In The Name of God

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Content

Why We Need Justice

Milton Fisk[1]

ABSTRACT: My aim is to reintroduce into the discussion of justice an element missing from recent accounts of it. In those accounts, the emphasis is on the formal framework within which to decide what is just. The framework consists of certain key values, a relevant set of actors, and a democratic procedure for decisions. I shall emphasize the need to go outside a formal framework in order to ask what we hope to accomplish by doing justice. Short of answering this question, we can't know that the formal framework is right.

This essay has three parts. I first sketch out a view of justice that goes beyond laying out any formal framework we must stay within to accomplish justice. In going beyond the formal, I argue that the goal of not weakening society is what is missing. Then I shall outline Nancy Fraser's recent important contribution to answering what she terms the "what", "who", and "how" questions of justice. Finally, I try to show that her views are incomplete without addressing the question of the "why" of justice – the question of what we wish to accomplish by doing justice.

KEY WORDS: Justice , Values , Right, Nancy Fraser.

1. Professor Emeritus, Department of Philosophy, Indiana University, USA; fiskm@indiana.edu

A kind of criticism that I want to discus has its roots in a major strand of modern ethics. John Rawls (1971, p.4; 1993, p.3) gave importance to the "why" of justice. He held that the fundamental question of political justice is how to find a concept of justice that can guide citizens in the direction of being cooperating members of a society despite the differences between their values. He mentions this as the goal of justice mainly in introductory remarks. But his guide in the task of developing a formal framework – with his principle of equal rights and his "difference principle" – is the aim of avoiding anything that might weaken society understood as a cooperative endeavor. In this regard, he had important predecessors among British moralists, notably Mill and Hume.[1]

1. Balancing Rights

Deciding what is just is challenging since one must navigate among competing rights. Was justice done when a court punished someone for taking a life? The victim had a right to life that the culprit seems to have violated. But the victim could have first threatened the killer. One needs then to go beyond the right to life to consider also the right to self-defense. With both rights involved, the question becomes how to balance them to establish justice. Perhaps the threatened person could have survived by fleeing the scene rather than killing the assailant. This leads us to ask how much risk a threatened person should tolerate before killing an attacker. What reason would one give for preferring one degree of risk rather than another?

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1. John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 3. Mill says, "This firm foundation [of utilitarian morality] is that of the social feelings of mankind … ." David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, Section 3, Part 2. Hume says, "The necessity of justice to the support of society is the sole foundation of that virtue."

In deciding justice we look for several things. We look for the conflicting rights of persons locked in a dispute. And we look for a way of balancing those rights. A plausible criterion for balancing leaves no one in a conflict with excessive gains or losses. Turning to a different kind of case, people have a right to respect and it is unjust to deny it to them. Through balancing we put limits on the right to respect. If others are overbearing, the respect due them diminishes, so that we are free to interrupt or to walk away. We have no obligation to respond to or even listen to verbal outbursts. But a balancing of rights that allows this reduction of respect must not involve excessive gain or loss for either of the parties.

We need to determine what will count as an excessive loss or gain in a matter of social importance rather than individual preference? Is diminished respect an excessive loss for an overbearing person? Our answer will depend on what one could reasonably hope to achieve by diminishing respect. Paradoxically, one can hope to increase chances for a respectful society by diminishing respect for overbearing persons. The overbearing person who threatens us physically can earn respect only by ending those threats. A society of mutual respect, as a common good, would seem to be the goal we are aiming at here when we decide that it is fair to withhold respect in the case of threats.

Does this appeal to common goods offer the solution to the problem of how to balance gains and losses to have justice? We commonly think we have done enough, to justify a balancing by showing how it favors some common good. But discord erupts even at the level of common goods. In addition to those who balance gains and losses in light of the ideal of a respectful society, there are those who think balancing should take place in light of a different common good. Instead of a respectful society they argue that a security society is the

relevant common good. In it, security will be so tight that repression occurs even on suspicion that misbehavior might occur. A rationale for the security society might be that there are always factions organized for displacing those seen as different. Coddling those factions fails to lead them to respect others. So, the balancing of gains and losses to make justice proceeds, instead, in the light of the security society as a common good. Those on this side emphasize the importance of being threatening to realize a security society.

We seem to have reached stalemate. Balancing solves disagreements only within a circle of adherence to a given common good; an alternative common good will have its devotees, who will balance gains and losses in a different way. The suggestion that we move to common goods at a higher level to avoid stalemate seems like an invitation to an endless regress. To avoid regress, it is tempting to go transcendental (on the notion of a comparative *versus* a transcendental view of justice cf. Sen, 2009, pp.96-101). Then the test of a decision about justice would be whether one would affirm it universally, affirm it if there were no reasonable objection to it, or affirm it in an ideal speech situation. But no human could visit all situations to confirm universality, attest that nobody will have a reasonable objection, or communicate while unaffected by passion and propaganda. This limits the relevance of justice to supra-human beings. Each of them would have the knowledge that they all thought alike, thereby avoiding controversy over justice.

However, we can accomplish what we want without leaving the terrain of everyday humans. Where common goods like respect and security collide, each side is aware that such a collision makes living together in a society more difficult. If removing obstacles to living together in a society is their aim, then it will be important for each of them to evaluate the

practices they engage in. An evaluation might indicate that neither respect nor security by itself can avoid serious risks to being part of the same society. Instead, it might indicate that a certain blend of the two would avoid the most challenges to living together in a society. This would give us what we want in order to claim that such a balancing of respect and security is just.

We have here a goal that spans the gap between conflicting values. It is the goal of avoiding obstacles to having a society. A society of a specific kind is not the goal we want here. It is not a socialist, an industrial, or an Islamic society that spans the gap between conflicting values generally. For, the dominant values in terms of which we characterize such a society may be in conflict with the values of opposition groups within it. And the dominant values in such a society will be in conflict with values found in a regional or global society encompassing it. What then is it about society that I am appealing to? In any society, one can rely on many others in it for help, for holding to their commitments, and for joining in relaxing pastimes. We severely reduce these expectations in a threatened society. As threats to these expectations accumulate, the society itself faces threats to its survival. Our interest in having a society to live in leads us to reject measures that would threaten it. So, to decide how to balance common goods in a way that we can call just, we ultimately rely on balancing that does not pose a threat to society. In fact, if we avoid balancing common goods, we pose a threat to society by encouraging polar views on justice that makes cooperation unlikely.

One might object that the regress of balancing does not stop with society since there are those for whom preserving society is not a goal. But it is an illusion to suppose that balancing could still go on between defenders of society and

those who refuse to treat defending it as a goal. In balancing the culpability due to homicide with justification by self-defense, a common ground of language and reasoning was available for discussing reasons for self-defense. But this common ground is no longer available where there is indifference to society. So, since balancing can only take place in society, society caps off the regress in balancing.

2. Fraser's Three Questions about Justice

One of the main strengths of Nancy Fraser's *Scales of Justice* (2009)[1] is her use of recent social and political changes and conflicts as the context for her philosophical account of justice. She hopes to develop ways to understand and ultimately move closer to resolving major disputes over justice arising in this context. She sees some of the major disputes as stemming from clashes of ideas from previous periods with those of the current period. Some of the older ideas were compatible with national insularity, but now they collide with newer ones arising from globalization. In addition, whereas distributive justice had commanded the greatest share of attention, now we attend more equally to issues of social recognition, political representation, and distribution.

How then does Fraser contribute to untangling such clashes? Her main strategy is one of separating three types of issue regarding justice. One of them has to do with deciding *what* we must do to act justly. (16) To act justly, must we punish rather than try to reform convicted criminals? We are dealing here with what she calls the "what" of justice. There are, she claims, three categories of claim that fall under the "what" of justice. These are justice claims concerning distribution of

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1. Numbers appearing in parentheses in the text refer to pages in this book.

goods, recognition of persons, and representation in politics. There is also a question about *who* is to come under the umbrella of justice. Does it apply to members of minorities and foreigners? (33) This is a question about the "who" of justice. (Fraser does not discuss whether the "who" could include infants, victims of dementia, pets, and corporations.) Lastly, there is a meta-question about *how* we are to go about reaching a binding agreement on an issue of justice. Do we let autocrats decide for us, or should we rely on participatory means? (27) Here the question is about the "how" of justice.

Fraser's drawing clear distinctions between the three areas is an undeniable contribution to the literature on justice. Yet something is missing that is the key to making her tripartite analysis work. There is a long teleological tradition in normative matters, including justice, that would insist on a fourth division, the "why" of adopting values as morally binding on us. In that tradition, one wants to know, about a claim to moral validity, whether it serves the kind of aim needed for it to be a valid moral value.

There have been various views of what such an aim is, but the immediate issue is how a norm can be binding without an aim. If we think justice is a moral value, and not a regulation adopted by a state, we cannot account for justice apart from its having the kind of aim that moral values in general have. Moreover, we shall see below that Fraser links justice to a variety of norms of equality to answer the "what", "who", and "how" questions. These norms of equality must also promote the aim that moral norms in general promote. The moral importance of acting justly rather than unjustly turns on its promoting this aim – the "why" of justice. Moreover, if we know the "why," then we are on our way as well to answering the "what," "who," and "how" questions for justice. That is, if we know why we reject injustice, we shall choose norms of

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justice ("what"), populations to which they apply ("who"), and methods for having them treated as binding ("how") that help satisfy our reason for wanting justice.

The specific context Fraser sets for her discussion of justice is the post-Cold War, neo-liberal, globalizing condition with which the 21st century began. Disputes in this context over justice are rampant, posing "a major problem for anyone who cares about injustices today" (56-57). Of course, views of answers to the "what," "who," and "how" of justice developed before this period still show up as parts of present disputes. The centrality of the temporal dimension in her discussion of justice enables her to avoid a sterile treatment by emphasizing just how high the stakes in the debate have become for all of us. What though are the stakes? Suppose the "wrong side" wins. What does that mean for you and me? To be able to say, we need an answer to the "why" question. What is there about injustice that can make one not want to win by adopting it?

Is, though, the "why" question necessary? Aren't the values Fraser appeals to in answering the "what," "who," and "how" questions sufficient? She speaks of these values as "clues" for getting beyond "abnormal justice", that is, for getting beyond a failure to have a shared understanding of justice (57-58). As we shall see, these values belong to a circle of values that includes justice itself. If they can lead to agreement on justice, then they make the "why" question unnecessary. For, once justice has alongside it this circle of norms, justice seems to need nothing more than these norms to have a binding character. I find this hard to accept. My general point is that what is at stake in adopting a given value, like justice, is not whether it belongs to a circle of closely related values. What is at stake, if we are to avoid formalism, is something outside any such circle of values but that the values in the circle can help us protect.

Just what are the values Fraser places in the circle around justice? There are three of them, paralleling the "what", "who", and "how" questions. One of them concerns participation inside a society. Equal participation in social life is unlikely where some experience economic, cultural, or political barriers to participation. For example, denying the vote to an ethnic, gender, or racial group rules out equal participation. Such a denial would violate what Fraser calls the principle of *parity of participation.* (60) This principle limits the "what" of justice by rejecting as unjust any discrimination in the distribution of goods, of recognition of cultural differences, or of representation in politics. In the circle of values referred to above a denial of parity of participation would become an injustice.

The second value is embodied in what Fraser calls the *all-subjected* principle. (65) It addresses the issue of the "who" of justice by telling us that a governance structure of whatever kind must treat those subjected to its decisions as subjects of justice. The all-subjected principle makes sense in our new world where communities are no longer isolated. But there will still be those who hold that communities are responsible only to their own members. What the all-subjected principle tries to avoid is a lack of reciprocity. A governance structure enforcing regulations on insiders and outsiders must treat both with "equal consideration". If it regulates both, it cannot deny the outsiders the same participation in deciding on such regulation that the insiders enjoy. The G-20 is an elite organization made up of economic leaders and officials from 20 large economies. It has influence not just over these 20 economies but over other economies as well. In this sense, all economies, including those not represented in the G-20, are subject to its decisions. According to the all-subjected principle, even the non-represented economies here have standing in relation to the G-20 and hence it owes them

justice along with its own members. The worry is that, due to its unrepresentative structure, the G-20 will ignore the needs of the economies of the non-members.

This brings us to the "how" question. When facing a dispute over the justice of taking a certain step, how are we to go about resolving it? We would not resolve the dispute between isolationists and globalists about the "who" of justice just by appealing to the all-subjected principle. Fraser's proposal for resolving such a dispute has two parts. First, we must deal with a dispute about justice through dialogue rather than appeals intended to cut off discussion. Yet she says dialogue is no guarantee of reaching ultimate agreement on justice. So, second, there is a need for institutions that can make rules of justice binding. These institutions are to take into account the dialogue going on around them. And they must be democratic enough themselves to have legitimacy in making their decisions about justice binding. As Fraser notes, this approach to the "how" of justice avoids both a populism focused solely on democratic dialogue and a hegemonism focused solely on institutional autonomy. (68-69) The binding character of justice arrived at in this way has little to do with being backed by raw power. But in the last section, I ask whether justice of this kind binds morally rather than merely politically.

Now I wish to consider Fraser's idea that framing questions about justice through "what" and "who" questions opens the possibility of misframing them. She considers two kinds of "misframing" of justice. My concern is that in each case a crucial element is missing in her analysis of misframing.

The first type involves the "what" of justice. Consider the example of a poll tax for voting. Suppose we frame the "what" question about the justice of paying a poll tax as a distributive

issue. It might then be about whether voters should share the cost equally of setting up the polling places and counting the ballots cast. However, this could be a "misframing" of the issue of the justice of the poll tax. For a proper framing of the "what" question, we might need to look beyond the distributive issue to that of political representation. From this viewpoint, we would see the poll tax as unjustly denying those who could ill afford the tax their right to political representation.

This, though, raises the question of balancing. One should avoid trying to find what is just here by flatly rejecting either political representation or equal distribution. Instead, one could look for help in a system that calls for modifying both the ideal of political representation for everyone and that of equal distribution of the cost of voting. This system would balance representation and distribution in a way that does not create excessive gains or losses for anyone. In it, the power gained through representation by the well off would diminish since they would take over from the less well off a large share of the expenses of voting. This hypothetical system would promote the common good of a fair voting system. The basis for this common good would be that it helps avoid threats to society.

For Fraser, the second kind of misframing involves a more serious mistake. (62) It does not involve the "what" of justice but the "who" of justice. In the case of the poll tax, we considered those who could not pay the tax as members of a larger community that includes those who could pay it. The problem was merely that the poor could not participate fully in this community. Yet the second type of misframing involves separate communities. Despite being separate, one community may try to control the other through some means of governance – an occupying army, international loans, or

media ownership. This governing community might try to avoid treating those in the community it controls as deserving justice. Its excuse would be that it does not owe justice to those outside its community. Suppose exports of cheap grain are devastating rural populations in many communities. Fraser would say that communities promoting these exports misframe justice by not treating those subjected to harm by their exports as subjects to whom they owe justice.

Here, as in the first case of misframing, Fraser seems to ignore the room for balancing. One can find this room between devastating rural populations and modernizing an economy. Those who subject others to trade will reply to her that only through increasing trade and doing away with inefficient agriculture can a newer and more promising form of justice prevail. As in any serious case of a conflict of views of justice, there is need to balance the sides. This will call for an appropriate common good, one that will guide the sides to a solution that can avoid threatening society. One cannot avoid the "why" question in the process of claiming a misframing of justice.

3. Challenges to the "Why" Question

Reflecting on the way just rules bind us can provide a better understanding of the "why" of justice. We begin this reflection by clearing up an ambiguity. Fraser says governing bodies that take account of public dialogue can decide issues of justice and make them binding. She does not make clear whether justice here is an ethical or a political justice. She could have resolved the ambiguity by noting that much that the state and other governing bodies do is simply for the sake of maintaining their rule. Governing bodies may consider public dialogue merely to learn what obstacles they will face

in pursuing their own ends. Governability then provides an answer to the "why" question that is appropriate for the justice of governing bodies. The limits set by governing bodies are politically just limits when they succeed in avoiding major threats to their governability (this connection between governability and state justice is the theme of Fisk, 1989, pp.155-161).

Though governability may be the answer to the "why" question for political justice, it is not the answer to it for justice in ethics. In seeking ethical justice, the concern is not with society's institutions of governance but with society itself. Clearly though, the two forms of justice are often closely connected, despite being answers to different "why" questions. This close connection accounts for the ambiguity of the "why" question just noted.

Racial discrimination for those in the mid-19th century US was an ethically unjust practice. It created a chasm in the society that could have led to its collapse. But at that time, a government that passed and enforced a law against racial discrimination would have seriously compromised its capacity to govern. When in mid-20th century some of those forms of discrimination actually became illegal, this of itself did not imply any change in their ethical status. By then, the moral crusade against racism, a central aspect of which was dialogue, had won over a sizeable section of the population thereby making laws against racism compatible with governability. In this case, extended dialogue among the governed, not only addresses the ethical issue as to what the rules of justice should be, but it provides valuable evidence for those who govern about which rules would, or would not, permit governing. It would weaken governance to have it rest on rules that flew in the face of an enduring popular ethics.

