority societies but also whether Muslims in these settings experienced greater discrimination than other religious minorities. The study found that Muslims did not confront proportionately greater discrimination than other minorities. Moreover, the levels of discrimination in Christian-majority countries, with the exception of former Soviet Bloc states, were relatively low compared to non-Christian-majority countries. Fox (2013) focused on Muslim-majority countries. The study found that 45 of the 47 identified minorities – and all of the non-Muslim minorities – encountered religious discrimination. Minority Muslims, for example, Shi'a in majority Sunnī countries, experienced the lowest level of discrimination. Christians contended with higher levels than Muslim minorities. Hindus, Baha'is, Druze, and Buddhists confronted the highest levels of discrimination.

Determining the causes of these varying levels of discrimination remains difficult and susceptible to value judgments. Claims about the "intolerance" and "theocratic nature" of Islam, for example, have too often substituted for empirically grounded analyses. Fox, James, and Li (2009), utilizing the "minorities at risk" dataset, offers an example of an empirical approach: the study demonstrates a strong correlation between "state religious exclusivity" and religious discrimination. State religious exclusivity refers to a situation in which a state has established an "official" religion "to the exclusion of all others." The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which supports Wahhabi Salafism, restricting or repressing other forms of Islam and excluding non-Muslim religions, constitutes an extreme example. State support for a particular religion need not result in religious discrimination, however. Bowen (2010) demonstrates through a comparison of France and Indonesia as limit cases – one country does not establish or privilege any religion (France) while the other makes Islamic scriptural sources a basis of its legislation – that two very different regimes can nevertheless develop similar policies that mitigate religious discrimination. Such policies include extending legal protections and privileges to multiple "recognized religions" and preserving the supremacy of the state's authority over religious texts as the originating point for law.

Alongside structural political variables (e.g. state religious exclusivity), Sarkissian, Fox, and Akbaba (2011) found, as well, that cultural or "ideational" factors appear to explain varying levels of discrimination against minorities within a given society. In Muslim-majority contexts, for example, Hindus, Baha'is, Ahmadis, and Buddhists can experience greater degrees of discrimination than Christians. The reasons for the variance are historical and rooted in religious texts: Islamic religious tradition and political practice have traditionally recognized Christians and other so-called "Peoples of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*) as fellow monotheists, albeit misguided ones, and accordingly have not only tolerated but also granted such groups a certain degree of autonomy to organize their internal affairs in relation to their own religious laws and practices. Hindus and Buddhists have not always received the same level of qualified acceptance. Ahmadis and Baha'is, decried as apostate or heretical movements by authoritative religious bodies, have experienced high degrees of discrimination, formal and informal. The identity of the group thus correlates with the level of religious discrimination directed toward it. Finke, Martin, and Fox (2017) have confirmed and expanded these findings regarding state religious exclusivity and ideational factors.

Examining cases of 500 minority religions globally, they conclude that minority religious communities contend with discrimination when the state perceives them to be competing with the officially sanctioned religion and to be a danger to the cohesion of the wider society. A lack of independent judicial protection also contributes to the probability of discrimination in these instances. The identity of the community, moreover, can mitigate or reinforce the degree of prejudice and persecution.

The Asadian Critique of "Religious Discrimination"

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks and the subsequent US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a group of scholars across a range of fields, including Middle East studies, religious studies, and anthropology, have advanced a trenchant critique of the religious discrimination concept and the associated notion of religious freedom. Taking their cues from the writings of Talal Asad, these scholars have sought to debunk these terms and the underlying notion, rooted in international human rights conventions, of religion as a matter of individual conscience that they share. The criticisms trace the origins of the religious freedom idea to specifically Western discourses of secularity and individual rights and to the formation of the modern state and the corresponding secularizing delimitation of a restricted (privatized) yet always contested religious sphere. They note, moreover, the link between these Western concepts of religion and individual rights and the projection of Western power. The US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – and the accompanying transformation of Islam into a symbol of atavistic religious extremism that threatens democracy and thereby justifies Western military intervention and confirms Western cultural superiority – constitute the prime contemporary examples of this phenomenon.

Among the Asadians, the work of the late Saba Mahmood is most forthright and persuasive in advancing these arguments. In a series of publications, beginning with *Politics of Piety* (2005), she puts forward an unrelenting critique of the supposed Orientalist underpinnings of liberal secularism, especially liberal feminism, and of Western notions of "tolerance" and human rights. In her analyses, Mahmood essentially inverts the object of interrogation and the corresponding trajectory of blame: secular–liberalism and the political order it imposes on the rest of the world, not Islam and Muslims or any other group deemed to contradict secular tolerance, are the true threat to the broad range of human possibilities for human flourishing, including "illiberal" ones that appear arbitrarily to restrict the agency and rights of women.

Mahmood expands these assertions in a subsequent critique of US governmental initiatives to promote a modern reform of Islam compatible with a secular–liberal order in the post-September 11, 2001 period (Mahmood 2006). She begins first by debunking the twin conceits of secularism: that it excludes (or should exclude) religion from the public domain and that it remains neutral with respect to particular religious claims. Following Talal Asad's criticism of French laïcité, she argues that "secularism has sought not so much to banish religion from the public domain but to reshape the form it takes, the subjectivities it endorses, and the epistemological claims it can make" (Mahmood 2006, 326). In doing so, secularism and the secular state operate theologically, determining licit and illicit forms of religious doctrine and practice. Thus, in Mahmood's paraphrase of Asad's point, the "secular liberal state's ongoing regulation of religious life should be understood not so much as an exception to the norm of liberal rule, but rather as an exception in the Schmittian sense: as an exercise of sovereign power" (Mahmood 2006, 327). An example of how the modern secular–liberal state redefines religion is the passage by the US

Congress of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). Signed in 1998, the IRFA justified the expansion of the power of the US government to regulate "religious life on an international scale in the name of enforcing and protecting religious freedoms" (Mahmood 2006, 326). The significance of this law appears through the Asadian lens "as not an abrogation of the doctrine of secularism but its reasonable extension – particularly in light of the fact that the United States has emerged as *the* global power, one aspiring to render its definition of 'the exception' sovereign over the entirety of the geopolitical landscape" (Mahmood 2006, 326).

Another example to which Mahmood points is the George W. Bush administration's "Muslim world outreach" (MWO) project. The MWO, which received initial funding of $1.3 billion, advocated a "reformed" Islam receptive to the conditions and values of a secular democratic order, especially those of moderation and tolerance. The initiative directed its money to:

> training Islamic preachers, establishing Islamic schools that counter the teachings of the now notorious fundamentalist *madrassas*, reforming public school curriculums, and media production (which includes establishing radio and satellite television stations, producing and distributing Islamic talk shows, and generally shaping the content of public religious debate within the existing media in Muslim countries) [with] the aim of ... foster[ing] what is now broadly called "moderate Islam" as an antidote and prophylactic to fundamentalist interpretations of Islam.
>
> (Mahmood 2006, 331)

In the MWO, the secular state takes it upon itself to determine licit (reformed, liberal) and illicit (fundamentalist, illiberal) forms of religion and to actively intervene against the latter in defense of the former and of the secular order into which compatible forms of faith are to be integrated.