In this light, Fraser's transition from public dialogue to making rules for governing appears too smooth. At the level of public dialogue, people will test a potential norm of justice to decide whether it is compatible with parity of participation and the all-subjected principle. If there are no additional obstacles to this norm, it could achieve widespread support in the public forum. Then, for Fraser, the governance level, after taking the dialogue in the public forum into account, makes its own decision on whether or not to consider the norm binding. (69, 84) However, there is a break in the apparent smoothness of this process, which is not evident in Fraser's version of it.[1] The break comes with the change in criteria as we move from the public forum to the governance level. In the public forum the criterion is to avoid threats to society, whereas at the governance level it becomes avoiding threats to governability. This break does not keep a governing body from supporting a norm of justice that the public forum accepts as a means to social survival. But the governing body will support the norm, not because it promotes social survival, but because it promotes governability. After all, if a governing body cannot govern, it is of little use in promoting justice of either kind.

Having drawn this distinction between politics and ethics, I turn now to ask how Fraser with her dedication to justice can pull up short before raising the "why" question. It is clear from her book that Fraser writes, not as a mere onlooker, but as a justice seeker in passionate pursuit of at least a provisionally correct circle of values around justice. This is evident in a number of ways. She wants to relate justice to the world we face now. She does an admirable job of bringing up to date the circle of values associated with justice. She

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1. Nor is this break evident in Jürgen Habermas' version of the same transition. For the transition cf. Habermas, 1996, pp.129-131.

updates the circle that seemed adequate when nation states were less involved in a world market and privileged groups less likely to face criticism for failure give full recognition to less privileged ones. Furthermore, she wants to raise our hopes of escaping the trap of abnormal justice with its unresolved disputes, ones that are often between older and newer views of justice. She suggests that the new "how" of justice, with its emphasis on public dialogue and democratic governance, can move us closer to ending these disputes. Even if other disputes will take their place, we can reach provisional agreements – provisional hegemonies – that help to avoid a "paralysis" of action. (72) But paralysis suggests the loss of a decisive gain. So, what kind of gain can one expect from resolving disputes in matters of justice? Answering this question, which can reveal the basis for her passion, will answer the "why" question about justice.

To have a fully critical study of justice (38) or of morality in general, it is important to add the "why" question to Fraser's list of three questions. Her three questions are ones that call for answers that, like justice itself, are values. The "why" question addresses the whole edifice of values, so one does not answer it by introducing another value – "a new normal." This restriction holds for any answer to the "why" question. A number of answers are familiar, ranging from the theological to the humanistic and beyond that to the biological. On a theological view, the reason for being just is ultimately the desire to be in harmony with a sacred being. On the humanist view, the reason is that just behavior allows humans to develop the best traits of their humanity. One among various biological views is that justice evolves from random acts of cooperation, which prove to promote survival among otherwise self-interested beings.

Fraser would be skeptical of efforts to settle issues regarding the need for justice in any of these ways since they do not make dialogue central. She picks out for harsh criticism the use in matters related to justice of scientific experiment or postulation. (42) This use of science largely deserves her criticism. But we should not extend it to all investigation. My reservation comes from the need to investigate to find whether a proposed norm of justice could pose a threat to a society. We would have to sift data, look for exceptions, and constantly dialogue with others. Whether we call such a course scientific investigation really doesn't matter. What matters is having an investigation that can confer objective status on its results. If after investigation laced with dialogue we can claim that adopting a certain norm of justice would likely end up generating crises severe enough so that they threaten society, then we have an objective basis for rejecting that norm. This warrants our saying that it is an objective matter whether a norm of justice, or any norm in the circle of justice, is valid. Why we accept or reject norms of justice depends on how they could affect society.

We can now piece together an account of what the role of society is in ethics and in justice in particular. The answer to the "why" question is, I claim, society's viability rather than something found in theology, humanism, or biology. The fundamental reason for a norm would then be that investigation, including observation and dialogue, would show that its widespread adoption could help avoid threats to society. In general, we are averse to a life that, as Hobbes put it in *Leviathan*, chapter 13, is brutish and solitary. All of the values that Fraser finds connected to justice – equality, inclusion, democracy, governance – lose their importance without society as their context. Thus, for example, parity of participation applies to participation in society. The all-subjected principle might seem an exception. Those

subjected are outsiders. If they were outside a social network that includes the subjecting power, then we would have an exception. True, the all-subjected principle applies when the outsiders are not part of the same governance structure. But they can be outside such a structure and still inside a social network that includes the subjecting power. The governing power will need to form the rudiments of a social network with those it governs. And finally, the way we go about contesting views on justice involves a blend of democratic publics and democratic institutions, both of which belong to a society. Destroy society; then none of these three requirements of justice would hold.

To understand how society can play such an important role, consider a few of its salient features. Fraser herself speaks of society and civil society distinguishing them from organizations with formal governance functions, like states and the international financial organizations. (70, 154) In addition, we can distinguish, as we did in Section 1, a change within a society from a society's demise. A society that evolves from militarism to pacifism undergoes a change that need not signal its demise. In fact, this change may have been necessary to avoid threats to its survival. By contrast, the collapse of a society goes deeper by destroying trust, mutual aid, and joy in the company of others. Moreover, it is important not to think of avoiding threats to social collapse as itself a moral principle. Instead, if one lives in a society, then it becomes the context of one's activities. As just noted, we assume our presence in society when we debate matters of justice, equality, and democracy. Justice and other norms are ethically binding when they help avoid threats to society can make even though avoiding threats to society is not itself an ethical norm. Norms will need revision as some societies become parts of regional societies and then parts of global society. What the survival of a smaller society needs may not be needed for survival when it is included in a society with a larger base.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, I consider an objection to my claim that Fraser's view is incomplete. Doesn't the "how" question show that the issue of the "why" of justice is superfluous? For her, a correct answer to the "how" question tells us, first, how to avoid conflict among justice claims and, second, how to reach a binding justice claim. The first part of her answer proposes having dialogue within civil society. But she feels this isn't enough since in civil society not everyone participates and one cannot guarantee that the procedures are democratic. So the second part of her answer proposes going well beyond civil society to democratic institutions that have governance functions. That is, though taking into account the views worked out within civil society, these institutions will make decisions that bind their members. (69) In this way, conflict is resolved – without ever having to ask the "why" question – through linking popular dialogue with institutional decisions.

My response is that this answer provides a formal framework for a procedure to handle a dispute. It leaves out any indication as to why the dispute has importance. All we know is that there is a conflict about something called justice and that we are to have a discussion at various levels to resolve it. The only guidelines for the discussion are the participatory parity rule, the all-subjected principle, and the norm of democratic discussion. We are supposed to advance to a stage of being bound by the results that come from following these guidelines to the end. Yet without an inkling of what the stakes are, there is no reason to be bound by the results. Fraser's framework is useful only when we attach justice to a goal. Of course, different parties to a dispute about justice might have different goals in mind. We can dismiss most of these goals for leading away from the kind of egalitarian and participatory justice Fraser has in mind. The point though is

that, to have a passion for making justice an active force in the world, justice must have a goal compatible with the various requirements Fraser places on justice. For this reason, settling the "how" of justice does not make its "why" redundant.

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Toward an Axiological Virtue Ethics

Rem B. Edwards[1]

ABSTRACT: This article introduces Formal Axiology, first developed by Robert S. Hartman, and explains its essential features—a formal definition of "good" (the "Form of the Good"), three basic kinds of value and evaluation—systemic, extrinsic, and intrinsic, and the hierarchy of value according to which good things having the richest quantity and quality of good-making properties are better than those having less. Formal Axiology is extended into moral philosophy by applying the Form of the Good to persons and showing how this culminates in an Axiological Virtue Ethics. This involves the systemic, extrinsic, and intrinsic goodness of persons, the intrinsic-good-making properties of persons, and the moral virtues that respect the intrinsic worth of persons in thoughts, feelings, and actions. A few obstacles to being and becoming morally good persons are also identified and explained.

KEY WORDS: Formal Axiology, Hierarchy of Values, Robert S. Hartman, Virtue Ethics.

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1. Lindsay Young Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, The University of Tennessee, USA; remb1@att.net.

Introduction

First, please allow me to introduce myself to any new friends who might read this. I am now retired from a teaching career in Philosophy at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, USA, but I am still professionally active. I have published 21 books and over 85 articles and reviews in philosophy. My areas of specialization, research, and teaching are mainly in ethics, axiology (value theory, more broadly conceived), medical ethics, the philosophy of religion, and American philosophy. The following discussion outlines the best account of value theory and ethics or moral philosophy that I have been able to find, after almost a lifetime working on and thinking about ethical and broader axiological issues. I will keep technical jargon and historical references to a minimum, though inevitably there will be some.

Formal Axiology in Seven Easy Steps

The moral philosophy that I find most plausible is grounded in a broader theory of value known as Formal Axiology. This theory of value has been explained in many articles and books, but perhaps two of the best are Robert S. Hartman, *The Structure of Value,* 1967 and Rem B. Edwards, *The Essentials of Formal Axiology,* 2010. Hartman's book is very difficult, so most of my references will be to my own book. Much more relevant information is made available by the Robert S. Hartman Institute, on line at:

 www.hartmaninstitute.org.

There are many kinds of goodness in addition to moral goodness, (e.g., good food, good workers, good products, good education, good theories, good societies, etc.), so axiology, the general theory of value, deals with non-moral as well as moral goodness. Formal Axiology differs from other

approaches in concentrating initially on the general patterns or forms involved in value judgments and inferences, and then applying these forms. Formal Axiology will be outlined in seven easy steps, and then applied to ethics or moral philosophy.

1. The Meaning of "Good." Before we can understand "moral goodness," we must first understand the more general meaning of "good" (or its equivalent in other languages). Robert S. Hartman, the creator of Formal Axiology, spent many years searching through innumerable definitions of "good" in order to discover a meaning common to its manifold uses (Hartman, 1994, pp.51-52). The British philosopher, G. E. Moore (1901), had more impact on ethical thinking in the 20th Century than almost anyone else. With Moore, Hartman agreed that "good" is not synonymous with any natural descriptive property such as pleasure, happiness, desire fulfillment, interest, preference, approval, knowledge, truth, conscientiousness, etc. Such definitions commit the "naturalistic fallacy," which confuses answers to, "What things are good?" with answers to, "What is the meaning of "good"?. Moore concluded from his own philosophical investigations that "good" cannot be defined at all, but Hartman disagreed and showed that this key value concept can be defined formally, though not materially or naturalistically. Thus, the naturalistic fallacy can be avoided, while recognizing an intimate relationship between the "Form of the Good" and descriptive "good-making properties."

Formal Axiology's "Form of the Good" is this: "Good" is "concept or standard fulfillment." This means that if you want to know whether ANYTHING is good, you must: **A.** have a standard or "concept" at your disposal, consisting of an indefinite number of ideal good-making descriptive or

conceptually constructed properties relevant to what is being evaluated; **B.** examine or otherwise learn about the value-object being evaluated to determine its actual properties; **C.** match its actual properties with the ones it is supposed to have according to your ideal standard; **D.** finally, judge or conclude that it is good if it has all the properties it is supposed to have, or judge it to be good by degrees (fair, average, poor, no good) if it has some but not all of them (Edwards, 2010, pp.2-7). Anyone can become a better judge of value by understanding that legitimate or justified judgments of "good" always involve these four steps.

Values are meanings in the sense that they always involve both the intensional connotations and the extensional denotations of concepts. Thus, the most valuable life is the most meaningful life, and the most meaningful life is the most valuable life.

Systemically valuable entities may fulfill only their definitional or conceptually constructed properties, but other kinds of goodness are richer in desirable properties. Consider this example of applying a relevant concept or standard to two complex value-objects. To determine if Mr. X or Mrs. Y are *extrinsically* good or useful college teachers, they must not only actually exemplify the defining properties of "college teacher," but they must also exemplify additional ideal expositional "good-making" properties of the college teacher social role. They must:

(Definitional properties)

> 1. actually be teachers,
> 2. be employed to teach by a college,

(Additional expositional extrinsic good-making properties)

3. know well their subject matter,
4. engage in research and publication in their areas of teaching and specialization,
5. keep up with the latest developments in their areas of teaching and specialization,
6. be effective in communicating with students,
7. be fair and unprejudiced in grading students' papers and other course work,
8. make themselves readily available to students, e.g. by keeping regular office hours,
9. encourage their students who do well,
10. give extra help and attention to students who need it, etc.

(Taking adequate account of the intrinsic goodness and the moral goodness of Mr. X and Mrs. Y (or anyone) requires additional good-making properties, as later explained.)

This list of good-making properties could be extended almost indefinitely, as the "etc" indicates, but such criteria are widely used to determine if any given college teacher is a good one, a useful one. This is what a good college teacher is supposed to be like. Such norms (good-making properties) constitute our concept of "good college teacher." Norms are built into our concepts of social roles. Assuming that this list is sufficient, then if both Mr. X and Mrs. Y. exemplify all ten of these good-making properties, they are indeed good college teachers. To be classified as college teachers at all, they must fulfill the first two defining criteria. The remaining expositional good-making properties may be fulfilled by degrees, so Mr. X or Mrs. Y would be good teachers if they *completely* fulfill the 10 point standard, or they may *partly* fulfill the criteria by degrees and thus be fair, average, poor, or close to worthless as college teachers. Good is *complete* standard or concept fulfillment.

Robert S. Hartman, the founder of Formal Axiology, thus "saw" the "Form of the Good" for the first time, though philosophers have sought it since the time of Plato. In the abstract, here is the form of the good:

GOOD-MAKING PROPERTIES	ACTUAL PROPERTIES
1. --------------------------	1. ---------------------------
2. --------------------------	2. ---------------------------
3. --------------------------	3. ---------------------------
4. --------------------------	4. ---------------------------
5. --------------------------	5. ---------------------------
6. Extend as far as needed.	6. Extend as far as needed.

People can fail to reach agreement or make mistakes in positive value judgments if they:

> A. disagree about or misunderstand which good-making properties are included in the ideal standard,
> B. fail to examine, learn about, or understand adequately the value-object to which it is being applied,
> C. mis-match a thing's actual properties with its ideal properties, or
> D. fail to draw logical conclusions.

This form can be applied to *anything* about which anyone makes positive value judgments, whether moral or non-moral. A corresponding form for "bad" or "evil" is composed of bad-making properties, though this negative form is not emphasized here (*Ibid*, pp.7-9). The forms of "good" and "bad" are definitive or absolute in structure or theory, but they are always somewhat subjective in application because disagreements or errors may occur anywhere between A. and D above (Hartman, 1967, pp.110-111). Then, to make further

progress, disagreements and errors must be discussed and resolved. Sometimes we just have to agree to disagree.

2. Defining "Better," "Best," and "Ought." When comparing good things, if one has more good-making properties than *some* others in its class of comparison, it is *better* than those others. If it has more good-making properties that *all* others in its class of comparison, it is the *best* of the lot (Edwards, 2010, pp.20-22). Thus, Mrs. B is a better college teacher than Mr. A if she has nine of the good-making properties listed and he has only seven. She is the best of the lot if they are the only two teachers being compared. "X ought to be done" means "X is the best thing to do, so do it" (*Ibid*, pp.134-35).

3. Three Kinds of Goodness. There are at least three kinds of positive value or goodness—systemic, extrinsic, and intrinsic; and all of them can be measured or compared rationally or conceptually with respect to their degree of goodness (*Ibid*, pp.27-39).

Systemic goods are desirable mental or conceptual values. Primary examples are: concepts, ideas, constructs, propositions, beliefs, laws, rules, mathematical and logical forms, ritual forms, and formalities of every description.

Extrinsic goods are means to ends beyond themselves. They include useful actions, objects, and processes located in public space-time and known through sensory perception. Examples are: beneficial human behaviors, natural resources, tools, flowing water, drinkable water, nutritious foods, shelters, clothing, etc. For short, we will call such aggregates "mere things" since in themselves they are inanimate and lack consciousness.

Intrinsic goods are ends in themselves, desirable for their own sakes. Primary examples are: unique individual persons, animals, and spiritual beings.

Philosophers have debated for more than two millennia about answers to, "What entities are intrinsically good?" Obviously, these examples are controversial. Some say that only pleasure (or hedonic happiness) is intrinsically good, or desire-fulfillment, or truth, or knowledge, or moral conscientiousness, etc. The only available method ever discovered for determining which entities are intrinsically good is the "principle of isolation" described by G. E. Moore (1903, pp.91-96, pp.187-189). This method involves isolating the entity being considered from all else that it is normally associated with, then determining intuitively whether we desire it in itself or for its own sake when so isolated. We may discover that we value it only as a means to something else beyond itself, or only for its mental interests. After carefully applying Moore's method of isolation, if we find intuitively that something all by itself is desirable in itself or for its own sake, we can reasonably proclaim it to be intrinsically good.

After reflecting for almost a lifetime on commonly advanced candidates for "intrinsically good" such as pleasure (hedonic happiness), desire-fulfillment, truth, knowledge, conscientiousness, etc., my own carefully considered and rationally refined judgment is that these are *not* intrinsically good. They have some other kind of goodness. They are *good for us,* but they are not *good in themselves.* Here is an easy way to see this. Carefully applying the principle of isolation to them means separating them from all else with which they are normally associated, *including individual conscious beings like ourselves.* Considered rigorously only "in themselves" or "in isolation," such candidates for "intrinsically good" cannot even exist, much less have

positive value. They exist only "in us" or in other conscious individuals. They are thus good only *for us* but not *in themselves*. Only unique conscious beings are ends in themselves or *intrinsic goods*; these other desirable things are only *intrinsic value enrichers or enhancers*. Immanuel Kant (1969, pp.52-53) got the words right for this when he said that we should always treat persons as ends in themselves [intrinsic goods], and never merely as means [extrinsic goods]. Just what Kant meant by this is another story.

4. *The Hierarchy of Value.* Intrinsically good things have more good-making properties than extrinsically good things, which in turn have more good-making properties than systemically good things. This "more" can be qualitative as well as merely quantitative. Qualitative differences can also be counted. Thus, the three kinds of goodness fall into a hierarchy of goodness (Edwards.2010, pp.39-40). In application, since "better" means "more," people (or other conscious individuals) are better or more valuable than mere things, and mere things are better or more valuable than mere ideas of things or of people (*Ibid*, pp.40-41).

Expressed abstractly, intrinsically valuable entities have more goodness than extrinsically valuable entities because they have more good-making properties, and extrinsically valuable entities have more goodness than systemically valuable entities because they have more good-making properties.

In application, this means that people (or other conscious beings) have more value than useful but inanimate sensory objects and processes, and useful sensory objects and processes have more value than mere ideas about them or about people.

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However implausible this hierarchy of goodness may seem at first, it can be defended. Let us begin with the least valuable of all, systemic values. Placing them at the bottom of our hierarchy of values does not mean that they have no value or very little value. Some good things can be very good, yet other good things can be even better. Systemic values—concepts, ideas, rules, beliefs, formal systems, etc., are only mental symbols that point toward or apply to even more valuable realities. Fictions may be created with them, but the primary purpose of mental symbols is to point or refer to realities beyond themselves. We have words for people and for mere things, but real people are more valuable than (have more good-making properties than) the verbal symbols that point to them. So it is also with desirable inanimate things—useful sensory or physical processes, activities, and objects. Both physical entities and human activities can be very useful as means to ends beyond themselves; so they are more valuable than our words for, thoughts about, or conceptual symbols for them. We can spend the coins in our pockets, but we cannot spend our thoughts about those coins. Money in the bank is worth more than money that exists merely in our minds or dreams, even if the two are numerically identical in face value. Real moral actions are more valuable than merely thinking about doing good.

Why are people more valuable than merely inanimate things? In only a few words, people are animate and conscious, but cars, houses, cash, coins, etc. are not. Careful attention will be given soon to the profusion of intrinsic-good-making properties of people. For now, let's grant that people have many good-making properties that inanimate but useful objects do not have. Real people are worth more than all the thoughts we can think about them. Real friends and loved ones are worth more than all of our ideas of or beliefs about them; and in relation to non-conscious extrinsic goods, they are priceless.

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5. Value Combinations and Confusions. Value objects belonging to our three kinds or dimensions of goodness may be combined with one another in positive or negative, helpful or hurtful, value-increasing or value-decreasing ways. These combinations may form organic wholes that are more valuable than the mere sum of the values of their components or parts. For example, we can use ideas to create useful products, and we can give useful or physically beautiful things to our friends and loved ones. People can unite with people in marriage, family, and friendship. Homes can be bought or built for people. Good ideas can help us to become more thoughtful of an affectionate toward those we love, or more useful to our employers or employees. Examples of such value combinations are practically inexhaustible. Things that are otherwise good taken singly may also be combined with other good things in hurtful or destructive ways, e.g., when two good cars crash to make good junkers. Good ideas, useful things, and active people can be used to hurt people, destroy property, and degrade beliefs.

Value combinations must be distinguished from instances of the three dimensions taken singly. Great confusion may result when they are mistakenly identified, especially so when considering the value of systemically good things. Intellectuals are partial to systemic goods without always understanding why. We may confuse the value of ideas or other systemic goods as such with their relations to other good things that are complex value combinations. We might wonder if ideas aren't more valuable than mere things *because* we can do so much more with them. Well, which ideas, and which things? More importantly, good ideas plus their desirable consequences are rich combinations of value-objects in two or more value dimensions, and that combination (ideas *plus* what we can do with them) should

not be confused or identified with the value of ideas alone. To avoid such confusion when assessing the relative worth of ideas, follow this rule: *The value of conceptual symbols must always be correlated only with the good things that they symbolize* (*Ibid*, p.48). Thus, we should not ask if ideas in general are more valuable than cars, houses, lands, and property. We should ask instead if a real car is not more valuable than the mere idea of a car, if a real house is not better than the mere idea of a house, if real land and property are not worth more than the mere thoughts of such, etc. Finally, we should ask if the value combination—the reality of a good idea and what we can do with it—is not more valuable than the mere thought of "a good idea and what we can do with it." The obvious answer to such questions is, "Yes."

6. *How We Value.* Good things, value-objects, exist within the three value dimension—systemic, extrinsic, and intrinsic. They are *what* we value; but *how* we value is equally important, though often neglected (*Ibid*, Ch. 3). *How we value* involves *both thoughts and feelings*. Some philosophers suggest that valuing involves thoughts alone (e.g., Kant, Moore); others say that valuing involves feelings alone (e.g., the Emotivists and Logical Positivists). Both capture only half the truth. The whole truth, says Formal Axiology, is that valuing properly involves both thoughts and feelings. Evaluation is both a rational and an affective process.

Mentally or rationally, evaluating all three kinds of value-objects (and their combinations) involves forming relevant standards composed of ideal sets of good-making properties, then gaining knowledge of the actual properties of these value-objects, then matching the two sets of ideal and actual properties to determine if they correlate, i.e., if the objects really exemplify their ideal properties, and to what degree, then drawing logical conclusions.

Affectively or emotively, value-objects are evaluated through different kinds and degrees of feeling. Different feelings belong most naturally and appropriately with value-objects in different value dimensions. Most appropriately, we are involved dispassionately, objectively, or disinterestedly (but not uninterestedly) with ideas and beliefs (systemic evaluation.) We are involved with mere things through ordinary practical desires and feelings (extrinsic evaluation). And we are involved with persons or conscious beings through intense feelings of love, compassion, enjoyment, and self-identification (intrinsic evaluation). Degrees of feeling-involvement shade off gradually into one another, but hard core instances of each are identifiable. Systemic evaluation is the least intense kind of affective involvement, but it is not mere indifference or uninterestedness. Intrinsic evaluation is the most intense kind of affective involvement, and extrinsic evaluation falls somewhere in between. What philosophers call "approval" comes in many shades.

7. *Valuing Good Things in Different Dimensions*. A value-object in any dimension can be evaluated as if it belongs to some other value dimension. The distinction between value-objects (values) and evaluations (how we value) is highly relevant and important.

As value-objects, mere things like knives, tables, newspapers, and art objects that have no consciousness or awareness of their own *never* have any intrinsic value. They are always merely extrinsic value-objects. However, we can value them in three different ways, systemically, extrinsically, and intrinsically. We can value any value-object as if it belongs inherently to some other value dimension. Evaluation in each dimension has two components, a conceptual or rational component (concept fulfillment) and an affective component (our emotional or affective involvement with it). Let's

consider a pocket knife as an example. In itself, a pocket knife is simply an extrinsically valuable (useful) perceptual object or tool, but we may relate to it evaluationally in three distinctive ways

Evaluating this or any extrinsic value object *systemically* involves both reason and affections. (1) Rationally, we do this by applying only a very few abstract Form of the Good properties to it. Does it actually fulfill its purely formal properties? Does it exemplify the definitional properties of "knife"? (It might be only a rubber or plastic toy that will not cut anything.) Does it have the mathematical and geometrical properties of a good pocket knife? (A poorly manufactured one may not.) (2) Affectively, we can relate to these formal properties only objectively or disinterestedly. We can also evaluate pocket knives extrinsically or intrinsically.

Evaluating a knife or any extrinsic value object *extrinsically* also involves both reason and affections. (1) Rationally, we can apply a more complex Form of the Good to it. For example, a good pocket knife can be used for cutting, chopping, and defending. How well do the properties of this particular knife fulfill the expectations of usefulness that we have for it? Does it actually have the good-making expositional properties that it ought to have? We may go further and ask if this knife is worth its weight in gold, but even gold is merely an extrinsic value object, highly prized for its immense utility. (2) Affectively, we can relate to the usefulness of knives and gold through our normal everyday practical desires, feelings, attitudes, and interests.

Evaluating a knife or any extrinsic value object *intrinsically* also involves both reason and affections. (1) Rationally, we can conceptually consider a pocket knife in its uniqueness and completeness. How does it differ from all other knives in

the universe? What are its individuating properties? Does it have any psychological properties? Why do we find it especially appealing? (2) Affectively, we can relate to it with profound sensitivity, love, affection, delight, and personal identification, as if it were person-like. When affectively evaluating them intrinsically, we typically associate extrinsic value objects, mere things, with persons. Intrinsic evaluations of extrinsic objects are value compositions, not evaluations of merely inanimate objects considered in isolation. For example, we may intensely value this particular pocket knife because it belonged to our father or grandfather, who we recall with great affection. Perhaps we recall using it ourselves on a glorious camping trip with our own children. Thereby, we personally identify intensely with this particular knife/grandfather, or with that knife/camping-trip/with-our-children. There is a real difference between the value of *a mere pocket knife* and *my grandfather's pocket knife.* Of course, a miser might intensely and directly value the gold or money that the knife is worth "for its own sake" and create his own personal identity around it, without further associations. However, most of us value money in any form only extrinsically, for what we can do with it, i.e. for its usefulness in getting other things that we want. We easily recognize that misers overvalue gold or cash.

No matter *how* we value it, a pocket knife as such is just a pocket knife, a physical object with no mind, awareness, consciousness, thoughts, sensitivity, feelings, or values of its own, and no amount of value-association or reflection can ever get around that brute fact. This must also be said of tables, chairs, newspapers, physical works of art, etc. A newspaper is inherently a value compound or composition, being both a physical object and a locus of systemic thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and information. We can separate these two elements and consider a newspaper merely as useful kitty

litter, or we can ignore its physicality and consider only the thoughts it brings to mind.

Even professional axiologists may ignore the distinction or confuse values (what we value) and evaluations (how we value), so don't be discouraged if you share this confusion. Robert S. Hartman sometimes called art-objects like beautiful paintings and sculptures "intrinsic values," though surely he meant only that we can evaluate them intrinsically. Many of us think that way about them. Strictly speaking, however, they are only extrinsic value-objects being evaluated intrinsically in their full concreteness and uniqueness and with profound feelings. A beautiful statue by Michelangelo has no mind, awareness, consciousness, thoughts, sensitivity, feelings, or values of its own. Thus, it is not intrinsically good, not an end in, to, and for itself, even if we aesthetically identify with it profoundly and speak metaphorically of its "intrinsic value."

Often, evaluating value-objects in some other dimension is a very good thing that enhances overall value; but sometimes it is not, most obviously when done to diminish the value of something even better. Overvaluation or undervaluation involve valuing things as if they were something else, and ranking them wrongly in relation to other better or less valuable value-objects. For example, people can be evaluated as if they were mere things or property (slavery), or as if they were mere tokens in a system (ideology and dogmatism). Things and beliefs can be valued passionately as if they were persons, and persons may be evaluated as mere things or mere systemic tokens (*Ibid*). Most of the moral evils of human existence involve either undervaluing people or outright disvaluing them.

Nothing is inherently wrong with positively evaluating everything in any value dimension passionately and intensely (intrinsically) as long as the hierarchy of value is sustained,

that is, as long as value-objects are *loved in proportion to their actual degree of goodness.* This is the way that the saints value in every culture, but most of us fall far short of this (*Ibid*, pp.125-130). This leads us to axiological ethics.

AXIOLOGICAL ETHICS OR MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Ethics is understood by most philosophers to pertain to our relations with human beings, ourselves included. In recent decades, ethics has been profoundly extended to include our relations with non-human animals and our wider natural environment, but, due to limitations of space, our present focus will be on our ethical relations with people. Axiological ethics 1. applies the Form of the Good to human beings to discern our good-making properties, and in doing so 2. it applies three kinds of goodness to human beings—systemic, extrinsic, and intrinsic. Our moral duties, practices, motives, and virtues can be identified within these contexts.

1. Systemic formal ethics is expressed conceptually or rationally in moral beliefs, rules, regulations, rights, commandments, etc. It is expressed affectively in approving, adopting, or affirming such conceptual formalities dispassionately or objectively, and in being mentally attuned to the still small voice of conscience within us. There is no definitive list of carefully considered conscience-sanctioned ethical rules, but they include such things as: We ought to help the poor and those in need. We ought to keep our promises. We ought not to kill. We ought not to steal, etc. Often, appropriate qualifications are required, such as allowing killing in self-defense or to protect friends or loved ones against aggression when there is no other way to do it. Conceptual ethical guidelines are desirable, indeed practically indispensible, but other aspects of morality (the extrinsic and the intrinsic) are even more desirable, so moral rules exist for the sake of practice, property, and people, not the other way around.

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Systemic ethics can also be expressed in thinking positive or beneficial rather than negative, hurtful, degrading, or prejudicial thoughts about people. Harmful thoughts often lead to harmful deeds and to real harm to persons. I have elsewhere summarized the most basic systemic moral rules of Formal Axiology in these words:

1) We ought to value people more than things, and things more than ideas.
2) We ought to develop ourselves, and to help others develop themselves, systemically, extrinsically, and intrinsically.
3) We ought to value all persons and conscious beings, including ourselves, intrinsically, and never *merely* extrinsically or *merely* systemically.
4) In all possible value dimensions, we ought to choose courses of action that sustain or increase value, and avoid actions that decrease value for ourselves and others who are affected by what we do.
5) Thus, *we ought always to identify-with, prefer, choose, and do what is best, that is, what is likely to be richest in good-making properties* (*Ibid*, p.170).

2. *Extrinsic practical ethics* consists in *acting* rightly and avoiding wrongful actions. Extrinsic ethics includes systemic ethics. *Rationally*, it involves acting in accord with socially beneficial moral rules, while recognizing that good moral judgment often transcends rule-rigidity. It considers both actions and consequences. It involves understanding what is likely to help or hurt people, thinking helpful rather than hurtful thoughts, and putting our systemic value insights into practice. Extrinsic ethics presupposes systemic ethics. *Affectively*, extrinsic moral goodness involves very ordinary human feelings, emotions, pleasures, attitudes, preferences, approvals, attitudes, likings, desires, and interests. *Practically*, extrinsic ethics involves *acting* rightly, which

goes deeper than mere rational objectivity. Pro-social desires, if often practiced and reinforced, can become moral habits, dispositions, and virtues. Though it is only long-range egoism, what philosophers call "reciprocal altruism" is a good expression of extrinsic moral goodness. Most of us, for very practical reasons, find the "social contract" that codifies reciprocal altruism very desirable: "I won't hurt you if you won't hurt me; I will help you if you will help me." Thereby we get along and muddle through. Since we are by nature social beings, most of us desire at times to help a few others in unselfish ways. Here the line between extrinsic and intrinsic morality grows fuzzy, depending on the depth and scope of such imperatives, desires, and affections. Most ordinary people are systemically or extrinsically ethical and get along well enough with others without being moral saints and heroes.

3. *Intrinsic virtue ethics* rationally involves applying the Form of the Good to all persons, self and others, as explored in the next section. Virtuous people also consider and are guided by ethical rules (rational or systemic ethics), but they understand that rules are incomplete, general, often conflicting, and never displace good judgment by good people in concrete circumstances. Virtuous people are also morally active people, so virtue ethics also includes extrinsic ethics. Affectively, intrinsic virtue ethics involves the most profound manifestations of morally good motives and enduring moral affections and virtues. As I explained elsewhere,

Intrinsic morality is the highest level of morality, but it is not the sum total of ethics. [There is also systemic and extrinsic moral goodness.] It is based upon and manifests genuine and profound love, empathy, compassion, and self-identification with others. Its requirements go far beyond those of systemic and extrinsic ethics. With increasing degrees of intensity and

specification, all three levels of morality orient us toward and are governed by the basic principle of morality: We *ought always to identify, prefer, choose, and do what is best, that is, what is likely to be richest in good-making properties*. The systemic level gives more specific action-guiding moral rules for optimizing moral goodness; the extrinsic level largely lives it but without great passion; the intrinsic level does it best, most thoroughly, and with the most intense, profound, and saintly moral motives and virtues. (*Ibid*, p.156)

Intrinsic moral goodness includes systemic and extrinsic moral goodness, but it goes beyond them by degrees if not in absolute kind. To understand this, we must reflect on how the Form of the Good applies to individual persons.