In later publications, Mahmood and other scholars sympathetic to Asadian antifoundationalism have deepened and broadened the assault on the religious freedom concept and the secular–liberalism that grounds it. In *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (2015), Mahmood turns the tables on secularist assumptions, arguing on the basis of fieldwork with Egyptian religious minorities that political secularism in Egypt has exacerbated, not solved, the problem of sectarian conflict, prejudice, and inequality in that country. In Sullivan, Hurd, and Mahmood (2015) the critique widens to include topics spanning deconstructive and genealogical analyses of the religious freedom concept as well as diverse empirical case studies from across the globe. Both types of contribution aim to demonstrate the incoherence, contingency, and bad faith of "religious freedom" as a concept and policy, especially in the context of the "neoliberalism" that takes root globally from the 1980s onward. They also seek to show the empirical and causal complexity of actual cases of state repression of, or majoritarian violence against, minority religious communities. Regarding the former point, the incoherence of the concept, the authors observe, "the deployments of religious freedom are multiple and contradictory, at times used to identify the virtuous and condemn the oppressor, other times on behalf of women and minorities, and sometimes to serve narrow sectarian interests of missionaries, governments, and religious authorities" (Sullivan, Fallers, and Mahmood 2015, 9). Multiple parties invoke the concept. What it means remains unclear at best. At worst, it serves to justify secular–liberal interventions that do great violence to societies or groups seen to be in violation of religious freedom norms.

Moreover, the authors point out, the forces at work in apparent situations of religious discrimination are often political and economic in character, not religious. The authors offer Pakistan as an example, "seen by many as a poster child for the urgency of the need for religious liberty" (Sullivan, Hurd, and Mahmood 2015, 3). They acknowledge that "violence against minorities (Ahmadis, Muslims [e.g. the Shi'a], and Christians, in particular) has increased over the past several decades, and intolerance toward dissenters has taken root" (3). The authors claim, however, that "the key historical factors that have produced this climate of intolerance and hatred are political and economic and thus cannot be addressed through religious liberty advocacy alone" (3). President Zia ul-Haq (1978–1988), in a bid to curry Islamist support, curtailed rights for women, minorities, and political opposition forces. Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence, with the quiet support of the United States, moreover, actively cultivated the Taliban as a proxy force in Afghanistan. The authors conclude that "foregrounding religious freedom as *the* key to understanding Pakistan's problems today blinds us to the political and economic pathologies of Pakistan" (emphasis in original, 4).

The Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar bear out similar conclusions. Careful examination reveals racial, ethnic, economic, and political factors at play; sorting which ones are the primary causes is next to impossible (Sullivan, Hurd, and Mahmood 2015). Nevertheless, government, media, and academics persist in claiming the absence of religious freedom is the main reason for the persecution of Rohingya (Sullivan, Hurd, and Mahmood 2015). The insistence plays into the hands of Buddhist majoritarian forces, which also construe matters in religious terms. Emphasizing religion consequently exacerbates rather than ameliorates the Rohingya situation (Sullivan, Hurd, and Mahmood 2015).

The Limits of Asadianism

The Asadian line of critique provides a salutary warning about the ideological and analytical pitfalls of religious freedom and religious discrimination discourse in a period in which the United States, with backing from other Western powers, has pursued a "global war on terror." In its strong form, however, the critique undermines the foundation for defending any notion of universal rights. In *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* (2015) Mahmood exemplifies this problem by ultimately dismissing religious freedom as a dangerous and highly ideological slogan that masks the operations of power. The universal norms that human rights doctrines attempt to establish are, at best, highly relative, adapted, and deployed for a range of contested political projects. At worst, invocations of religious freedom serve to deceive. Sullivan, Hurd, and Mahmood conclude:

> Listening to the deployment of this phrase *religious freedom*, across many contexts and registers, we have come to see it as a deeply ambiguous, even at times intentionally duplicitous, legal standard in domestic and international law, one that is often dependent on parochial anthropological and philosophical understandings of the human and of human society
>
> (emphasis in original, Sullivan, Hurd, and Mahmood 2015, 8)

Not all contributors to *Politics of Religious Freedom* view religious freedom discourse in such dim terms. Laborde, while acknowledging the criticisms, argues nonetheless that the liberal state can expand

what counts as religious faith and commitment and thereby extend conscience protections to a wider range of expressions (Laborde 2015). Still, the overwhelming tendency in the volume is to view religious freedom discourse with great skepticism. Wendy Brown's chapter, the volume's final word on the matter, concludes that, contrary to the conceit of secularism to have achieved a liberation from religious authoritarianism on behalf of individual conscience, what actually has transpired has been to demand submission to an alternative regime of truth. As Brown puts it: "freedom's imbrication with sovereignty means that freedom is always driven and limned by the desire to be governed by the true authority, whether that authority is self, reason, God, family, revolution, rights, or philosophy" (Brown 2015, 332). Essentially, the liberal secular state has substituted one God for another.

> Can state sovereignty itself, whether imitating, joining with, overturning, or displacing that of God, ever fail to invoke divine right or divine succession in its quotidian juridicism as well as in its exceptional words and deeds? Has any state not made its citizens oath-swearers? Has a state ever gone to war without a God on its side? No more than secular subjects, it would seem, can secular states be religiously free.
>
> (Brown 2015, 333)

Brown's point is simple and true: power, if it is to be sustained, requires a normative justification instilled within and accepted by the governed. But not all such justifications for domination are identical. The invocation of natural law as a foundation for a constitutionally delineated set of rights is not the same thing as the invocation of the divine right of kings. The two assertions constitute historically, discursively, and analytically distinct conceptions of authority. To suggest that it all boils down to theology may be a neat polemical flourish but it ultimately confuses matters. Movements like the Moral Majority, radical Jewish religious nationalists, and the Muslim Brotherhood have taken direct aim at secularism, perceiving correctly that it contests and displaces religious justifications for the political order. This is not to deny the point that secular orders do not exclude religion so much as redefine its normative and institutional location: religion may cease to serve as a foundation for law; but the law might nevertheless recognize a distinct sphere for religion. Still, maintaining the analytical distinction between the two normative conceptions is crucial to understanding the specificity of, and potential for conflict between, political projects that invoke one or the other as a foundation.

The relativizing of rights discourse or, worse, the redefinition of it as "theological," has another unfortunate effect: the undermining of any universal foundation to contest oppression, religious or otherwise. Stateless groups, women, and minorities, including religious minorities, have relied on human rights conventions to fight repression. Palestinians, to cite one example, regularly invoke UN resolutions and the Hague Conventions in response to the abuses perpetrated against them by the Israeli state as well as by the Palestinian National Authority and Hamas. The invocation of rights in this context has not been without contradictions: the decades-long military occupation has led to cynicism but also productive critique of the so-called "human rights industry." The critique, however, is indicative of the demand for effective implementation of rights, not for their suspension or abrogation (Allen 2013). Similarly, in Argentina, the campaign to bring to justice the leaders of the military junta that "disappeared" more than 30,000 individuals between 1976 and 1983 has grounded its efforts in human rights. Groups like Las Madres de la Plaza continue to appeal to human rights frameworks in their protests against neoliberal economic policies, the erosion of state-supported social programs, and attempts to minimize the scale of the atrocities during the period of state terror (Lybarger, Damico, and Brudney 2018).