The Intrinsic-Good-Making Properties of Persons

People may be good or valuable in several different ways. We will now consider the intrinsic goodness of persons, which includes their uniqueness and their moral goodness or virtues. Morally good people take the intrinsic goodness of all persons fully into account conceptually, behaviorally, and affectively. We must now consider some of the good-making properties of intrinsically valuable persons.

What intrinsic-good-making properties do people have that extrinsic and systemic goods lack? Persons are intrinsically good, ends in themselves, valuable in themselves or for their own sakes, *because* they exemplify many intrinsic-good-making qualities not exemplified by mere things or by mere ideas, formalities, and beliefs. Among these are: minds, awareness, consciousness, thoughts, sensitivity, feelings, actions, and values of their own. Explaining this involves applying the Form of the Good to persons.

Modern sociobiology has made it fashionable once more to think seriously about human nature, about properties shared in common by all human beings. Having distant common ancestors and a common genetic heritage makes us more alike than different the world over. Sociobiology as well as axiology invites us to consider what we are like essentially as human beings. Having common good-making properties does not necessarily mean that these properties are only or distinctively human, that no other living creatures have them. Axiology invites us to assess the value significance of our essential properties, whatever they are, and no matter who or what else shares them. Again, there is no definitive list, but we will consider some obvious possibilities.

To decide whether anything is good, we must create or identify a conceptual standard composed of relevant good-making properties, then apply this standard to it. Deciding whether anything is intrinsically good requires more specific *ideal criteria for intrinsic goodness* that distinguish it from extrinsic and systemic goodness. So, what intrinsic-good-making properties do people (and other conscious beings) have by virtue of which they are valuable for their own sakes, ends to, in, and for themselves? These can be divided into three groups, generically human properties, unique individual properties, and moral properties. People are ends in themselves because they exemplify the following intrinsic-good-making properties.

1. *Generically Human Intrinsic-Good-Making properties.* Some intrinsic-good-making properties are common to all human beings everywhere. Consider these examples.

Consciousness. We know from experience what consciousness is. We experience it every time we wake up from a good night's sleep. We know that through it we are aware of many things and take account of our environment; but we have many unanswered

questions about it. We know that consciousness is embodied, that it is intimately related to the functioning of our brains, but we really do not know how (though there are many theories about this). Yet, we do know that it is very real and causally effective. Consciousness partly accounts for our intrinsic goodness.

Self-consciousness and self-concern. Not only are we aware, when awake, of what is present and going on in our environment, but we are also aware of ourselves, of what is present and going on within ourselves. We are immediately aware of our own thoughts, feelings, choices, and actions, and of their temporality. Further, we are concerned about ourselves and about our own thoughts, feelings, choices, and actions. Such things matter greatly to us. By nature, we are self-concerned, self-interested. We anticipate and care about our own future, what we will think, feel, experience, choose, and do tomorrow and later. We plan ahead, though some do this better and further than others. Some have long-range plans of life, though their specificity varies from person to person and from time to time within each person. We are valuable to, for, and in ourselves partly because we are directly aware of and care about ourselves.

Intelligence is a very broad concept that includes our systemic capacities to remember or image past events, create concepts, make judgments, generalize, draw logical inferences (reasoning), and imagine things not immediately experienced, including future possibilities for actualization. Because we are intelligent beings by nature, we are curious. We wonder, we seek and find knowledge and truth, and we value such things. Although we are intelligent or rational beings, we should not think that our intrinsic goodness depends on reason or intelligence alone. Nor should we vainly boast or assume that only human beings are intelligent. Still, intelligence is one of our intrinsic-good-making properties.

Feelings or affections, broadly understood to include all desires, appetites, emotions, affections, purposes, interests, approvals, moods, enjoyments, attitudes, etc., are among our intrinsic-good-making properties. Without feelings we would have no values at all; we would not care about anything. Non-human animals (rational by degrees) as well as human animals (also rational by degrees) have feelings, so intrinsic-good-making properties are not distinctively human. Shared intrinsic-good-making properties indicate that some non-human living things also have intrinsic worth. Animals have feelings, but mere things and mere thoughts do not. Some of our feelings (e.g., of hatred and revenge) are among our moral bad-making properties. Having feelings partly accounts for our intrinsic goodness. Feelings are also integral to intrinsic moral goodness, particularly those feelings involved in profound love, empathy, compassion, delight, and concentration.

Creativity, choosing, and acting are universal human properties that contribute to our overall intrinsic goodness. All human beings are creative, make choices, and act upon them. Some people are much more creative, make more momentous decisions with more consequential effects, than others. We constantly make creative choices in dealing with the ordinary affairs of life and in relating to others, even if we are not immensely creative artists, musicians, writers, thinkers, philosophers, inventors, social engineers, or moral activists. All of us are partly self-creative, and our initiatives influence human, animal, and environmental others by degrees. All of us are responsible for the choices we make, i.e., for the voluntary control we exercise over what we think, how we feel, and what we do, and for our immediate and long-range effects. Many of us are immensely creative and concentrate intensely on what we are creating (e.g., works of art, or systems of thought, or inventions, or better social

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conditions and relations), and we intensely identify ourselves with our products during our most creative moments.

Values and evaluations are common human intrinsic-good-making properties. We recognize value-objects and evaluate them in three dimensions. Mere things and mere thoughts do not. Living is valuing. All of our waking moments involve evaluating value-objects. One of our intrinsic-good-making properties is that we both recognize and identify ourselves with intrinsic goodness. We also recognize and attach ourselves by degrees to other kinds of goodness.

Perhaps other common human properties should be added to this list of intrinsic-good-making properties, but we have enough before us to show how the Form of the Good applies to our own intrinsic goodness. We are intrinsically valuable because we actually exemplify these ideal good-making properties. We fulfill this concept. Yet, at least one more property is absolutely essential for intrinsic goodness, and here it is.

Uniqueness or individuality contributes significantly to our being final ends, valuable in, to, and for ourselves. Here "individuality" does not mean "individualism" in the pejorative sense — eccentric selfishness, excessive self -centeredness, or exclusive self-interestedness. No, "uniqueness" or "individuality" just means "having properties that nothing else has" (*Ibid*, pp.56-61). Not having some important things in common with others is one of the most important things that we all have in common! No human being is only generically human, having only abstract general capacities for consciousness, self-consciousness, intelligence, feelings and affections, creative choice-making, etc. Concretely, all of us have properties that no one else has. All of us are distinct individuals, unrepeated and unrepeatable under the sun, and our uniqueness is one of our most important intrinsic-good-making properties. Keep in mind that uniqueness alone does not account

for our intrinsic worth because, in a sense, all mindless thoughts and things are also unique, that is, all have at least one property that nothing else has; and they may be so regarded and valued. Intrinsic worth requires all the other common human properties already discussed plus uniqueness. So what are some of our individuating or unshared properties?

1. All universally human properties are concretely combined or configured in each person in absolutely unique ways (as are our fingerprints, iris eye patterns, genes, etc).

2. Every person occupies an absolutely unique position in space and time. No one else was ever born exactly where and when I was born, and no one else sits exactly where I sit as I now type these words. Such spatiotemporal uniqueness extends throughout life. Human spatiotemporality involves embodiment; no one else has my body; no one else has yours.

3. Every person constantly enjoys an absolutely unique and distinctive perspective on the universe. No one else sees or otherwise experiences anything from exactly my point of view.

4. All persons make their own choices. No one else makes them for us, or makes them at all. Each new choice is an additional good-making property (as is every other new positive experience). Time constantly enriches our axiological goodness.

5. What was just said of choice is also true of all previously discussed universally human intrinsic-good-making properties in the concrete. Each person is consciously and self-consciously unique with respect to all the *details* of consciousness and self-consciousness, all the particulars of functioning intelligence, affections, and actions. In the abstract, we have many desirable general capacities in common; in particular, mine are only mine, and yours are only yours.

6. Considered concretely rather than in the abstract, all of us have our own distinctive personal projects, stations in life, and responsibilities to ourselves and others.

7. All of us have our own unique self-concepts, self-knowledge, self-ideals, and self-expectations.

8. Each of us can only die once in, to, and for ourselves. Nobody else can do it for me. No one else can do it for you.

This list might be extended indefinitely, but enough has been said to make the essential point about uniqueness. We are not intrinsically good simply because we are generically human. In addition, we are individual or individuated persons, and we are valuable in, to, for, and because of our absolute uniqueness. We can and should value all persons in their uniqueness and not just as generically human. Values that are not unique, e.g., our generic human properties, and our social properties or roles, are replaceable without loss of goodness by any other individual who exemplifies those properties (to the same degree). Unless we have formed intimate personal relations with them, most people in our lives are replaceable with little or no sense of loss. This is because in practice we value most people only extrinsically or systemically, and all extrinsic and systemic values are replaceable without loss by something or someone else just as good. We can value others through extrinsic or systemic ethics without valuing them through intrinsic ethics, but this still leaves something to be desired.

We do not normally grieve when our students, colleagues, customers, employers, employees, etc. move on or away and are no longer in our lives. We can always get another one if anyone's goodness to us is merely extrinsic or systemic. We do grieve, however, when those who are very close to us, those we value intimately and intrinsically, move away or out of our lives, especially if separated by death. If we did not

cherish uniqueness, we would feel no great loss when a dear friend or loved one dies, just as a shopkeeper feels no great loss when a customer walks away, Yet, this is not so; we do grieve when intimates are lost. But can't dear friends and loved ones also be replaced without loss by other friends and loved ones, just like passing customers or most of the students in last year's classes? Not so. Grief focuses primarily on uniqueness, not just on common humanity, or on repeatable social roles (usefulness to others), or on systemic conformity. Friends and loved ones may have beneficial successors, but they cannot be replaced intrinsically. If we comprehend that, we have understood the value of unique and intrinsically valuable persons.

A philosophical consideration about "Who am I?" may help to show how the common property of "having properties that no one else has" (uniqueness) is essential to our having intrinsic worth. This question can be asked and answered by everyone, so the "I" used here is everyone's "I." According to Formal Axiology's understanding of "self," *I am the integrated unity and totality of all of my properties,* whether good or bad (*Ibid*, pp.58-61). But none of us are finished or completed integrated totalities. We exist in time. We are becomings, not mere beings; and every moment adds new and interesting good-making (or bad-making) properties to our integrated totality—new sensory and introspective experiences, new thoughts and beliefs, new feelings, desires, appetites, emotions, purposes, interests, moods, attitudes, approvals, enjoyments, etc., and new choices and creative practical endeavors. Time constantly adds to the richness of who "I" am, to the richness of my concrete intrinsic-good-making properties. So it is with all of us. The *number* of good-making properties in abstract "humanity" can be counted easily; the *number* of good-making properties in unique individuals is so vast that it is practically impossible to count them.

More could be said about the intrinsic goodness of human beings, but this is enough for now. Note that morally wicked people exemplify all of the preceding intrinsic-good-making properties that morally good people exemplify. They are conscious, self-conscious, self-concerned, and intelligent. They have feelings, make creative choices, have values, and are unique individuals. They are intrinsically good even when they are morally bad. Our capacities for morality, degrees of it, or the lack of it, are also integral aspects of our uniqueness. Thus, another universal intrinsic-good-making properties is that *we can be either morally good or morally bad*, or fall somewhere in between by degrees. So how does Formal Axiology deal with moral or ethical goodness and badness?

2. *Morally Desirable Good-Making Properties or Virtues.* "Intrinsically good" and "morally good" are distinctive concepts that can be independently fulfilled, even if the notions overlap in content. They have different good-making properties, and they apply to different people to the degree that they exemplify such good-making properties. No one can fail to be intrinsically good; anyone can fail to be morally good.

Morally good-making properties are commonly called "virtues." Moral virtues are enduring dispositions to behave morally. Aristotle suggested that morally right or correct actions are those that morally virtuous persons would do. What is now called "virtue ethics" springs from this insight. Identifying morally correct actions in this manner requires an understanding of the moral virtues of morally good persons. Many moral virtues have been identified, such as wisdom, courage, temperance, justice, humility, truthfulness, and honesty; but we will concentrate on a few that have special significance within the framework of Axiological Virtue Ethics, those involving the intrinsic evaluation of others.

Intrinsic virtue ethics involves and presupposes systemic and extrinsic ethics. Intrinsic ethics is both informed and active. Applying the Form of the Good to the concept of "morally good person," here are some relevant good-making properties or *moral virtues*.

Conscience. All people, by nature, and not just by culture, have an internal systemic moral compass, commonly called "conscience." Its clarity and strength varies from person to person. It may be colored or distorted by culture and upbringing, but we all have it (except maybe sociopaths). Carefully considered, it approves of certain ways of relating to people and disapproves of others. Morally good people are attuned to and do not suppress conscience. They have an easy conscience because they actually do what conscience requires, and they refrain from what conscience prohibits.

Empathy. No one can be a morally good person systemically or extrinsically without conscience, a sense of and beliefs about right and wrong, and actions flowing from them; but intrinsic empathy goes further and is equally essential. Conscience could not function effectively without some degree of it. Empathy is the ability to imagine oneself in someone else's place, in "someone else's shoes," as we often say. Empathy positively values the goodness in someone else's life, whether it be systemic (mental), extrinsic (physical, social, active, or practical), or intrinsic (inner personal). Empathy requires imagination. It functions when we imagine the goodness in someone's else's life, especially when our own thoughts, feelings, words, and actions affect them. Imagining how we might affect others for better or for worse, and how they would respond to that, motivates the highest morally good or ethical behavior. One of the most important and universally accepted formal aids to empathy is commonly called the "Golden Rule." Exactly what it says may

be expressed in many different ways: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. Do not hurt others if you would not have them hurt you. Desire for others what you would desire for yourself. Love for others what you would love for yourself. Love others as you love yourself. All versions of the Golden Rule require imagining how others would be affected by what we do, *assuming that we have their thoughts, beliefs, feelings, desires, habits, and interests,* not that they have ours. Virtuous persons are empathetic and act accordingly. Empathy is a fundamental good-making-property of morally good persons.

Compassion. Empathy focuses on the *goodness* in the lives of others, and on acting to enhance that goodness. Compassion attends to *the undesirable things or harms* in the lives of others, and on how to act to alleviate or avoid inflicting them. Empathy rejoices with those who rejoice; compassion suffers with those who suffer. Evils in the lives of others may be systemic (undesirable thoughts and beliefs, e.g. falsehoods, confusions), extrinsic (undesirable physical or social conditions or behaviors), or intrinsic (undesirable inner or personal conditions, experiences, or passivities). Existing evils in the lives of others are not necessarily inflicted by us. They may be already there. Compassionate people identify with the sufferings and losses of others. They do what they can to console those who suffer and to alleviate their suffering and losses. Compassion imagines the harms that we might inflict on others, and it is merciful. Compassion does not inflict harms on others that we would not wish to have inflicted on ourselves, and it acts to alleviate already existing harms that we would want relieved if we were in their place.

Identification with others. Empathy and compassion manifest an underlying intense axiological/psychological

moral identification of self with others. Artistic, practical, and intellectual creativity, concentration, and consumption involve intense personal identification with and evaluation of works of art, physical things, social conditions in the world, and intellectual products. We may robustly identify ourselves with systemic goods, with extrinsic goods, and with intrinsic goods.

When we identify ourselves profoundly with intrinsically good things, with other people, something very strange and interesting happens to us. We are transformed. We are no longer narrowly and exclusively self-interested or self-centered selves. The "self" is changed into something much more inclusive and expansive. Psychologically and axiologically, we somehow become one with others. Ontologically, we are still unique and distinct individuals, but our internal self-identity now includes their self-identity. The metaphysical differences between us no longer matter and often are no longer even noticed. Their systemic, extrinsic, and intrinsic goodness become our systemic, extrinsic, and intrinsic goodness. The systemic, extrinsic, and intrinsic harms that befall them now befall us. When we identify intensely with others, our lives are enriched immensely but not selfishly, for their good-making properties in every value dimension now become our own good-making properties. We are no longer the narrowly self-absorbed persons we were before. With respect to their ills, here too our lives are enriched as we suffer compassionately with those who suffer and strive to help them.

Integrity. Being consistently or constantly true to ourselves, to the goodness that is in us, to the best that is in us, to our highest intuitions and ideals, is integrity. Morally good persons have systemic integrity, extrinsic integrity, and intrinsic integrity. They are honest, truthful, responsible, reliable, and conscientious. They have high standards. They are dependably helpful and actually live up to their highest

ideals of goodness. They are open to finding and becoming something even better. They assume personal responsibility for who and what they are and do. They have profound self-esteem and value themselves as well as others intrinsically.

Many other moral virtues could be identified and discussed, e.g., *a sense of justice* that issues in treating people fairly and with due respect, but perhaps enough has been said about the intrinsic moral virtues emphasized by Axiological Virtue Ethics. *Morally right actions* are those that would be done by people who are conscientious, empathetic, and compassionate, who identify themselves with others, who are consistently true or faithful in thoughts, words, and deeds to the best of the goodness within themselves, and who are fair and just in their dealings with others. Moral rules are never sufficiently precise or inclusive so as to eliminate the necessity for the individual judgments and decisions of virtuous people.

Many hard questions about how to apply axiological ethics remain to be answered. For example, what does all of this imply for highly controversial current issues in medical ethics, ethics and animals, ethics and the environment, inevitable conflicts between intrinsically valuable lives, degrees of intrinsic goodness, etc.? These remain beyond the scope of this essay, though I have discussed some of them elsewhere (Edwards, 1991, pp.81-104).

Instead of now dealing with the very large topic of moral vices and negative thoughts, deeds, and feelings, this discussion will conclude with some brief comments on just a few common but serious obstacles to becoming and being morally virtuous persons.

3. *Major Obstacles to Virtuous Living.* Not everyone is morally good. Bad people exist in the world, and most people exist in a fuzzy realm somewhere between the best

and the worst that they could be. Why is it so hard for us to be or become morally good people? Here are a few of the many obstacles.

Undervaluing other people. Even when we attach some positive value to people, as most of us usually do, we may regard them as having less value than they actually have, and we may act accordingly. We may view them only or primarily extrinsically, and thus exploit them and treat them as mere means to our own ends, without acknowledging their intrinsic worth, without taking adequate account of their own beliefs, plans, projects, physical well being, or inner feelings, desires, habits, and interests, and without treating them as ends in themselves. It *is* morally permissible to use people; we do it appropriately and with proper respect much of the time; but we may not *merely* use people and disregard or disvalue their intrinsic reality and worth, just as Kant suggested. We often disregard or thwart what is best for others for the sake of our own material or social gains, thus undervaluing their intrinsic goodness for the sake of our own extrinsic well being. We may undervalue others who disagree with us, or who do not fit neatly into our own belief systems and ways of thinking, thus ranking their intrinsic personal worth lower than our own systemic conceptual values. Ideologists and fanatics of every description constantly do this.

Not valuing others intrinsically actually diminishes us, though we may not realize it. We hurt ourselves when we do not identify ourselves with others, when we do not take their goodness into ourselves and make it our own. As often noted, people can be very moral in some ways, e.g., systemically and extrinsically, without being profoundly or intrinsically moral. People who know what is right and act accordingly may be extrinsically moral—because it pays, or systemically moral—

duty only for the sake of duty (see Kant, 1969, pp.6-7, pp.18-20), but not for the sake of people. Yet, such people are missing out on something very important. To some degree, egoists and reciprocal altruists may resent the fact that innumerable good-making properties belong to and within others, and that all the goodness in the universe is not exclusively their own. Yet anyone really can make all the goodness in the universe their own by not caring that it is not exclusively their own, by delighting in its presence with and in others, and by identifying as fully as possible with all in all. Such intrinsically moral (and saintly) people live lives as meaningful and rich in goodness as it is possible for any human life to be.

Disvaluing other people takes the practical axiological errors of undervaluation to extremes. We may regard people as having little or no value, but we may go even further and regard them as so inherently evil that we are allowed if not obligated to inflict evils of any or every description upon them by any means available to us. We may regard others, our "enemies," as inherently evil because they now threaten or in the past have damaged our way of thinking, our social or material prosperity, or our inner feelings and reality. Moral vices like hatred and revenge disvalue people as such. Greed and envy disvalue their property—as long as they have it, while positively coveting it for ourselves. Dogmatism and ideology disvalue their beliefs and life-forms if different from our own. Such vices are major obstacles to moral goodness. Better means richer in goodness. Love is better than hatred. Forgiveness and mercy are better than revenge. Delight in the prosperity of others is better than greed and envy. Equality is better than snobbery or domineering. Inclusion is better than exclusion. Forbearance is better than dogmatism. Helping is better than hurting. Building is better than destroying. Peace is better than war. These are difficult moral lessons for

anyone anywhere to learn and practice, but the world would be a much better place for all if we did.

The insider/outsider distinction. One of the most natural but morally pernicious distinctions made by almost everyone (except for moral saints) is that between insiders and outsiders. Insiders are people who have moral standing with us; they belong to our moral community; outsiders don't. We feel that we have moral duties to help and not hurt insiders, but not outsiders. Insiders are "our kind of people;" outsiders are "those kind of people," "strangers," "aliens," "enemies." We care about what happens to insiders, but not to outsiders, strangers, aliens, enemies. Using the insider/outsider distinction, we inordinately limit the scope of our moral concerns, duties, and frames of reference. We regularly use it to ignore, underestimate, or even disvalue the intrinsic worth of others.

Modern sociobiologists tell us that when morality first originated, it was applied only to members of one's own tribe or clan, but not to outsiders, not to those who do not belong. Thus, by nature we seem to care morally only for persons of kin and kind. Even within our own social groups and cultures, we distinguish between superiors and inferiors, to whom we have more or less stringent moral obligations. Many philosophers and serious thinkers insist that we must somehow expand the scope of our moral concerns beyond kin, kind, and social class. Philosophers insist that morality is necessarily universal in scope and application, and many other people say that as human beings we are all brothers and sisters of one another and should act accordingly, but are they fighting a losing battle with human nature? Let us hope not.

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Self-Deceit and Moral Philosophy

Sam Fleischacker[1]

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the role of moral philosophers in answering concrete moral conundrums. It proposes that the very stance we take up when we do moral philosophy — the theoretical, disengaged stance — encourages us in our tendency to self-deception rather than leading us honestly to confront the emotional obstacles that, often, block us from decent action. The proposal is defended by way of the astute account of self-deceit, and of the failings of moral philosophy, in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

1. Professor of Philosophy, Philosophy Department, University of Illinois-Chicago, USA; fleischert@sbcglobal.net.

Introduction

My mother was diagnosed with lung cancer in January 2001, and given less than a year to live. In September, two months before she died, the cancer went to her brain. She did not lose all her cognitive faculties — sometimes she was very lucid — but she became confused enough that her power to make medical decisions passed to her designated legal representative for health care. Due to a mix-up at the hospital — not, unfortunately, an uncommon occurrence at hospitals in America — it was unclear at first whether my sister or I was my mother's representative, and that unclarity led to an angry argument between the two of us. The argument concerned whether my mother should be given a large enough dose of morphine to relieve the suffering she was then undergoing, at the cost of putting her into a virtual coma and almost certainly shortening her remaining life. My sister, with the rest of our family and the doctor behind her, was in favor of giving the morphine. I, with certain Jewish traditions behind me along with my mother's express concern over the past few months to live as long as possible, was opposed. On certain views of consent, my mother's declaration that she wanted to keep living would presumably settle the matter in favor of my view, but before she had gotten sick my mother had also declared, about other people who were prolonging their lives vainly, that she would never want to struggle on like that for a little extra life. So if one looks to the will of the patient, there was something to be said for both my sister's and my view of the situation. If one looks on the other hand to utilitarian considerations, or religious views of the end of life, one could again find arguments to support both giving the painkillers and not giving them. How, then, should my sister and I have resolved our disagreement?

I'm not going to answer that, at least right now. What I want to ask here is whether it is the job of moral philosophers to help us answer questions like this. And the answer I want to propose to *that* question — against, I think, the view of many of my colleagues — is "no."

What is the point of doing moral philosophy? If you ask many contemporary moral philosophers, they will tell you that the moral philosopher can help settle difficult moral controversies. It is hard for ordinary folks to figure out whether abortion is right or not, whether the death penalty should be abolished, or what obligations we have to nonhuman animals: philosophers, it is said, can solve or at least shed important light on these controversies. In addition, we face new challenges in the modern day, which raise ethical questions no-one ever imagined before. Should we allow human cloning? Is there something sordid about cosmetic surgery? Philosophers, we are told, are better situated than other people to take up these new challenges from a moral point of view.

Now, to be sure, some moral philosophers are skeptical of these grand claims, and would be happy if philosophy could simply help ordinary people to think more clearly, or establish certain basic features of ethics, such as whether actions or character should be the main objects of moral evaluation. But even these philosophers often try to contribute to public debates over abortion or famine policy, or suggest that their favored philosophical approach should guide everyday moral deliberations.

I would like in this paper to propose that even the weakest versions of these ambitions for the place of moral philosophy in everyday life may be inappropriate — that moral philosophy tends to be *harmful* rather than helpful to the

settlement of real ethical questions. I will present this thesis, first, by laying out some themes from Adam Smith, which he took to challenge certain kinds of moral philosophy. I will then describe some of the implications I take Smith's criticisms to have for much of what we try to do today in moral philosophy, and I'll conclude by briefly sketching some alternative goals for the moral philosopher.

1. Adam Smith on Self-Deceit

To begin with, then, a passage from Smith. Consider first the rich analysis of the nature of self-deceit, and its importance, in part III of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS):

> When we are about to act, the eagerness of passion will seldom allow us to consider what we are doing, with the candour of an indifferent person. The violent emotions which at that time agitate us, discolour our views of things; even when we are endeavouring to place ourselves in the situation of another, and to regard the objects that interest us in the light in which they will naturally appear to him, the fury of our own passions constantly calls us back to our own place, where everything appears magnified and misrepresented by self-love. Of the manner in which those objects would appear to another ... we can obtain ... but instantaneous glimpses, which vanish in a moment, and which, even while they last, are not altogether just. We cannot even for that moment divest ourselves entirely of the heat and keenness with which our peculiar situation inspires us ...The passions, ... as ... Malebranche says, all justify themselves, and seem reasonable and proportioned to their objects, as long as we continue to feel them.
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> When the action is over ..., and the passions which prompted it have subsided, we can enter more coolly

into the sentiments of the indifferent spectator. ... It is seldom, however, that [our judgments] are quite candid even in this case. ... The opinion which we entertain of our own character depends entirely on our judgments concerning our past conduct. It is so disagreeable to think ill of ourselves, that we often purposely turn away our view from those circumstances which might render that judgment unfavourable. He is a bold surgeon, they say, whose hand does not tremble when he performs an operation upon his own person; and he is often equally bold who does not hesitate to pull off the mysterious veil of self-delusion, which covers from his view the deformities of his own conduct. Rather than see our own behaviour under so disagreeable an aspect, we too often, foolishly and weakly, endeavour to exasperate anew those unjust passions which had formerly misled us; we endeavour by artifice to awaken our old hatreds, and irritate afresh our almost forgotten resentments: we even exert ourselves for this miserable purpose, and thus persevere in injustice, merely because we once were unjust, and because we are ashamed and afraid to see that we were so.

... This self-deceit, this fatal weakness of mankind, is the source of half the disorders of human life. (TMS [Smith 1976a], III.4.4,6; 157-8)

I'd like to draw attention to several details of this passage. First, note that Smith takes it to be a feature of *agency*, not an accidental human flaw, that our passions get overly heated. The "eagerness of passion" is what carries us forward into action at all. Cool, distant judges would not get themselves out of their chairs to *do* anything; like the angels in Wim Wenders' film, *Wings of Desire*; they would simply *observe* the world. So passion and the distortions that come with it, are features of agency, not something we could get rid of and still be able to act.

Second, as I've just indicated by talking of "distortions," the passions that move us affect how we *perceive* a situation, for Smith. The passions of self-love "magnify" and "misrepresent" all objects that concern ourselves, and make it difficult to see how those objects might "appear" to someone else, although we can catch "glimpses" of those appearances: perception language runs throughout the passage. Moreover, the passions *distort* our perceptions, and even though we know that, we cannot easily correct for that distortion. We might think we could stand beyond our passions, and then evaluate how they are distorting our perceptions, but Smith endorses Malebranche's claim that our passions all seem reasonable as long as we continue to feel them. So the passions distort our perception but we can't see how they distort it until we stop feeling the passions.

Smith captures here a very deep aspect of self-deceit: that we can be perfectly well aware that certain feelings are likely to distort our perceptions, yet nevertheless endorse the distorted perceptions for as long as we experience the feelings. To take a trivial example: my wife has a fast metabolism and gets cranky when she is hungry: she is therefore cranky before lunch and dinner almost every day. Now my wife *knows* this about herself, yet when she is in the cranky state, she regularly insists that she is annoyed by objective features of her environment and not just because she is hungry. *Occasionally*, I have seen her — and other people with similar physiologies — acknowledge that she is just hungry and should not think about whatever seems to be annoying her until she has eaten something, but most of the time her crankiness "justif[ies itself,] and seem[s] reasonable and proportioned to [its] objects, as long as [she] continue[s] to feel it."

A far more serious version of this phenomenon occurs in discussions of political subjects that arouse great passions, like the Israel/Palestine conflict, especially among people who feel involved in that conflict. The passions that such people feel about the conflict distort their ability even to read the facts fairly, let alone to take up the perspective of those on the other side. But if we now accept the first point I have drawn from our Smith passage — that passions are essential to agency, to our ability to act — we can see that the distortion in people's perceptions of issues like the Israel/Palestine conflict cannot be easily overcome. The effort to get beyond our own passions, even to be able to see the facts of a situation clearly, is itself a form of action, hence itself something that requires passion. But then trying to see beyond our own passions will truly be an effort to raise ourselves up by our own bootstraps, something we will do at best only momentarily, only enough to catch "an instantaneous glimpse" of the relevant facts, as Smith says, and not an "altogether just" one at that.

To return now to the passage from Smith: perhaps the most unusual feature of it is that Smith denies that we commonly see either the real facts of a situation, or own true motivations, even *after* we act. "It is so disagreeable to think ill of ourselves," he says, that even after our actions are over "we often purposely turn away our view from those circumstances which might render [our] judgment [of our actions] unfavourable." Here Smith probes the darker aspects of human nature more deeply than practically any of his Enlightenment contemporaries. And his point about our retrospective judgment of our actions is rooted, I think, in a profound understanding of the *function* of self-judgment in our lives. Our opinion of ourselves depends on our past conduct. We know that we have no self other than the one that expresses itself in our actions, and we know that our past

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selves largely determine what we are like now, that we do not simply start afresh every moment. So we have a deep stake in seeing our past selves as good. We are, mostly, what we were; if we were weak or contemptible people in the past, we are probably weak and contemptible now. But it is very difficult to get ourselves to do anything, it is difficult even to take actions to *improve* ourselves, if we must see ourselves as weak and contemptible. So instead of honestly facing our real motivations in the past, even if that might be the only way to improve ourselves, we attempt to re-evoke the passions that misled us into wrong action in the first place: we "irritate afresh our almost forgotten resentments." We are "ashamed and afraid" to see what we were truly like in the past, lest we have to conclude that we are worse people, now, that we can bear to think. The word choice here seems to me exactly right. Shame is a feeling that other people despise us, a feeling of being naked or disgusting in other people's eyes. If we have to see ourselves as acting on petty resentments, or greed, or lust, we will be ashamed of ourselves, first and foremost; we will feel we have lost the attractive persona that we need in order to interact with the people around us. In addition, we will be afraid: of punishment or retaliation, of the effort needed to make restitution for past wrongdoing and the danger that our victims will rebuff those efforts, of the effort needed to reform ourselves and the danger that we will not succeed. Since all these emotions are very painful, and since we fear we can do nothing about what is wrong with ourselves anyway, we distract our attention from a focus on our own characters and re-evoke instead the passions that led us into bad behavior in the first place. And if we succeed, those passions once again justify themselves, for as long as we feel them.

Again, Smith's psychology seems to me exactly right. I find it very difficult to live with an unpleasant picture of myself and therefore am extremely reluctant to spend much time examining possibly bad actions I have taken. Among my friends and acquaintances, even the most psychologically astute, quick with accurate and sharp judgments of other people's conduct, get defensive when any question is raised about their own behavior, and are hardly ever willing to admit that they have acted on a shabby or vicious sentiment. Indeed, this is true of many quite decent people. It is a mark of the best people I know that they can take a great deal of criticism, and are far more willing than others to apologize for things they have done, but even they usually have a significant area of their lives in which they won't brook criticism, and react angrily if they are so much as questioned[1].