Women, too, especially those contending with regimes that invoke religious justifications for gender inequalities in law, invoke concepts of equality, democracy, and rights in their effort to forge a specifically secular space in which to achieve gender equity. In her critical review of Mahmood's *Politics of Piety*, Selim (2010) notes the dangers inherent in reifying religious milieus as distinct "life worlds" that secularism seeks to "reform" or "liberate" (and thus effectively erase, in Mahmood's view) rather than seeing them as actively constituted political positions engaged in a *Kulturkampf* aiming to restore a religious patriarchal order:

> *daʿwa* [Islamic proselytizing] is not the "natural" expression of an ontological form of Egyptian women's agency grounded in "sentiments ... and sensibilities" that are finally untranslatable in terms of progressive "western" ideals, but an active political movement that explicitly strives to convert – or expel – the other.
>
> (Selim 2010, para. 10)

As a political force, the women's *daʿwa* movement, in its appeal to lower-middle class and working-class women, has "facilitated the steady shrinking of the space in which Egyptian women have historically struggled to achieve full citizenship and equality under the law, whether at home, in the workplace, or on the street" (Selim 2010, para. 10). Selim effectively restores the secular–religious distinction that Mahmood and the Asadians elide (e.g. in their reduction of the secular to the theological). She does so because she perceives correctly that secularism constitutes a distinct political project that contests the premise of countervailing fundamentalist religious conceptions of social order. Selim concludes: "if we were to shift the terms of this conversation from the United States to Egypt, the 'lifeworld' in actual danger of becoming 'extinct or provisional' is that of feminism itself – dissident, secular, and anti-colonial" (Selim 2010, para. 12). The loss of this feminism would be "another great tragedy for Egypt and the region as a whole" (Selim 2010, para. 12).

For all of its contradictions and cynical manipulations, secularism and its attendant conception of universal human rights, including religious freedom, nevertheless provide ground on which to stand in contesting authoritarianism no matter what transcendent value it might claim for itself. Without such a framework, the basis for declaring abuses, including abuses of religious freedom and individual conscience, and mounting interventions to prevent and end such abuses evaporates. To speak of declaring, intervening, and ending risks the potential for the sorts of arrogant, imperialist violence of which the Asadians are so keenly and rightly critical. Yet, doing nothing or insisting that the "real" violence lies elsewhere, with the secular–liberal state, for example, hazards a dereliction of moral and political duty especially toward those most vulnerable to repression and discrimination: racial, ethnic, sexual, class, gender, religious. Not all forms of "intervention" are to be embraced but neither is intervention to be foreclosed on principle. The failure to act can be as morally reprehensible as an action undertaken under false pretenses or one that institutes repression in its own right.

Additionally, with particular regard to religious discrimination, the analytical emphasis on the "theological" hypocrisies of putatively secular power among the skeptics has the ironic and unfortunate result of reinforcing power at the expense of rights. The insistence of the critics of rights discourse that power and not religion is the crux of the matter unwittingly betrays the secularist biases of modern social science as much as it reflects the postcolonialist desire to expose the imperialist pretensions in politics and in the academy: the "true" explanation, as the thinking goes, is not

religion or religious freedom but rather "harder," "more real" power interests. Religious freedom is merely a pretext masking actual material forces. Empirically and methodologically, however, this secularist bias can distort understanding of religious discrimination cases as well as undermine demands to implement religious freedom.

Conclusion

The tendency among the critics to dismiss the concern for religious freedom and religious discrimination as hopelessly ideological and analytically incoherent ignores the findings of the quantitative research described at the outset of this entry. These studies employ a clear definition of religious discrimination and measure its value neutrally in relation to multiple indicators across diverse societies globally. The warnings of the critics are not entirely misplaced, however: situations of religious discrimination invariably entail a range of complicating factors – political, historical, and economic – and there is a need for qualitative studies that probe these intersecting variables. Moreover, the discourse of rights has too frequently furnished justifications for violent interventions whose underlying objectives lie elsewhere, for example, in geopolitical interests. These considerations should spur a refining of definitions and analyses and a reinforcing of conventions, however, not a minimizing or dismissing of religious discrimination. Scholars, human rights activists, and governments have an intellectual, moral, and legal responsibility to address discrimination, religious and otherwise. Religious minorities facing discrimination, moreover, invoke human rights covenants and principles of democratic equality in their calls for support. What should the reaction be? Is a coordinated global response possible in the absence of a universally accepted frame of rights? The complexity of religious discrimination and state manipulation of rights discourse should not lead to abandoning such a universal frame but rather to improving and reinforcing it. A commitment to democratic rights and basic human dignity requires no less.

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CHAPTER 158

Torture

Amy Laura Hall

Introduction

This entry should need only one word. No. Lisa Hajjar begins her essay "Does Torture Work? A Sociolegal Assessment of the Practice in Historical and Global Perspective" by stating, "If an article addressing the question 'does torture work?' had been solicited for the *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* a decade ago, it would have seemed as anomalous as an article entitled 'does genocide work?'" (Hajjar 2009). More words are necessary. The 2008 guide to jurisprudence offered by the Association for the Prevention of Torture and the Center for Justice and International Law defines torture as including the following elements: physical pain, a person inflicting or ordering another person to inflict pain and, that this person is hoping to gain information related to the aims of someone who has something to gain related to the family, state, or nation involved (Hajjar 2009). Every form of accepted international law, from the United Nations to the European Union to the Geneva Convention, and every recognized world religion prohibits causing pain in order to secure truthful words from someone who is afraid for their own life or the lives of people they care about. Torture is both immoral and, according to even the most basic of definitions regarding "truth," ineffective. So, again, why would not an encyclopedia article on "Torture" for an Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics need more than one word?

In "Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation," Joel Marcus presents a question in interpreting the use, during the Greco-Roman era, of prolonged, spectacularly public executions on elevated, crosswise structures. Why? There were speedier ways to kill someone. What work was the cross doing for the authorities of that era? He explains, "in the ancient Greco-Roman context, the idea of bringing a person down by raising him up must still have struck people as incongruous, and presumably those responsible for the practice would have been cognizant of this irony" (Marcus 2006). The "human object lesson" that was crucifixion "gained maximum visibility and hence optimal deterrent power." Marcus writes "this strangely 'exalting' mode of execution was designed to mimic, parody, and puncture the pretensions of insubordinate transgressors by displaying a deliberately horrible mirror of their self-elevation." He continues, "people of any class who had not shown proper deference to the emperor," people who "demonstrated disdain for imperial rule," were particularly subject to this form of torture. "The graphic tableau of the cross" is, Marcus argues, "a prime illustration of Michel Foucault's thesis that the process of execution is a 'penal liturgy' designed to reveal the essence of the crime" (Marcus 2006, 79).

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

In *Fear: The History of a Political Idea*, intellectual historian Corey Robin enumerates different uses of fear as a means of control. Specifically, Robin is interested in "political fear," by which he means "a people's felt apprehension of some harm to their collective well-being . . ." (Robin 2004, 3). He links different ways that political fear works, and his analysis is helpful for thinking about how torture works politically. Robin explains that "political fear," while "often associated with government acts," is not unrelated to "the fear a woman has of her abusive husband, or the worker of her unkind employer." Although by some accounts "these fears" are merely "personal, the product of an unfortunate but entirely private derangement of power," Robin continues, "they are political . . . [and] spring from pervasive social inequities." These established rules of order are, in turn, sustained by fear. Fear "sustain[s] long traditions of rule over women and workers" (Robin 2004, 3).

Robin explains that, during times of war, the form of fear used most obviously is to present "public objects of apprehension and concern" (Robin 2004, 18). The effort to normalize torture in the United States, and, to some extent, in other countries participating in the ongoing "war against terror" has involved depicting Muslim people as "public objects of apprehension and concern." There has been another, related, political use of fear – a fear that "hover[s] quietly about the relationships between the powerful and the powerless, subtly influencing everyday conduct without requiring much in the way of active intimidation" (Robin 2004, 19). Linking Marcus's insight about the use of crucifixion as a "display" or "liturgy" to warn against insubordination to state power, torture may "work" to, as Hajjar words it, "deter opposition and signal the costs of resistance." Hajjar quotes Henry Shue's 2004 essay on torture, noting that the purpose of torture may be "intimidation of persons other than the victim." She continues, summarizing other essays on "modern torture regimes": "Terroristic torture is an invisible spectacle because people are made fearful of torture that they know is occurring but do not actually see" (Hajjar 2009, 323). Torture, as a spectacle, as a possibility, as a hidden but known reality, may be used as part of a complex of social control.

Logistics of Torture

In a February 2016 essay for the *New York Review of Books* entitled "The Psychologists Take Power," Tamsin Shaw follows up on an independent report issued in July 2015 after an investigation "into the collusion of APA [American Psychological Association] officials with the [U.S.] Department of Defense and the CIA to support torture." Shaw's essay is one resource for understanding that the "enhancement" involved in "enhanced interrogation techniques" involves an assessment of how best to dismember another human being's psyche or, as some religious ethicists would say, how most effectively to destroy a person's soul. As the US mainstream media continued to use the term "enhanced" when describing what was and is defined by international law as torture, the story Shaw covers is vital to the logistics of torture. She explains: that, by way of the July 2015 report, "we learn that following the attacks of September 11, in December 2001 the APA adopted an emergency 'Resolution on Terrorism' to encourage collaborations that would help psychologists fight terrorism." This effort was, Shaw suggests, part of what passed for common sense at the time, as different professional organizations in the United States attempted to prove themselves useful. She continues, "The APA resolution resulted in a meeting, in December 2001, at the home of Martin Seligman of 'an international group of sixteen distinguished professors and intelligence personnel' to discuss responses to Islamic extremism." This was not a niche

gathering; "Stephen Band, the chief of the Behavioral Science Unit at the FBI, later reported that 'Seligman's 'gathering' produced an extraordinary document that is being channeled on high (very high).'"

Shaw notes that, according to documents related to the 2015 APA report and the 2014 "Report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program," officials designated early on to determine whether "enhanced" forms of interrogation would yield information related to national security judged the "enhancement" recommended by Martin Seligman's team of psychologists to be completely useless, again prompting the question "why?" Quoting Shaw's summary here: "many techniques were tried . . . including sleep deprivation, keeping [Abu Zubaydah] in a freezing room and waterboarding him eighty-three times, to the point that he was hysterical, vomiting, and ultimately 'completely unresponsive, with bubbles rising through his open, full mouth." If torture does not "work," then what work was torture doing at this time?

Given that torture does not "work" to procure intelligence, why have people working under the direction of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States tortured people? To put the question crudely, what "work" does torture do? What "work" has been wrought by torture in the last two decades? This encyclopedia entry – this set of words containing information about torture – comes from a location central to one agency's pursuit of intelligence. The applicable definition of "encyclopedia" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is as follows: "A literary work containing extensive information on all branches of knowledge, usually arranged in alphabetical order." This entry on torture comes from the vantage point of North Carolina in 2019. The North Carolina Commission on the Inquiry of Torture issued a report in September, 2018: "Torture Flights: North Carolina's Role in the CIA Rendition and Torture Program." The commission included legal scholars, clergy, veterans, and physicians working together to document how and why Johnston County Airport in Smithfield, North Carolina was used as a launching site as part of the United States Rendition, Detention, and Interrogation program. North Carolina was involved in trafficking people by air to places where people were assigned the task of torturing other people in the presence of other people tasked with recording words.

In his "Foreword" to the report, Alberto Mora, Former General Counsel (2001–2006), Department of the US Navy identifies the basics. He explains that the "connection between North Carolina and the government-sponsored torture of the era is clear: aircraft operated by at least one local company, based at North Carolina airfields that were subsidized by North Carolina revenues and subject to a measure of North Carolina regulation, and flown by North Carolina pilots, were engaged in the transport of dozens of captive individuals to multiple foreign sites, some managed by US officials, others by foreign governments, to be tortured" (Read 2018, 4). This 2018 report was part of an ongoing effort by citizen groups across the United States to document US sponsored torture. There was a saying about the Italian government under Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini. Tourists were said to have noted that Mussolini "made the trains run on time." In their report, the North Carolina Commission documents how North Carolina made the rendition planes run on time.

Linguistics of Torture

In the United States, the word "torture" has become diluted in the cultural lexicon. This entry is written from a state that functions as a hub of the US military and of defense contracting to institutions of higher education. The author is interested in the dilution of the word and legal definition. To write accurately

about torture for this lexicon requires that the author ask the reader first to note how accustomed most readers in the United States have become to use of the word casually in polite company. The word "torture" has been used as a joke. As in, "this is torture!" People in the United States hear this word used in gridlocked traffic, while someone is trying on a swimsuit in front of a department store mirror, to describe a badly written song on the radio. The word "torture" has, through common parlance and also through film and television, become something rhetorically other than what it is, technically. Actual torture has also been diluted, visually, through the use of images on a screen.

Torture has been used repeatedly since September 11, 2001 in Western, popular culture, to entertain, to warn, and to frighten – from *Game of Thrones* to *24* to *Homeland* to complicated, story-driven video games. Actual people have been tortured as "human object lessons," to use Marcus's phrase, with originally limited, targeted viewing. And, at the same time, fictionalized depictions of torture have reached a wide, general audience. As recently as April, 2019, John Powers, a television critic for National Public Radio, summarized the popularity of *Game of Thrones* as "the world's most popular show" at that time. Powers noted that "journalists are even writing elegiac articles about how, given our fragmented media environment, *Game of Thrones* may be the last TV series that everyone watches at the same time in order to be part of the conversation" (Powers 2019). While some journalists have been attempting for almost two decades to draw attention to a systemic, carefully orchestrated system of actual torture, watching (and commenting adroitly on) television series that depict torture has become a civic ritual, even a responsibility to be "part of the conversation."