We have begun to see how pervasive self-deceit might be, and I hope it now looks at least plausible when Smith says that "self-deceit … is the source of half the disorders of human life." Still, this is an extremely strong statement. *Half* the disorders of human life come from self-deceit? Really? Can self-deceit be worse than greed, envy or cruelty? Surely not, but it is a mistake to understand self-deceit as on par with greed or cruelty. Rather, it is a structure that *enables* these other motives to do their harmful work. Few people set out to do something that they know is unacceptably greedy, or that merely satisfies their envy or cruelty. Rather, they tell themselves that they really deserve the money they are about

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1. Butler 1855: p.459: "In some there is to be observed a general ignorance of themselves and wrong way of thinking and judging in everything relating to themselves — their fortune, reputation, everything in which the self can come in, and this perhaps attended with the rightest judgment in all other matters. In others this partiality is not so general, has not taken hold of the whole man, but is confined to some particular favourite passion, interest, or pursuit."

to cheat their employer out of, or that the injury they are about to inflict on someone is required by justice, or by the needs of a righteous cause[1]. Self-deceit thus enables us to act on our worst motives without recognizing that that is what we are doing. It also enables us to cover over the real nature of what we have done, after it is over, so that we never come to reform our motivational structure properly, and proceed instead to do the same kind of thing in the future. In both these ways, it protects bad sentiments against the moral scrutiny that might otherwise lead us to abandon such sentiments, or at least refrain from acting on them. To some extent, it also provides its own motivation for bad action. Since drawing back "the mysterious veil of self-delusion" is so painful, since we protect ourselves so strongly against having that veil lifted, we tend to react fiercely against anyone who threatens to lift the veil, to confront us with our own shameful motivations. I don't know how much Smith is concerned with this third danger of self-deceit, but even the first two — the fact that self-deceit gives cover to our bad passions when we are on the verge of acting, and the fact that it blocks repentance after we have acted — are enough to make sense of why it might truly be "the source of half the disorders of human life."

2. Smith on the Failings of Moral Philosophy

Smith has an interesting solution to the problem of self-deceit: he suggests that the function of moral rules is to pre-empt the kind of deliberation, case by particular case, that gives room to self-deceit. We "lay down to ourselves a general rule" that certain actions are always to be avoided, and this stops us from inflicting injuries even where we can come up

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1. Smith gives examples, much along these lines, in the next few pages: of self-deceiving resentment on pp.160-61 (III.4.12) and of ideological (religious) self-deceit, leading to murder, on pp.176-7 (III.6.12)

with a clever justification for why the injury is, in this particular case, justifiable. Similarly, rules encourage us to be generous where we might otherwise come up with clever reasons why we needn't bother. I like this solution, and think it looks forward to what Kant wants us to do with his categorical imperative. But I don't want to dwell on that here. Instead, I want to turn to a different theme: what Smith says about self-deceit in connection with the work of moral philosophers.

Consider two further passages from TMS:

> [T]he most sacred regard is due to [the rules of justice]. ... In the practice of the other virtues, our conduct should rather be directed by a certain idea of propriety ... than by any regard to a precise maxim or rule; and we should consider the end and foundation of the rule, more than the rule itself. But it is otherwise with regard to justice: the man who in that refines the least, and adheres with the most obstinate stedfastness to the general rules themselves, is the most commendable, and the most to be depended upon. Though the end of the rules of justice be, to hinder us from hurting our neighbour, it may frequently be a crime to violate them, though we pretend, with some pretext of reason, that this particular violation could do no hurt. A man often becomes a villain the moment he begins, even within his own heart, to chicane in this manner. The moment he thinks of departing from the most staunch and positive adherence to ... those inviolable precepts ..., he is no longer to be trusted, and no man can say what degree of guilt he may not arrive at. The thief imagines he does no evil, when he steals from the rich ... The adulterer imagines he does no evil ... provided he covers his intrigue from the suspicion of the husband, and does not disturb the peace of the family. When once we begin to give way to such

refinements, there is no enormity so gross of which we may not be capable. (TMS III.6.10; 175)

With regard to all ... matters [of ethics aside from justice], what would hold good in any one case would scarce do so exactly in any other ... Books of casuistry, therefore, are generally as useless as they are commonly tiresome. ... One, who is really anxious to do his duty, must be very weak, if he can imagine that he has much occasion for them; and with regard to one who is negligent of it, the style of those writings is not ... likely to awaken him to more attention. None of them tend to animate us to what is generous and noble. None of them tend to soften us to what is gentle and humane. Many of them, on the contrary, tend rather to teach us to chicane with our consciences, and by their vain subtleties serve to authorize innumerable evasive refinements with regard to the most essential articles of our duty. (TMS VII.iv.34; 339-40)

These passages appear in widely separated parts of TMS but they are closely related both linguistically[1] and in argument. The first follows on the discussion of general rules and reminds us that, if the rules are to perform their role of checking self-deceit, we need to humble ourselves to them, not argue with them ("refine" them), even if we think we have a good reason for violating them. Once we start violating the rules, we will find violating them again easier and easier, until we are openly and irredeemably immersed in evil, and "there is no enormity so gross of which we may not be capable."

The second passage suggests that certain kinds of books on ethics — books of casuistry — may *encourage* us in the dangerous process of "refinement" and "chicanery": "One,

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1. Note the words "refinement" and "chicane" in both.

who is really anxious to do his duty," says Smith, "must be very weak, if he can imagine that he has much occasion" for such books. They "tend rather to teach us to chicane with our consciences" than to inspire us with a love for doing our duty. Note here that Smith suggests that a good book on ethics needs a certain kind of *style* more than a particular content, a style that "awakens" us to moral attention, or "animates" us with a passion for being noble or humane. He will end the paragraph by saying explicitly that "it is the principal use of books of morality to excite" in us morally useful emotions. Against the passions that lead us astray, or the self-deceit that clouds those passions, a useful book of morality will excite noble passions, or prick us into a self-examination that unravels some of the lies we have been telling ourselves.

Now we might think that Smith's complaint about unhelpful books of morality is restricted to books of casuistry, but elsewhere he makes clear that that is not so. "[The writings of Swift and Lucian]," he says in his lectures on rhetoric, "together form a System of morality from whence more sound and just rules of life … may be drawn than from most set systems of Morality." Lucian especially, he tells us, "may be an excellent model to those whose particular business it is to teach morality, in opposition to a very different manner which prevails at present." (LRBL [Smith 1983] i.v.125; p.51). He bestows similar praise on certain tragedians and novelists of his own day: "The poets and romance writers, who best paint the refinements and delicacies of love and friendship, and of all other private and domestic affections, Racine and Voltaire; Richardson, Maurivaux, and Riccoboni; are, in such cases, much better instructors than Zeno, Chrysippus, or Epictetus." (TMS III.3.14; 143) By contrast, "the metaphysical sophisms" that the Stoics use to support their views "can seldom serve any other purpose than to blow up the hard insensibility of a coxcomb to ten times its native

impertinence." Here a metaphysical system, not casuistry, plays into the coxcomb's vices; here *metaphysics* reinforces bad character traits. Similarly, when Smith notes in the *Wealth of Nations* that the education in moral philosophy so prized by the Greeks did not lead them to become particularly virtuous, while the Romans, who gave no such a role to philosophy, were rather better human beings, (WN [Smith 1976b] V.i.f.40; pp.774-6), it is moral philosophy as a whole, not just casuistry, that he is calling into question.

Plainly, for Smith moral philosophy has various moral dangers, even when it prescribes the right sorts of actions. It is not just that one might get hold of a bad moral philosophy; there are entire ways of thinking characteristic of philosophy that feed, rather than countering, our self-deceit, and that can therefore harm rather than help our ability to lead a virtuous life. One such way of thinking is casuistry, where we try to determine precisely what is required of us by virtues that are essentially imprecise: casuists attempt "to direct by precise rules what it belongs to feeling and sentiment only to judge of." The false precision involved here allows us to think we have been virtuous when we have merely done the least that can possibly be expected of a person, and to pretend we have not been vicious when we have merely, by a hair's breadth, fulfilled the letter of our duty. General rules have to aim for such a least common denominator, to mandate something that can be required of everyone in every situation, so an attempt to put, say, generosity or courage into a rule will inevitably result in a diminution of those virtues. And even the virtue of justice, which must be made precise for legal purposes, will be watered down for moral purposes if we have to limit truth-telling to not committing outright fraud or perjury, or limit honesty in business to not stealing.

But the deepest problem with casuistry also applies to other kinds of moral philosophy: that engaging in it provides us with an excuse not to think about ourselves and our personal failings — not, in particular, to think about our *emotional* failings, about the ugly passions that may be motivating us. Instead of worrying about what *I am* doing, or about to do, the philosopher invites me to think about what the whole world ought to do. Instead of just applying the appropriate rule to myself, the philosopher invites me to put myself in the place of one who invents moral rules[1]. But this provides a great excuse for self-deceit. Instead of asking myself whether I have just vented my jealousy of a colleague by revealing his unsavory past, I can think about the purpose of norms against gossip, and whether that purpose might allow for me to tell the story I currently want to tell. Certain kinds of misconduct need to be well-known, I say to myself, so that people do not mistakenly trust those who have committed them. I thus see the norm against gossip as if I occupy a point beyond that norm; I theorize about it; I think about it from a disengaged position, in which I can forget about my own motivations. I can thereby skirt the fact that my actual motive for gossiping is jealousy, not the noble wish to help anyone. By thinking about what *people in general* should do, I get to avoid thinking about what *I* am doing. Herein lies the deepest temptation to immorality in moral philosophy. We might say: the philosophical stance lacks what traditional Christians call

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1. In Kant's terms: I am invited to see myself as legislator rather than as subject, as the source of moral law rather than as subservient to it. For Kant, of course, I need to see myself, ultimately, as both legislator and subject, but Kant himself would probably not object to the claim that I should not see myself as legislator when immersed in a push towards action, and in danger therefore of using rationalization to cover over self-deceit and avoid the demands of morality. In any case, any marriage of Kantian ethics with Smith must make this move, as Smith himself does: suggesting that we come up with moral rules in reaction to other people's actions (TMS III.4.7) and then need simply to apply them to ourselves when we find ourselves in the situation in which we condemned or commended those others.

"sin-consciousness," the awareness of how often even our supposedly well-meant theorizing about morals merely serves deeply selfish ends.

Smith indicates, as I have noted, that literature can do a rather better job than philosophy at "excit[ing]" morally useful passions in us. Swift's wit is more likely to prick our vanities and humble our conceits than the writings of any philosopher; Racine, Voltaire and Richardson are the best teachers of love and friendship. The most obvious advantage literature has over philosophy in this regard is that it engages our emotions, rather than allowing us to ignore them. A more subtle advantage may be that it deals with specific circumstances rather than generalities, and it is specific circumstances that awaken our emotions. When we read a novel or see a play, we can't so easily forget ourselves, and if the circumstances described in it resemble a situation in which we are currently enmeshed, we find the work discomfiting, and may come away uneasily pushed towards an action we have been resisting. When we read a work of moral philosophy, by contrast, we are likely to be at most annoyed by the writer if he contradicts our own views about how to act; we are very unlikely to feel moved to change our minds.

3. Applying Smith to Contemporary Moral Philosophy

Let us now bring what we have learned from Smith together with what goes on in current moral philosophy. There are some writers who work on agency and free will and meta-ethical topics like realism. To their credit, they don't claim to help solve actual ethical problems. Nor do they. Then there are the grand political theorists — Rawls and Nozick and some Marxists and other radicals — who mostly offer us large visions unconnected to the details of contemporary politics, but occasionally use their ideas to support policies wildly out

of synch with what the majority of any current democracy is willing to accept[1]. And then there are the "applied" ethicists, of whom the most famous at the moment is Peter Singer, known for his advocacy of a variety of quite ridiculous positions, one of which — that one should not spend large amounts of resources on the elderly and mentally unfit —he is also famous for grossly violating in his own life[2]. But it is too easy to mock Singer. He is not an exception and he is far from the silliest or most morally obtuse of contemporary ethicists. Shelly Kagan has joined Singer in the call for extreme self-deprivation to alleviate world famine; Christine Korsgaard is said to have given a paper using Kant to condemn surprise birthday parties; and Judith Jarvis Thomson's bizarre discussion of abortion has become a philosophical classic. For more intellectually sophisticated examinations of issues about the beginnings and ends of life, one could turn to Frances Kamm or Jeff McMahan, fast becoming the most respected applied ethicists in the mainstream American philosophical community, but it is hard for me to imagine that anyone actually faced with a question about whether to have an abortion or not, or to hasten the death of a loved one, would find much wisdom in the elaborate metaphysics for which Kamm and McMahan are known. Indeed, what Smith says about the Stoics applies directly to work like Kamm's and McMahan's: they offer us "metaphysical sophisms" which are likely to do nothing but feed the insensibility of people who are already finding it difficult to acknowledge their own real emotions, or to empathize adequately with the people who would be affected by their decisions. Far better, if you have a real moral quandary, to read a novel or see a play.

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1. People like Dworkin or Nussbaum or Amartya Sen do write very sensible pieces on current issues, but almost always without drawing much on the philosophical views for which they are well known.
2. See Specter 1999.

Now one problem with the methods of contemporary ethics, which I shall not dwell on here, is that it often proceeds by way of appeal to our intuitions, and that it often makes that appeal by way of wildly unrealistic counterfactuals. That our intuitions might not be uniform is rarely discussed; that they might be culturally and religiously structured is usually not so much as mentioned; and I have rarely seen anyone raise the possibility that their reliability, as evidence of our deeply held moral beliefs, is put under especially great strain when we are asked to apply them to situations very remote from our experience. Jeff McMahan asks us who should properly count as "me" if I undergo a variety of brain-splitting or brain-merging procedures that are possible only in science fiction[1]. But my intuitions about personal identity, and about the moral implications of personal identity, are shaped by my responses to the situations I encounter in my everyday life. Of course, that includes situations I read about in newspapers and history books, but even then there is no reason to suppose that I will so much as *have* an intuition, let alone an intuition I would want to rely on, about situations that occur only in fanciful science fiction scenarios[2]. Moral intuitions are closely tied to moral feelings, and it is part of our biological makeup that we have intense feelings about situations we actually experience or think we are likely to experience, while our feelings weaken the more distant a situation is from us, and disappear when we consider situations we regard as virtually impossible. Only this explains why people tend to *laugh* at the scenarios philosophers dream up, in which mad

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1. McMahan 2002, pp.20-23, 38, 56-61, 83.
2. There is also no reason to think that my intuitions are easily extendable from situations I have experienced to situations very distant from my experience: rather, intuitions, like perceptions, are likely to be indexed to highly concrete circumstances. A rational principle may range over a vast number of cases that are similar only in broad outline, but an intuition is not a principle, nor solely (primarily?) a product of reason.

scientists put our brains in a vat or torture millions of exact replicas of our bodies — why people tend to find these stories funny rather than frightening or tragic.

I promised not to dwell on this issue, however, and I am after larger game: I want to suggest, not that contemporary moral philosophy should drop its reliance on intuitions in favor of the kind of systematic argument to be found in Kantianism or utilitarianism, but that philosophical theorizing *of any kind* may often be the wrong way to go about addressing a real moral problem. Why? Well, consider the way we actually encounter moral problems in real life. In ethics classes, and ethics textbooks, we are usually told about people who face difficult conflicts between moral claims, each of which is prima facie decent and reasonable — the person who has to choose between killing one innocent person and letting many more innocent people die; the person who must either tell a lie or let someone know that she has a fatal disease; the claims, on a university administrator, of color-blind equality on the one hand and affirmative action for oppressed minorities on the other. Or we are asked to think about new situations, unprecedented in human history, for which the ethical norms are unclear: whether people should have babies by a surrogate, or engage in stem cell research, or be cloned. But these are not, I venture to say, the *typical* ethical quandaries in which most people find themselves. Most often, I have to engage in moral thinking when I am tempted to do something that part of me already considers to be wrong. I am tempted to save a few dollars by telling a ticket seller that my children are younger than they are, or by not reporting some income to the government tax office, or by overcharging my university for business expenses. Or I am tempted to have an affair, or to humiliate someone who has made me angry. In my own experience, these are the sorts of circumstances that most lead me to think about morality; I

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have almost never encountered anything like the sorts of dilemmas and curious situations set up by ethics textbooks. (I've certainly never had to guide a runaway trolley car, blow up a fat man in the mouth of a cave, or decide whether to get myself cloned.) I suspect strongly that the same is true for my readers.

But the interesting thing about real ethical situations, as opposed to the ones in the ethics textbooks, is that I have very little doubt about what I ought to do in them. Faced with a choice between cheating or not cheating my government or my employer, or having and not having an affair, I don't have any real doubt about what the appropriate action is. I am not faced with two equally good moral claims, and the problem of finding an appropriate principle to settle the difference between them. Indeed, the most obvious reason why these kinds of situations don't crop up in ethics textbooks is that they seem philosophically uninteresting[1].

What I face instead, in these cases, is the question of *how to get myself to do* what I already know is the right thing to do. That means, above all, that I need to deal with the age-old struggle between conscience and temptation, the struggle against what religious Jews call "the evil desire" and religious Christians sometimes call "Satan." In that struggle it may be that philosophical thinking plays no role at all. But part of this struggle usually involves coming to grips with the ancient question, which *is* a philosophical one, about whether there might sometimes be good reason to suspend morality altogether, whether the best human life is always and necessarily the moral life. Faced with a strong temptation, I am often inclined to ask myself, at least for a moment, why I bother trying to be moral, whether I might not better, at least

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1. It's interesting to note that Kant, for one, did not avoid cases like these. The cases in his *Groundwork* are almost all of this kind.

on this occasion, ignore morality. And there are a variety of not foolish reasons, from the critique of bourgeois morality made famous by Marx and Nietzsche, to Kierkegaard's religious reasons for going beyond ethics, to the arguments of rational egoists from Thrasymachus onwards, to suppose that morality might not, in fact, always be the best guide to a good human life.