Seventeen years prior, in an essay for *The Christian Science Monitor*, Gregory M. Lamb noted the precipitous increase in television violence after September 11, 2001: "So much for media critics' expectations that grisly fictional violence on TV would abate after the sobering events of September 11. Scenes of torture and sadism appeared on network entertainment TV at a rate nearly double that over the previous two years" (Lamb 2002). Lamb also named in particular a Parents Television Council (PTC) study that reported, in 2008, the show *24* was depicting procedural torture as commonplace: "A Parents Television Council review found that *24* showed 67 scenes of torture in the first five seasons. [The main character of *24*] Jack Bauer has been involved in more than 160 separate instances of violence since the show began (all six seasons) and has killed at least 71 individuals" (Lamb 2002). Other television programming was keeping up: "there were 110 scenes of torture on prime-time broadcast programming from 1995 to 2001. From 2002 to 2005, the number increased to 624 scenes of torture. Data from 2006 to 2007 showed that there were 212 scenes of torture" (Lamb 2002).

Bush and Cheney administration officials were open about their appreciation and emulation of the show *24*. In a succinct, 2008 review of two (then recent) books on torture – Jane Mayer's *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned Into a War on American Ideals* and Philippe Sands's *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values* – journalist Dahlia Lithwick begins by noting, "The lawyers designing [the Central Intelligence Agency's] interrogation techniques cited Jack Bauer more frequently than the Constitution" (Lithwick 2008). She continues, "according to British lawyer and writer [Philippe] Sands, Jack Bauer – played by Kiefer Sutherland – was an inspiration at early 'brainstorming meetings' of military officials at Guantanamo in September 2002." Lithwick explains that "Diane Beaver, the staff judge advocate general who gave legal approval to 18 controversial interrogation techniques including waterboarding, sexual humiliation and terrorizing prisoners with dogs, told Sands that Bauer 'gave people lots of ideas.'" Quoting Michael Chertoff, the Homeland Security chief, in his words to the Heritage Foundation about the show, it "reflects real life." Lithwick continues:

"Even Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, speaking in Canada last summer, shows a gift for this casual toggling between television and the Constitution. 'Jack Bauer saved Los Angeles – He saved hundreds of thousands of lives,' Scalia said. 'Are you going to convict Jack Bauer?'" Lithwick concludes "The problem is not just that they all saw themselves in Jack Bauer. The problem was their failure to see what Bauer really represents within the legal universe of *24*."

Jane Mayer, the author of *The Dark Side* (one of the books reviewed by Lithwick) summarized the legal universe created by the show *24* in a 2007 essay for *The New Yorker*: "Each season of *24* . . . depicts a single, panic-laced day in which Jack Bauer . . . must unravel and undermine a conspiracy that imperils the nation" (Mayer 2007). She continues: "Terrorists are poised to set off nuclear bombs or bioweapons, or in some other way annihilate entire cities. The twisting story line forces Bauer and his colleagues to make a series of grim choices that pit liberty against security." Mayer concludes that the show hinges on the choice, "invariably" for "coercion," as, "[w]ith unnerving efficiency, suspects are beaten, suffocated, electrocuted, drugged, assaulted with knives, or more exotically abused." And, "almost without fail, these suspects divulge critical secrets."

This "unnerving efficiency," with which "suspects divulge critical secrets" is not only unnerving but in direct contradiction to the facts about gathering "intelligence" through torture. Lisa Hajjar draws on historical scholarship on torture in Europe to explain "its basic flaw was recognized since the Roman era: What it proves is the individual's capacity to endure pain rather than the veracity of the statements elicited." Hajjar quotes J. H. Langbein's 1978 essay for the *University of Chicago Law Review*, "Torture and plea bargaining," "Judicial torture survived the centuries not because its defects had been concealed, but in spite of their having been long revealed" (Hajjar 2009, 319). The visual loop of torture continues to be part of the concealing of both basic, logistical truth and a longstanding, principled, moral consensus unequivocally against torture.

In a 2005 *New York Times* essay "Normalizing Torture on '24,' " Adam Green notes a pattern that links different ways fear works politically-socially with how torture works politically-socially. Torture is, by one sociolegal universe, not only necessary to procure "intelligence" but creates ligaments to connect people in a social body. Suffering torture becomes a macabre form of bond. This is another way that torture has "worked" politically in the United States. Green's narrative summary is necessary to understand the perhaps counter-intuitive claim that torture has worked to *domesticate* torture.

> What is most striking about torture on *24* is how it affects not only politics but also emotional and professional relationships. The C.T.U. data technician Sarah Gavin, interrogated with tasers to discover if she were a terrorist mole, subsequently returns to work showing no signs of trauma. Indeed, she marshals the clarity of mind to renegotiate her terms of employment with her superior, who approved her interrogation just hours earlier. The war-protester son of Secretary of Defense Heller, more alienated than ever after a session of sensory deprivation in a C.T.U. holding room, receives a strikingly paternal lecture from his father about why that treatment was appropriate. Even Audrey's husband, Paul, somehow rises above his grievance to view his erstwhile tormentor as a buddy, helping Jack extract documents from a defense contractor and fend off attack – and even loyally taking a bullet for him. In all of these interactions, torture doesn't deaden the feelings between people, rather it deepens them. ... It is often noted that torture goes against the tenets of human community in two fundamental ways. Because torturers deny the basic humanity of their victims, it's a violation of the norms governing everyday society. At the same time, torture constitutes society's ultimate

> perversion, shaking or breaking its victims' faith in humanity by turning their bodies and their deepest commitments – political or spiritual belief, love of family – against them to produce pain and fear. In the counterterrorist world of *24*, though, torture represents not the breakdown of a just society, but the turning point – at times even the starting point – for social relations. Through this artistic sleight of hand, the show makes torture appear normal. (Green 2005)

Note that the creators of *Game of Thrones* elicited what Terri Gross called (approvingly) "a huge and fanatical international fan base" by way of repeated scenes of rape, graphic violence, and prolonged sequences of human beings torturing human beings. The title of that review was "*Game Of Thrones* Keeps Its Finger On The Pulse," a phrase that warrants another question: What are the characteristics of a social body that has been trained to pulsate in this particular way (Powers 2019)?

Torture is "Funny!"

"The Good Place" (2016–the present) is a television series produced in the United States specifically and explicitly about morality. The show has as its core conceit a universe in which the main characters are set up to be tortured for eternity by their proximity with one another. The show's creator, Michael Schur, has explained his aim for *The Good Place* is to bring moral philosophy to a mainstream, television audience. Schur has literarily made torture a laughing matter. To quote the title of a *Vanity Fair* article: "*The Good Place* Makes Eternal, Hellish Torture So Hilarious." Schur explains: "We've always tried to keep it sort of cartoon-y and silly, because what is actually happening is obviously awful for everyone." He elaborates thus: "I have a 9-year-old son, and part of my thinking whenever we do something about how someone is being tortured is, 'Would my 9-year-old son laugh at this?' That's the sort of target audience for that kind of joke is, a 9-year-old boy . . . I've gamed it out in my head" (Bradley 2017). One possible reading of the series is that it upends the logic of suffering in shows like *24* and *Game of Thrones*, depicting visually an alternative form of living together toward mutual flourishing. This fact of an era remains. During the same two decades when the United States might have been, under different circumstances, engaged in a United Nations investigation about US sponsored torture, popular culture made "torture" a household word.

There are counterexamples. Yasiin Bey underwent the standard procedures for forcibly feeding a person imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay in 2013. Bey, known professionally in his career as a musician by the name Mos Def, underwent these procedures as part of a documentary directed by Asif Kapadia, in coordination with Reprieve, a human rights organization based in London, in an effort to bring awareness of the ongoing conditions at the US military prison at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In describing the effort, the *Guardian* notes, "in its fight against human rights abuses there is no substitute for the court of public opinion" (Ferguson 2013).

"Real Patriots"

The actual facts of whether torture "works" to elicit intelligence have been established since the Greco-Roman era. Regardless of the court of public opinion, the courts of ethics have been clear about the morality of torture for decades. This is what must strike a reader at present. The United Nations Convention

against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was established in 1984 and, from the outset, in Part I, Article 1 of its founding resolution, it defines torture as:

> . . . any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions. (United Nations 1984)

There are multiple practices covered by this definition: prolonged and repeated pouring water into a human being's face so that he or she feels as if they are drowning; forcing prolonged confinement in a small space alone, without even intermittent contact with another human being; putting another human being, while naked, into a freezing cold space, causing hypothermia; shocking another human being, while naked, on their genitalia; and forcing water into another human being's anus. This is not an exhaustive list. These were some of the practices encouraged under the auspices of the US Central Intelligence Agency after September 11, 2001. These practices are not allowed under US law and are explicitly disallowed under international law, including prohibitions established through the Geneva Conventions following World War II.

People working with and in the US have been assigned the role of torturer; people have been assigned the role of assigning the role of torturer; people have assigned the roles of these practices, determining who is best suited to which role. And people have been assigned the role of popularizing the necessity of these practices. There have been organizations and working groups of psychologists, filmmakers, musicians, clergy and scholarly writers charged with the work of determining how to implement the "deterrent power" of torture in the United States and abroad (to use Joel Marcus's phrase again). To paraphrase General Dwight D. Eisenhower in his departing speech, torturing other human beings became, after September 11, 2001, an industrial complex. Again, when threatened with torture, most human beings will respond with an answer that the executioner of such pain seems to be eliciting. But torture may "work" in that it may spread fear across a region, a nation-state, a village, or a family.

Scott Horton is an investigative journalist who has written extensively on US sponsored torture. In his 2015 essay for *Harper's Magazine*, "Company Men: Torture, treachery, and the CIA," Horton writes that when "the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released its torture report – or, more accurately, a redaction-studded version of the report's executive summary . . . [the authors] avoided the tepid style of most congressional prose, opting instead for a clinical, precise, and engaging narrative that patiently unfolds one of the most dysfunctional and embarrassing episodes in the history of American spycraft." Horton contrasts the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's narration with a story that was much more popularly regarded as truthful, a 2012 movie directed by Kathryn Bigelow, starring Jessica Chastain as a CIA operative serving on a team to use supposed intelligence to carry out the execution of Osama bin Laden. The Senate report "makes for an instructive comparison with *Zero Dark Thirty*, which was written and produced with the CIA's secret backing. The film tells the story of post-9/11 intelligence in the way Langley [a metonym for the Central Intelligence Agency] would like to have it told. But the Senate report unmasks the film as sheer fiction." The report "has the distinct advantage of being true."

This course of events was not inevitable. It was possible that the United States could have embarked on a thorough, public reckoning with the facts eventually highlighted by the (partial) publication of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's report in 2014. But there were new "objects of apprehension and concern" (to use Robin's phrase) in the form of "ISIS" (the Islamic State) and November elections for members of the US Congress. During an August, 2014 press briefing, Barack Obama, then in the middle of his second term as President of the United States, responded to a question about the Senate report by referring to people involved in the practice of torture as "real patriots," conceding that, although "we tortured some folks," and that torture is "contrary to our values," the acceptance of torture as a necessity is ethically conceivable. To quote from that briefing, President Obama explained, "I understand why it happened. I think it's important when we look back to recall how afraid people were after the Twin Towers fell and the Pentagon had been hit and the plane in Pennsylvania had fallen, and people did not know whether more attacks were imminent, and there was enormous pressure on our law enforcement and our national security teams to try to deal with this." He continued, "it's important for us not to feel too sanctimonious in retrospect about the tough job that those folks had. And a lot of those folks were working hard under enormous pressure and are real patriots" (Kludt 2014). His wording encourages empathy not only for the enlisted men and women expected to carry out torture, but for the people above them in the hierarchy who created the moral and legal architecture that made torture seem plausible.

In order better to understand the court of public opinion created at that time, and thus President Obama's own political options, it is helpful to note two images from a media source distributed widely in the United States in 2014. The line running underneath the address label for *The Week* was, in 2014, "ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS" (Capitalization in the original, 2014). In September of 2014, the two editions serving as parentheses around September 11, 2014 featured images about "ISIS." In the September 5, 2014 edition, the highlighted article was "Back on the Job: Obama's decision to respond to ISIS's challenge," with a political cartoon on the cover featuring Barack Obama, looking directly at a badge that would be known to most readers in the United States as a sheriff's badge from the "Western" classic *High Noon*. That storyline asks a basic question about a man's willingness to engage in a showdown against a murdering gang. In this case, the object of "apprehension and concern" is personified by a caricature of another man with brown skin, with a beard and a turban. The badge is engraved with the word "SHERIFF" and "OF THE WORLD." *The Week* also announced "The Best of the U.S. and International Media" on September 12, 2014, with a related image, of two young men looking at the image of a poster featuring a Muslim imam pointing, in a style referencing the Uncle Sam military recruitment poster from the United States in World War I and II, with the words "I WANT YOU" across the bottom. Two young men with brown skin are looking up at the poster. One young man has on an athletic jersey and is holding a basketball. To the side of the drawing is another brown-skinned young man with an athletic jersey, walking away from a basketball court and toward the poster. The racial dynamics are not subtle. Would the first African-American President of the United States be up to the task of performing as Sheriff of the World, or, as the second image implies, would he be on the side of the three other brown-skinned young men, "Joining the jihad" (Kludt 2014).