We now get to the crux of the problem with moral philosophy. The arguments I have mentioned for throwing off the yoke of morality have all been made famous by philosophers, and that is no accident. Philosophy stands, by its very nature, at a certain remove from ordinary life, suspending what we take for granted. That stance is indeed a defining mark of what philosophy is, since the time of Socrates, and it is essential to the two main tasks that philosophers have generally set themselves: 1) seeking foundations for ordinary ways of talking and thinking, and 2) criticizing those ordinary practices. In order to provide either a theoretical foundation or a critique of ordinary practice, we need to suspend its hold upon us, set it at a distance from ourselves. But in the circumstances of moral temptation, the agent is not normally in need of a theoretical foundation for or critique of his ordinary norms and practices — *precisely* what the agent most needs is a greater emotional attachment to those norms and practices. And precisely what the agent most needs to avoid is any greater distance between himself and his ordinary morality. So if the situations that call for moral thought are most often ones in which, rather than facing two equally plausible moral claims, we face a temptation to throw off the yoke of morality altogether, and if philosophy lends itself to the development of intelligent views that make it seem reasonable to throw off that yoke, then philosophy may often come into our moral deliberations in the form of *an aid to the temptation to immorality*, rather

than an aid to the proper resolution of our quandaries. What we need to do, in these cases, is not difficult: the right path is a simple one, laid out in front of the philosopher as clearly as it is to any unphilosophical fool. The impulse to make the issue difficult is already part of the temptation not to do the right thing; our philosophical skills merely come in to help us justify what the fool already believes, rightly, we should *not* do. "A man often becomes a villain," as Smith says, "the moment he begins, even within his own heart, to chicane [with his conscience] in this manner." It follows that we may make best use of philosophy, when tempted to "chicane in this manner," only to fend off the very temptation to do philosophy. What we philosophers can properly do with our philosophical skills is undermine the *bad* philosophies, or bad uses of philosophy, that tempt us — in Marxist or Nietzschean or rational egoist vein — away from the right path that even the fool could follow. We can use philosophy to fight philosophy. But that is the extent to which our moral deliberations, in many cases at least, require us to be philosophical.

We have come, now, close to a traditional project of moral philosophers. From Plato onwards, philosophers have often directed their moral writings above all to the refutation of what they considered to be bad moral philosophies elsewhere in their cultural milieu. There was no project more important to Plato — in the *Meno* and the *Apology* and the *Republic*, in the *Gorgias* and the *Theaetetus* — than refuting the relativism of the Sophists, and saving, in the face of their relativism, the rationality of being moral. Similarly, the main task in moral philosophy for Hutcheson and Smith, and a major one for Butler and Hume, was saving the rationality of being moral in the face of the egoism of Hobbes and Mandeville. Kant took the denial of free will to threaten the underpinnings of morals and his writings in moral

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philosophy were devoted far more to showing why it is rational to believe in free will, and how freedom of the will entails morality, than to giving us any concrete guidance as to what, specifically, morality requires of us. The main task of good moral philosophy, for Plato and many of his successors, was to combat bad moral philosophy, to refute the Thrasymachus within us all. But that may mean, and I suggest it does mean, that philosophers need among other things to combat the inclination to suppose that moral issues are complicated — that it takes a philosopher to help us reach a wise resolution of situations we encounter in daily life.

At one point in the *Republic* Plato suggests a view somewhat like this, a view according to which the settling of ordinary moral controversies is not the business of philosophy. "It isn't worthwhile," says Socrates to Adeimantus, to dictate specific laws about ordinary moral behavior to people who have a well-ordered soul: "most of these things ... they will ... easily find out for themselves." (*Republic* 425 d-e). Indeed, to deal with ordinary moral behavior by way of specific rules and guidelines is to enter into an endless and fruitless process of trying to take care of the multifold symptoms of an illness without curing the illness itself (426a-b); those who think they can eventually settle all moral issues with rules for conduct, says Socrates, are "ignorant that they are really cutting off the heads of a Hydra" (426e). Only when the individual fundamentally restructures the relationship between reason and desire within himself can he possibly be virtuous. If he does that, he needs no further guidance to figure out the right way to act in most circumstances, and if he does not do that, no set of principles, no matter how good, will be enough to lead him to virtue.

I don't want to press an extreme version of this view. It may be that philosophers can help even virtuous people find

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solutions to some complicated, confusing, or very new moral problems, that building a virtuous character within oneself will not enable one to solve all the moral issues one confronts. But I do think that the view I am attributing to Plato is far closer to the truth than the alternative view according to which it is the philosopher's job to offer solutions to difficult moral controversies. Decent character alone, it seems to me, may well be sufficient to enable most of us, most of the time, to act virtuously.

Conclusion: A Return to Where We Started

Let me conclude by returning to the question with which I opened. How, if the view I have been attributing to Plato is right, should my sister and I have solved the problem we faced as my mother was dying?

One response to that question might be that this is a *difficult* case in ethics, not the sort of clear case that I have been taking as paradigmatic. My sister and I did not know what we should do; we were not merely tempted away from what we already thought was right. So here, perhaps, philosophical thinking might be useful, if only to supply the general rules that people like my sister and I could then rely on. Indeed, practically any set of rules might be helpful in a situation like this, as a check on self-deceit, and that was in fact one reason why I preferred to turn to the dictates of the Jewish tradition, rather than my own reasoning, for a solution[1].

But of course this is not to say that Jewish law provided the *right* set of rules for this kind of situation; it is not at all clear what the right set of rules might be. As I said in the beginning of this article, Kantians, utilitarians, and religious ethicists

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1. I also preferred to turn to an outside advisor — my rabbi, in this case — because I did not trust myself to come to a decent and properly unselfish solution on my own.

may well disagree among themselves about a case like this. Many people will therefore wind up, like my sister and I, with no clear sense of what they ought to do. The question I have been meaning to raise here is whether, even in the absence of a clear sense about what to do, there remains something to be said about *how* one should decide what to do. And to that question Plato seems to tell us, at least in the middle of the *Republic,* that we simply need to make sure that our reason controls our desires, and not vice versa. Then the right decision — a good decision, at least; a decent decision — will come forth of its own. It follows — disturbingly, on some views of ethics — that *both* my sister's way of handling the situation *and* my own could have been right.

And I want to close by suggesting that that is indeed the case, that indeed both my sister's and my proposed resolution of the situation could have been a decent, ethically appropriate one, as long as we came to it out of the right sorts of motivations and with the right attention to the dangers and costs entailed by our respective positions. It would clearly be wrong to shorten a loved one's life out of impatience with the length of the dying process, to say nothing of a crass desire to lay hands on her possessions. It would be equally wrong to insist on keeping the loved one alive out of one's own fear of death, or desire to be with her a little longer. Both my sister and I needed to attend primarily to the wishes of our mother, difficult as it may have been to figure out exactly what those were. We also needed to attend, however, to the strain that keeping our mother alive had on the rest of our family — while making sure that we considered that strain as much as possible in an unselfish way (from the stance of what Smith calls "the impartial spectator") rather than reacting out of the feelings imposed by the strain. As long as we considered all the issues in this way, I suggest, both my sister's and my way of deciding the matter could deserve ethical approval.

Does this mean that neither my sister's nor my view was absolutely "right"? I don't know what to say about that. I do know that I have no idea what the absolutely right decision, if any, was in this situation, and that individuals, families, and whole societies can structure what seem to me equally decent ways of living around both types of approach to these cases. The cases do not occur in a vacuum, after all — they are interconnected with other cases, and part of a network of attitudes, practices, and institutions. Within these networks, an attitude or practice that tends too much towards one extreme, or runs too much risk of one sort of danger, will tend to be compensated, elsewhere, by attitudes and practices that run in the opposite direction. Thus in a society or family that generally believes in living only as long as life is worthwhile, people are at the same time likely to be careful to make sure that the alternative to a large dose of morphine really is the continuation of great pain, and that the patient really has at some point consented to the morphine. And in a society or family where people believe in extending life as long as possible, there are at the same time likely to be practices making sure that this extension of life is not carried to ridiculous extremes, that some way of making for a relatively painless death is permitted in cases in which the alternative is an existence of nothing but pain. In those branches of my own Jewish tradition, for instance, in which it is permitted to shorten life in order to reduce pain, the question of whether the patient has consented to such measures is of great importance, while in those branches that forbid any measure that shortens life, there are yet loopholes of one sort or another to allow one, in extreme circumstances, to avoid extending an excruciatingly painful life.

So I am not worried that an emphasis on what kinds of people we should be may lead to radically different ways of solving important moral problems. As long as the people

involved in a difficult situation are thoughtful, kind, honest, and courageous, their different solutions can all fit into decent ways of living. This is not relativism. I may not know what, absolutely, was the right thing to do in my mother's case, but I do think that the *way* of coming to a decision I am recommending is absolutely right, while making that decision in a purely selfish way would have been absolutely wrong. I am urging an absolute ethic of character, while avoiding an absolute ethic of action: the right way to go, I think, for anyone impressed by the moral philosophy of Adam Smith. And the first, and perhaps most important, element of any ethic of character is a way of coming to grips with the problem of self-deceit: the source of half the evils in human life, and a threat to decent character that each of us faces daily.

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"Surveying the Notion of Divine Justice from the Perspective of Islamic Theology" [1]

Rezā Akbarī [2]

Ghulāmhosein Tavakkolī [3]

ABSTRACT: All the theistic religions regard justice as a divine attribute. The holy book of Islam describes God as the ontological basis of justice (Āl-i 'Imrān (3), 18; Anbiyā (21), 47). The Prophet Muhammad made frequent references to the justice of God in this world and in the Hereafter and exhorted Muslims to keep away from committing any kind of injustice to the servants of God, be they Muslims or non-Muslims. So the two fundamental sources of Islam state that God is just in His essence and in His acts (Sharīf al-Razī (1414), sermons 185 & 191).

The Old and New Testaments also pay a great importance to the issue of divine justice (Jeremiah, Ch. 50, p.7). For example, the Biblical prophet Isaiah calls Yahweh the "Abode of Justice."(Isaiah, Ch. 50, p.7) In addition, the Scriptures describe divine judgments as just and right (Psalms, Ch. 119, p.75). Thus, one can say that the scriptures of Islam, Christianity and Judaism have agreed upon God's being just in His acts. However, the Muslim theologians elaborated upon the issues related to divine justice such as the consistency of divine justice with other divine attributes, the eternally staying of sinners in Hell, and the problem of evil.

KEY WORDS: Divine Justice, Theology, Ethics.

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1. Justice in the Relationship between God and Man

On the human level, the term justice means to perform good acts and avoid evil deeds and alludes to individual rights. The root meaning of the word is giving the people their due right and receiving one's own due right from them. A just person is thus defined as one who does not transgress the rights of other people. This description of justice implies a correlation because it occurs between two parties, the giver and receiver of a certain right. In this case, the reception of something due is right, while the giving of it is obligation. So the right that the people have on an individual puts on his shoulders the obligation to pay their due. In this context, justice implies the fulfillment of one's obligation with respect to the others. But this correlation does not apply to the relationship between man and God for it would be illogical and irreligious to state that God is obliged to act in a certain way because it is in conflict with the notion of divine omnipotence. In addition, such statements reveal an improper position with respect to the glory of God.

The correlation of right and obligation is significant insofar as the interpersonal relations are concerned. Since there is an essential equality among men, no one is innately indebted or payee. But this is not true in relation to God for no human being is equal to God in any sense. Therefore, one cannot claim that because of his deeds God should act in a certain way. God is the Creator of man, his powers, and the environments within which he acts. With respect to God, justice therefore cannot be taken in the sense of fulfilling one's obligations and paying the rights of others. If this is so, what is the meaning of talking of divine justice? It seems that we need to discover another perspective to make our discourse of divine justice meaningful. The answer to this question is closely pertaining to the innately good and bad character of things in the thought of Muslim theologians.

2. Justice and the Essentially Goodness and Badness of Acts

On the human plain, the good is described as one who has virtues and is free from vices, performs good acts and refrains from evil ones. In short, the good person is one who acts upon some principles laid down by the others. The Shiite and Mutazilite theologians hold that the laws and standards of good and bad exist independently from God. Thus, God is good because He performs the good and keeps away from the evil. So, things are good or evil in themselves and God acts upon the innate character of the things.

It is problematic in two respects to acknowledge the existence of such laws with which God should comply. First, accepting such laws nullifies God as the final law-giver. If these laws exist independently from God and God should abide by them to be qualified good or just, the source of goodness would be these laws, and not God. Accepting such laws of good and evil existing independently from God is to bring down God from His position and put these laws in His place.

Second, this implies the limiting of God's absolute power. If there were some laws that require God to act upon them, He no longer could do whatever He wills. While the Christians have more stressed the first problem, the Muslims laid the greater emphasis on the second one. This caused both groups to ponder the question of the essential goodness and badness of acts.

Are some acts essentially good and others essentially bad? If one admits that at least certain deeds are essentially good and some others are essentially bad, this means that he adopts the theory of the essentially goodness or badness of acts, i.e., the theory of moral objectivism. If one also maintains that the human reason can know the essential good and bad, this means that he also takes up the rationality of the good and bad.

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However, some Islamic theological schools deny the essentiality of the good and bad. For example, the Asharites assert that the acts are good or bad because God described and declared them as such. The Asharites disprove of the existence of the laws of good and bad independent from God. In their opinion, whatever God does is good and whatever He abstains from is evil (Shahristānī(1425), p.208; al-Ashʿarī (n.d.), p.117). For them, the acts are neutral *per se*. Thus, whereas whatever God wills, does, or commands is good, whatever He has forsaken and inhibited is bad. In the Asharite discourse, the justice of God simply means that whatever God does is coincident to justice because the criterion of goodness and correctness of choices is God Himself. We do not attribute injustice to God not because He does not perform injustice but because what He does is justice itself. Thus, the true standard of the goodness of an act is simply His doing the act.

3. God's Justice and His Other Attributes and Acts

There should be harmony and coherence among the divine attributes for it is not reasonable for God to have two contrary attributes simultaneously. This rules out not only the existence of any contradiction between the divine attributes but also the contradictions between the concomitants of the various attributes. The existence of any contrariety between the attributes implies that at least one of the two contradictory attributes is incorrectly ascribed to God. So, one of them should be omitted or interpreted in such a way that the contrariety be removed. However, it seems that divine justice is contrary to some other divine attributes.

3.1. Divine Justice and the Absolute Power of God

The divine attribute of omnipotence implies that God must be able to do whatever He wills. However, the divine attribute of justice necessitates that God do some acts and avoid some others. Yet, the absolute power of God does not allow for any limitation to His acts. Therefore, Abū al-Hassan al-Ashʻarī (260-324 AH(n.d. ,p.117)points out as the following: "The proof of God's being able to do whatever He wills lies in the fact that God is the Lord and the Dominating, and not the slave of anybody. No one is superior to Him so that he makes certain acts permissible. No one can command Him, nor can anyone prevent Him from doing what He wants to do. Nor anyone can define or describe Him. Therefore, no act is bad with respect to Him. If an act is bad with respect to us, this is because we have overstepped our limits and perpetrated an unbecoming deed. However, since God is not under the authority of anyone, nothing can be unbecoming with respect to Him".

The Shiite and Mutazilate theologians however approached the problem from a different point of view. In his *Tajrīd al-Iʻtiqad*, Khwājah Nasīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī (597-672 AH) remarks as the following: "Although God's power is absolute and all-comprehensive, He does not perpetrate evil." Commenting on this quotation, ʻAllāmah Hillī (1415, p.306)states: "God's power comprehends all the possible things, and bad acts are part of the possible things, too. So they are also involved in the range of divine power. But what is said of the fact that no bad act can originate from God is secondary to the primary possibility that God can do whatever He wants. Therefore, it does not invalidate the notion of the absolute divine power."

This means that one may keep away from doing bad deeds while he has the power to act so. So, that one has never committed bad deeds does not mean that he cannot act so.

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This is like the case of a sane man who has never taken poison in his life, which does not mean that he cannot do so.

One should state that God cannot do a bad deed. However, this is the sign and concomitant of His perfection without implying deficiency for Him.

3.2. The Relationship between Divine Justice and Divine power

Is the notion of divine justice compatible with that of divine knowledge? God foreknows how long an individual would live, whether he would commit sin or perform good deeds. Justice necessitates the punishment of evil-doers. However, if God knows they will do evil and commit sin, why did He create them?

Ash'arī, who adopted the notion of divine predestination and disapproved of the essentially goodness and badness of acts, referred to this point in his historic disputation with his former professor AbūAlī al-Jubbāī (235-303 AH): "Suppose that there are three brothers all dead: one is righteous, another is unbeliever and wicked, and the third one is minor. What is their situation in the Hereafter?" Jubbāī answers: "The righteous is in Paradise, the wicked one is in Hell, and the minor is among the People of Safety (*Ahl al-Salāmah*)."