Postscript

Joel Marcus writes in his essay on crucifixion: "The greater the insolence, the higher the cross; the proper response to excessive haughtiness was, in the words of the Clint Eastwood film, to 'Hang 'Em High!'" If the work of torture in the years after September 11, 2001 was in part to strike fear and deter haughtiness,

and if the work of torture on television was in part to dull the sense that torture is neither moral nor normal, then it is my hope, as a citizen and a scholar in religious ethics that people will summon defiance and clarity. At a 2011 conference held in Durham, North Carolina, "Toward a Moral Consensus Against Torture," Scott Horton named as a possible, very unintended consequence of the US program in torture the acceleration of resistance that came to be known as the "Arab Spring." With the 2004 publication of images of US coordinated torture of human beings at the Abu Ghraib prison, Horton proposed, people suffering under dictatorships in the region gathered courage to resist regimes held up through a combination of foreign (often US) aid and torture. This possibility, that, contrary to American grand strategy, the exposure of actual torture may have elicited such courage helps this author to continue her pursuit of our common discipline.

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CHAPTER 159

War and Non-State Group Violence

H. David Baer

Armed conflicts between states and non-state organized armed groups raise a distinctive set of moral issues which have assumed greater saliency since September 11, 2001. The so-called war on terror, which many understand to be a worldwide armed conflict against non-state organized armed groups, has challenged existing moral and legal frameworks for thinking through the ethics of war, producing important refinements to the international law of armed conflict while also generating significant debate. These debates center on concerns about how correctly to interpret and apply the rule of distinction. Insofar as the resolution of these debates depends also on *ius ad bellum* determinations, the debate over distinction in non-state conflicts raises broader questions about the ethics of war.

Religious ethicists generally consider issues of war from within the framework of just war theory. Just war theory distinguishes between *ius ad bellum* questions, which concern the conditions under which a state may rightly go to war, and *ius in bello* questions, which concern the proper use of force within the conduct of war. Central to *ius in bello* is the principle of discrimination, which stipulates broadly that armed force should be directed only against an enemy's counterforces. This broad principle of discrimination is closely related to the much more determinate rule of distinction known to international humanitarian law. The rule of distinction, laid out clearly in Article 48 of *Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions*, requires, among other things, that parties distinguish in the conduct of hostilities between combatants and civilians.

Combatants, Civilians, the Rule of Distinction

Combatants and civilians hold different status and enjoy different protections. According to international law, combatants representing a state party to a conflict have a right to participate in hostilities. They enjoy what is sometimes called the "combatant's privilege," which means they are permitted to kill in war. If captured, *privileged combatants* are entitled to the protections afforded prisoners of war in the Third Geneva Convention. The corollary of the combatant's privilege is lethal liability. By virtue of their status as active members of the armed forces of a state party to a conflict, privileged combatants are legitimate targets of attack, and remain such for the duration of the war.

By contrast, civilians are legally immune from attack; they cannot be targeted. This immunity is corollary of the fact that civilians do not participate in hostilities. Civilians who choose to participate in

Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics 3 Volume Set, First Edition. Edited by William Schweiker.

hostilities forfeit their immunity from attack. That does not mean, however, that they gain combatant's privilege. Rather civilians who become fighters are frequently described as *underprivileged combatants*.

As the name suggests, underprivileged combatants enjoy fewer protections than privileged combatants under international law. Members of an organized armed group fighting on behalf of a state party to an armed conflict (e.g. partisans) as well as civilians rising up spontaneously in a *levée en masse* are entitled to prisoner of war status if captured, provided they keep the rules of war. To this extent they enjoy some of the combatant's privilege. These exceptions aside, however, all other underprivileged combatants can be punished for acts of war they commit as combatants in accordance with domestic law. They are also legitimate objects of attack, although the extent to which they can be considered targets has become an open question.

The laws of war have been widely understood to stipulate that underprivileged combatants remain legitimate targets only so long as they are directly participating in hostilities. *Direct participation in hostilities* is a legal concept rooted in the language of *Additional Protocol I*. The meaning of the concept has become the focus of considerable debate since 2009, when the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC 2008) adopted an *Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under International Humanitarian Law*. According to the *Interpretative Guidance* direct participation is constituted by acts which: (1) meet a necessary threshold of harm, (2) are part of the direct causal chain which produces the harm, and (3) are carried out within a belligerent nexus; that is, they are acts intended to support a party to the conflict. Civilians lose their immunity from military attack while they are participating in hostilities directly, but regain that immunity as soon as they cease from direct participation.

Underprivileged and privileged combatants are therefore identified differently. Privileged combatants are identified by *status*, that is, by their *membership* in the armed forces of a belligerent state. They retain their combatant status regardless of whether or not at a given moment they are directly participating in hostilities. This makes them permanent combatants for the duration of the war. By contrast, underprivileged combatants are identified by their *activity* or *function*, that is, by their direct *participation* in hostilities. They assume combatant status only so long as they participate in hostilities. This makes them temporary combatants.

The functional definition of underprivileged combatancy has been criticized by some, who allege it gives irregular combatants an unfair advantage fighting against privileged combatants. According to critics, the functional definition creates a "revolving door," whereby individuals can adopt the role of combatant at the moment of attack while benefiting from civilian protections at all other times. This problem, according to critics, is only compounded when fighting terrorism. Most of the time terrorists are not directly participating in hostilities, even as they plan their attacks and design their weapons. If we define terrorists as combatants only when they commit an attack, say the critics, we grant them a civilian immunity they do not deserve.

Responding to the force of these criticisms, legal scholars have started to develop a concept called *continuous combat function*. The ICRC's *Interpretive Guidance* proposed that irregular combatants assume a continuous combat function when they become members of the organized armed group of a non-state party. As long as such fighters retain their continuous combat function, they remain legitimate objects of attack. Judged by this standard, individuals belonging to terrorist organizations could be considered underprivileged combatants even when they are not actively engaged in an attack. The concept of continuous combat function might thus be construed as broadening the notion of direct participation. Individuals with a continuous combat function are continuing to participate in hostilities even when not immediately engaged in an attack.

Nevertheless, difficulties with the definition of underprivileged combatant remain. One cannot tell for certain whether fighters with a continuous combat function are being identified by virtue of function or status. The *Interpretive Guidance* offers the concept as part of its interpretation of direct participation in hostilities, which suggests the concept is related to activity. Presumably, individuals with a continuous combat function are *participating* in hostilities continuously. At the same time, individuals are identified as having a continuous combat function by virtue of their *membership* in an organized armed group. This suggests they possess a *status*, analogous to the status of combatants belonging to the armed forces of a state. Moreover, insofar as certain combatants are being identified on the basis of their membership in an organized armed group, one might wonder whether the notion of continuous combat function is performing any real conceptual work.

Religious ethicists and just war theorists have not considered questions concerning the definition of combatants at the level of detail found within the legal community. The just war principle of discrimination, however, would not appear to warrant, at least at first glance, a sharp demarcation between regular combatants and organized irregulars. Insofar as underprivileged combatants represent armed counterforce, they are military targets for the same reason as are privileged combatants. Although civilians who temporarily and spontaneously take part in hostilities reasonably regain their immunity from attack once they put down arms, the principle of discrimination itself seems to suggest that we ought to distinguish civilians who temporarily participate in hostilities from those irregulars who, by joining an organized armed group, assume a role in an ongoing conflict analogous to that held by the members of a regular armed force. The term continuous combat function interpreted in light of the just war principle of discrimination might, therefore, be understood as a placeholder for a set of criteria which are to be applied when attempting to determine whether an individual has joined an organized armed group. Whether international humanitarian law understands the term this way, however, is uncertain.

Even if continuous combat function is understood as a placeholder for criteria of membership, the criteria themselves are unclear and contested. International jurists disagree about whether to construe the criteria narrowly or broadly; that is, they disagree about how intimately involved with an organization an individual must be before taking on a continuous combat function. Must an individual be actively involved in the direct causal chain leading to a terrorist attack to have a continuous combat function; or does providing general support and resources, such as financing and shelter, count as membership in an organized terrorist group?

Targeted Killing

Targeted killing has emerged in recent decades as a central tactic in the so-called war on terror. Although the definition of targeted killing is not completely settled, it can be characterized as the premeditated, intentional killing of individually selected persons who are not in the physical custody of the party targeting them. Often targeted killings are carried out by unmanned drones or missiles, which can strike far from the field of battle. Critics allege that such killings amount to extrajudicial execution, whereas defenders claim the persons being targeted are members of organized armed groups with a continuous combat function. A crucial and contested issue, therefore, concerns whether targeted killings are properly evaluated within a law enforcement paradigm or according to the laws of war.

No serious debate exists over whether targeted killing is permitted in international armed conflicts between states. Such killings have clear precedent, including the oft cited case of Admiral Yamamoto

Isoroku, a commander of the Japanese navy whose airplane was deliberately shot down by US forces in World War II. Although Admiral Isoroku was specifically selected as a target ahead of time, no one disputes that targeting him conformed to the rule of distinction and the laws of war.

However, targeted killing today is most frequently directed against non-state actors, in particular, suspected terrorists. The contemporary controversy, therefore, concerns whether or not the so-called war on terror can be considered an armed conflict.

The laws of war distinguish between international and non-international armed conflicts. International conflicts, by definition, are conflicts between states. Non-international conflicts take place between a state and a non-state actor. Many legal scholars argue that non-international conflicts are also territorially circumscribed. By definition, they say, non-international conflicts occur within the territorial boundaries of a state. Although, in their view, targeted killing as an act of war is permitted in non-international conflicts, it is only permitted in non-international conflicts that are properly defined. For example, members of al-Qaeda engaged in a war in Afghanistan, or members of ISIS participating in a Syrian civil war, can be individually selected as targets because they are members of a non-state party to a conflict. However, members of al-Qaeda or ISIS residing in the imaginary country of Ruritania cannot be targeted as if they were participating in the wars in Afghanistan and Syria. According to this widely held legal view, outside geographically defined armed conflicts, the proper legal framework for responding to terrorists is law enforcement. The members of al-Qaeda or ISIS living in Ruritania are not directly participating in a specific armed conflict. Therefore, they should be arrested and tried according to the norms of law enforcement. To select in advance terrorists in Ruritania as targets to be killed, according to this line of reasoning, is to engage in extrajudicial executions.

Some legal scholars have expressed dissatisfaction with the approach described above. They object to the disjunctive definition of armed conflicts as either international or non-international. This false dichotomy, in their view, fails to take into account the nature of global terrorism and the actual practice of states. Such scholars argue that the laws of war should be expanded to include a third type of "transnational" armed conflict, a category more apt to the phenomenon of global terrorism. Governed by the laws of war rather than law enforcement, transnational conflicts would allow for the targeted killing of members of non-state armed groups which are parties to a global armed conflict against specific states.

Thus whether targeted killing in the "war on terror" can be justified hinges largely on *ius ad bellum* questions concerning *with whom* a state may go to war. Considering this question from the point of view of just war theory, one cannot say it admits a ready answer, nor has it received sustained attention from contemporary religious ethicists. That just war theory would endorse the rigid dichotomy between international and non-international conflicts found in international law is far from self-evident. At the same time, one must admit that the just war criteria frequently invoked by religious ethicists do not offer much guidance on how to distinguish between different types of armed conflicts; much less do they tell us how to distinguish between armed conflicts and situations of law enforcement.

A first step toward addressing such challenges might be to define the universal characteristics of every armed conflict. At the very least, every armed conflict would seem to require: (1) a high threshold of violence and harm and (2) the presence of an organized party to a conflict. Only acts of violence of sufficient intensity or duration would seem to threaten a nation's basic security in ways that qualify as an armed conflict. Moreover, the ability of a party to sustain the threshold of violence which threatens a nation's security would seem, at a minimum, to depend on a level of organization and structure characteristic of armed groups.

A general definition of armed conflict that cuts across the dichotomy between international and non-international conflicts might, on the one hand, open up theoretical space for a category like transnational conflict. Moreover, if the relevant just war principle for the conduct of every armed conflict is the principle of discrimination, then one might argue on just war grounds that, regardless of how the armed conflict is classified in international law, global terrorist organizations are the types of entities against which a state can apply counterforce. This would mean a case could be made on just war grounds for the targeted killing of individuals participating in transnational conflicts.

On the other hand, a general definition of armed conflict which insists on a high threshold of harm would imply that not every act of terrorism could be viewed as part of an armed conflict. Awful though they are, most acts of terrorism (e.g. street bombs, knife attacks, runaway vehicles, etc.) do not reach the threshold of harm characteristic of acts of war. One must distinguish, therefore, between acts of terrorism and terrorist *attacks*. Many acts of terrorism fall below the threshold of harm reached in mass shootings, instances of domestic violence which no one suggests should be handled according to the laws of war. Such acts of terrorism do not amount to the armed *attacks* characteristic of armed conflicts. Thus, insofar as global terrorist networks are plotting and committing acts of terror rather than acts of war, to view those networks as parties to an armed conflict would be a misclassification. In such cases, global terrorist networks would more closely resemble the Italian mafia than a non-state party to an armed conflict, and the targeted killing of their members would be illegitimate.

A general definition of armed conflict certainly allows for the possibility that some acts of terrorism cross the threshold of harm characteristic of armed attacks. The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center are recognized by most as both an act of terrorism and an act of aggression. Whether justifying the response to 9/11 requires developing a new category of transnational armed conflict is less clear. The 9/11 attacks were perpetrated by a terrorist organization territorially located in Afghanistan, protected by the Afghanistan state. The US response in Afghanistan was both an international and non-international conflict that fit squarely within the framework established by international humanitarian law. Perhaps the capability to mount terrorist attacks of sufficient violence to cross the threshold of harm characteristic of acts of war depends upon state sponsorship and protection. In that case, the justified military response to such attacks would fall comfortably within the existing categories of international and non-international armed conflict.

What the just war approach to these issues might be remains an open question, and one hopes religious ethicists committed to just war theory will take them up with increasing vigor. Questions about distinction and the use of force against non-state groups in the fight against global terrorism are likely to remain prominent in public debate for years to come.

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