Ash'arī asks again: "If the minor brother asks for the rank and position of his righteous brother, is he allowed to reach it?" Jubbāī responds: "No, because he did not perform the same good deeds as the pious brother." Ash'arī asks one more time: "If the minor says: That is not my fault because you did not enable me to live longer and did not provide me with sufficient power to act as you did." In this case, how will you respond?"

Jubbāī answers: "Almighty God responds: I knew better that if you lived longer, you would disobey Me and deserve Hell-Fire. Thus, I acted in the most advantageous way for you."

Ash'ari asks: "If the unbeliever brother says, "Oh God! Thou knew what would happen to me just as Thou knew what would happen to the minor. Though Thou acted in his favor, why did Thou fail to do the same with my case, allowing me to dwell in Hell?" Jubbāī says: "You are crazy!"

According to this account, because of the contradiction inherent in his views, Jubbāī could not give answer to the last challenging question of his pupil Ash'ari. We find a detailed discussion of the issues in this dialogue in the theological and polemical works of Ghazzalī (450-505 AH)(1405, I, p.206). One can summarize the gist of the dialogue as the following: If God foreknows how people would act during their lifetime, will His attribute of justice not require that He avoid creating those people who would commit sin and suffer in Hell?" To answer this question, the proponents of the notion of divine justice have recourse to the thought of free will of man. We will discuss this matter in the following section.

4. Determinism and Free will

Justice has a strong relationship with the free will of man for justice can make sense only if man has free will. Commands, prohibitions, ethical recommendations, and abominations, be they in human relations or in the God-human relations, are meaningful only when man is free in the sense that he can act as he wishes(Mufīd, 1371, p.93). Overemphasizing the unity of God in respect to His acts often ends up in a strict determinism. However, the doctrine of absolute determinism implies the ascription of all the bad acts of man to God. Therefore 'Allāmah Hillī (1301, p.378) claims that the

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Ash'arites are agreed on the opinion that all evil including injustice, associating partners with God, and oppression are the acts of God and God is pleased with them.

Although the adoption of determinism entails to hold God responsible for all evil in the world, the opponents of free will are not ready to admit this implication. Denying the essentially goodness and badness of acts, they tend to view whatever God performs as good. So, Fadl Ibn Ruzbahān (d. 927 AH) describes the remarks of 'Allāmah Hillī on the Ash'arites as slander. (al-Muzaffar (1396), p.379)

On another occasion 'Allāmah Hillī (648-726 AH) (1982, p.85) points out: "Determinism implies that God is unjust and has no purpose in His acts. If God creates the acts of servants, He will be creating their bad deeds, too, like injustice and vanity. But God is free from and exalted above such things."

In attempt to solve the problem, Fadl Ibn Ruzbahānstates: "God is the creator of everything. However, there is a difference between creation (*khalq*) and action (*fi'l*), which means that though He creates evil, He is not the actor of evil (*fā'il*). Just as God's creating black does not imply that God is black, God's creating injustice does not entail that God is unjust. In addition, evil is not limited to the acts of man. Without doubt, God creates pigs and vermin. No one can avoid attributing the act of creation to God in these cases. Once it is admitted that these are created by God, one cannot but accept the evil inherent in them. Otherwise, one would deny an obvious fact. It follows that if the creation of evil necessitates the Creator being attributed of evil and injustice, the creation of evil, a fact that is admitted by the opponents of the Ash'arites, will necessitate the attribution of evil to God." (al-Muzaffar (1396), p.489)

Ruzbahān's argument is false because he fails to clarify in what way pigs and vermin are bad. In fact, the concepts of good and evil are exclusively related to the acts in the context of ethics. The usage of the terms good (*hasan*) and bad (*qabīh*) in relation to the things is equivocal. Since these contexts are mainly esthetic, the term "bad" here means ugly or harmful. On the other hand, to create is an act, too. Thus, if men were compelled to act in a certain way, the real actor of his deeds would be God. In other words, God not only creates evil but also does it. The same argument applies to the good acts. If one claims that to create an act is not to perform it, God as the creator of good would not be the performer of good, which is against the Ash'arite doctrine.

Many Muslim theologians such as Dirār Ibn ʿAmr (d. 190 AH), Najjār (d. 220 AH), Hafs (d. 3rd Century AH), and Ashʿarī turned to the theory of acquisition (*kasb*) to escape the problems caused by the doctrine of determinism. This theory supposes that while God creates the acts, man acquires them. The notion of the acquisition of acts can be described as an attempt to reconcile between the omnipotence of God and the free will of man and ethical responsibility.

Regarding the meaning of acquisition, QādīAbd Al-Jabbar (d. 485 AH) states: "It is man who turns an act into the instance of obedience or disobedience. By way of explanation, while the existential root of act belongs to God, the act acquires an ethical value through the agency of man" ((ʿAllāmah Hillī, 1301, p.308).

5. *Justice and Evil*

Justice requires refraining from committing any kind of injustice. However, the opponents of the theory of divine

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justice consider the evil existing in the world to be some kind of injustice brought about by man. Therefore, the discussion of divine justice revolves around the problem of evil existing in the world. One cannot deny the obvious existence of numerous and various evil in the world. So how are all these evil to be reconciled with the notion of divine justice?

Most of the Muslim thinkers tend to view evil as either the nonexistence of good or something nonexistent. For example, ignorance and poverty are simply lack of knowledge and lack of wealth. Though some evil do exist, they are not evil as such. Snakes, scorpions, and floods are considered evil not because they are snakes, scorpions or floods, but because they cause the loss of health or the loss of life. So evil is something accidental, and not essential in the world[1]

6. Justice and Divine Punishment

A just God not only Himself keeps away from doing injustice but also is not pleased with the occurrence of injustice among men. So, God as the final judge should punish the evil-doers in proportion to the gravity of their sin. One can discuss this issue in two items:

a. Many of the evil-doers in this world escape punishment, a fact which disagrees with divine justice. The Muslim theologians try to explain this on the basis of the divine rewarding and punishment in the Hereafter. This explanation is adopted by the Shiite and the Mutazilite theologians, too. The theory of divine compensation (*a'wād*) is another widely-used explanation. This theory claims that God will compensate the benefit that man is

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1. For further information on the philosophical implications of the notion of divine justice, cf.Sadr al-Mutaallihīn,1383 AH, II, pp.347-356; Tabātabāī, 1372, I, pp.321-322; ʿAllāmah Hillī, 1415 AH, p.30; Ibn Sīnā, 1403, p.21.

deprived and the evil that man suffered in this world. The compensation will fully satisfy man[1].

b. No offense can be as grave as to require the eternal suffering in Hell. However, adherents of every religion consider the followers of other religions irreligious, thus deserving damnation to Hell. The Qur'ān says: "Allah promised the hypocrites, both men and women, and the disbelievers fire of hell for their abode. It will suffice them. Allah cursed them, and theirs is lasting torment" (Tawbah (9), 68). This verse mentions the eternal suffering of unbelievers and hypocrites in Hell. The following verse states that the evil-doers also will dwell in Hell forever: "And whoso disobeys Allah and His messenger and transgresses His limits, He will make him enter Fire, where he will dwell for ever; his will be a shameful doom"(Nisā (4), 14).

The Shiite theologians are agreed upon the belief that grave-sinners will not dwell in Hell forever. For example, Shaykh al-Sadūq (306-381 AH) (1414, p.90) writes that only unbelievers and polytheists would abide in Hell forever while monotheists meet divine mercy at last though they committed grave sins. Shaykh Mufid (d.336-413 AH) claims that there occurred a consensus among the Shiite theologians on the opinion that the divine threat of eternal damnation to Hell only affects the unbelievers.

Nasīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī and 'Allāmah Hillī (1415, p.414) claim that among the Muslim scholars consensus occurred on the opinion of the eternal dwelling of unbelievers in Hell. In support of their claim, they usually cite the following Qur'ānic verse: "Lo! Allah forgives not that a partner should be ascribed unto Him. He forgives (all) save that to whom He

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1. For example, consult 'Allāmah Hillī, 1415, Problem 14, pp. 452–460.

will" (Nisā (4), 48, 116). The eternal suffering of sinners in Hell is mentioned in the Scriptures: "And these shall go away into ever-lasting punishment"(Matthew, Ch. 25, 46).

A common solution to this problem is that there is no conventional relation or correspondence between the sins committed in the world and the punishments in the Hereafter for "one can expect proportion between the crime and its punishment only in relation to the positive and conventional laws. But the relation of sin with its punishments in the Hereafter is like the relationship between cause and effect" (Hasanzādeh Amulī, 1415, p.629). We can explain this through the following analogy: One can make a mistake at one moment by touching a naked electric wire. Since the relation of his touching the naked electric wire with the electric shock is the relation of cause and effect, he should not expect the result of the electric shock to be proportionate to his mistake.

It is also claimed that punishments are another manifestation of the very sins appearing in the hereafter (Tabātabāī, 1372, I, p.92). A Qur'ānic verse says: "And whose has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it"(Zilzāl (99), 8). However, the verse does not talk of seeing the consequence of the act, but of seeing the act itself albeit in a different manifestation.

7. The Consequences of Belief or Disbelief in Divine Justice

Many of the modern thinkers ignore the traditional disputations over religious beliefs. One reasons of this modern intellectual indifference to such disputations which have been going on since the inception of Islam is the thinkers' regarding them as futile. Kant played an important role in this tendency by saying, that Metaphysics is out of the reach of speculative reason. Therefore, many people have

abandoned the debates related to the religious claims, whether they are for or against them, because they have considered such debates pointless.

However, the lack of attention to the pros and cons of religious doctrines does not justify the indifference to the doctrines themselves. Pragmatists consider and evaluate religious claims from the perspective of the benefit they may bring in. So if a doctrine is useful and has positive social effects, it is acceptable regardless if its truth can be proven by any method (i.e. traditional or modern) or not.

The belief in resurrection will make sense only if one has belief in divine justice. If one believes that God can do whatever He wants, there will remain little motives, if any, for a Muslim to seek virtues, keep away from evil, and observe the legal and ethical rules of Islam. The fact that God so far has kept His promises by rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked does not necessitate that He will continue to act so. Concerning this issue, Ghazzālī in his *Qawā'id al-'Aqāid* (1405, I, pp.203-205) points out that God can perform not the best (al-aṣlaḥ), and impose on people the obligations that are beyond their capacity, and torment them without a prior sin andtorture them without compensation.

It seems that if the belief in human justice brings about some kind of satisfaction and tranquility in the heart and mind of man and helps man accept the current state of affairs, the belief in divine justice will cause much more sense of safety. Likewise, if the human penal codes deter people from committing crime, the belief of divine rewarding and punishment in the Hereafter will more forcefully motivate man to pursue righteous deeds and avoid evil acts.

8. The Arguments of the Proponents of Divine Justice

God is not unjust because injustice originates from two factors: either the unjust person does not know that his act is injustice or, despite of his knowing that it is injustice, his needs urge him to act so. But since God knows what is good and what is evil and He is self-sufficient, He cannot be thought to perform anything evil.

This argument takes the essentially goodness and badness of acts for granted. However, the validity of the essentiality of acts at most indicates that God is not unjust, which does not necessitate Him to be just. This argument is true insofar as refraining from doing evil is considered sufficient to describe an actor as just, or inasmuch as the negation of act is also considered as an act (Mufīd,1371, p.211) .If so, an infant who died before reaching the age of maturity and thus prior to being able to commit injustice should also be reckoned as just, which is absurd.

In attempt to establish divine justice, 'Allāmah Hillī presents another argument in his commentary on *Tajrīd al-I'tiqād*: "God has enough reason to perform good acts, and there is nothing to prevent Him from acting so. In addition, He has enough reason to keep away from doing evil and there is no reason for Him to perform evil. On the other hand, God can do whatever can be supposedto be done. The existence of power and motive necessitates the occurrence of act. If one knows that an act is good and has the power to do it and if that act does not cause something evil, he will perform it." Hillī (1415, p.305) continues to comment: "An act is something contingent in itself. If the sufficient cause of the contingent thing comes to be, it becomes necessary by other than itself. Then, it necessarily comes into existence. Acts occur when the actor and power are existent. If these two exist, the sufficient cause will be completed and the effect will

naturally come about." Hillī elaborates upon the same issue in his *Nahj al-Haqq wa Kashf al-Sidq* (1301, p.388), too.

This argument assumes that the merely goodness of certain acts is enough reason for God to perform them. But the existence of motive alone is not sufficient for human being to act for on many occasions, in spite of the existence of motive, man may not have the power to perform the act.

But the assumption that God has enough reason to perform good acts implies a series of consequences as to the nature of God as actor, which many philosophers do not accept (Tabātabāī, 1372, p.172 and309). Since this notion creates many problems, the Muslim Peripatetics view God as acting by providence, the Illuminationists, i.e., the followers of Shihābuddīn Suhrawardī (549-587 AH) as acting by His own please while the followers of Mullā Sadrā (980-1050 AH) view God as acting by self-manifestation. All these explanations deny the motive superadded to God.

The Muslim philosophers strive to demonstrate through different methods that God is perfect and free from deficiency. According to the principle of homogeneity of cause and effect, God's acts are also complete and perfect. Therefore, attributes like justice indicating the perfection of God can be ascribed to God (*Ibid*).

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Soul-Body Relation and Immortality in Mullā Sadrā and Descartes

Fahīme Jameei[1]
Mūsā Akramī[2]

ABSTRACT: Plato argues for the immortality of the soul. He presents his "substance dualism" in which the body is moving, material, and mortal, while the soul is unmoving, immaterial, and immortal. Aristotle states the unity of the soul and body on the basis of his "hylomorphism" in which the soul is the form of the body, so that it may not exist without the body. Descartes' restating substance dualism to prove the soul's immortality is an explicit objection to Aristotle's view on human immortality and eventually leads to reduction of the soul to the mind. On the contrary, Mullā Sadrā holds that the soul enjoys unity and simplicity, really being identical with the body. He considers the soul as an entity having been created with the body. It becomes spiritual (and immortal) according to increasing its gradation of being through substantial motion. In this way, Mullā Sadrā argues for the soul's immortality without ever referring to the soul-body dualism.

KEY WORDS: Mullā Sadrā, Descartes, Soul, Soul-Body Relation, Immortality.

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1. Graduated in Comparative Philosophy, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch of Tehran, Tehran, Iran; ***Corresponding Author's Email***: jamei_fahimeh@yahoo.com
2. Associate Professor, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

Introduction

Among the most puzzling questions that the human being has faced regarding himself is the question concerning his immortality. Is it possible for human being to exist after demise of his body? How his soul (*psuchê*) can live after his death? And what is the nature of the soul-body relationship? The latter problem consists of two related questions: (1) are the soul and the body two real distinct unexplainable substances/ entities, or is each of them a kind of form or function for the other? (2) How can we understand the obvious bilateral causal relation between the soul and the body? The former question deals with the dualism and the latter seeks for some logical explanations for mutual causal interaction between the body and the soul. The main problem in finding an appropriate answer to the first question appears when one must explain how a non-physical (non-spatial) entity such as a soul is related to a physical entity such as a body. Indeed, the discussion of the human soul and its relation to the body occupies a highly important position in the question of human immortality, so that there are a number of different interesting answers in the history of philosophy.

In spite the fact that most of ancient doctrines of immortality of the soul are not specifically theoretical, some works of Plato and Aristotle on the soul and its immortality can be taken seriously. In general we may claim that there are two main controversial views on the relation of human soul to his/her body: dualism and the unity of the soul and body. Obviously, the first one, that seems to present a better explanation for human immortality is stated by Plato. Indeed, Plato is known as a forerunner for soul and body dualism, and tries to argue about immortality of the soul after demise of the body. One may discover his reasons for dualism in the

Phaedo. But, his theory is different in the *Republic*, where, explaining the problem of the soul-body interaction; he offers a theory of the soul, in which the unity of the mind is accepted. The soul-body unity has been presented by Aristotle who has done the most exhaustive work on the theory of the soul in his *De Anima* (On the Soul). In this work, he holds that the soul is not a material object, but a form of the body. As we will discuss, through presenting the soul as a form of the body, he cannot explain both the separability of the body from the soul (especially soul's existence without the body after death) and independence of thinking while acquiring the knowledge. Later on, in seventeen century, Aristotle's view on human knowledge and immortality made Descartes to claim that there is a separate soul. He presented the view that the mind and the body, being distinct from each other, could be separately distinguished. In fact, Descartes restated Plato's view on dualism, though we are not entitled to say that both of them are genuine dualists. To be more precise, we try to show that Descartes' dualism is not sufficient to prove immortality of the soul, because he cannot remain faithful to substance dualism, a thesis that is unable to explain the soul-body interaction.

In a comparative study, we are going to do an investigation on Mullā Sadrā's opinion concerning the soul and the body to show how he tries to prove the immortality of the soul not, of course, on the basis of dualism; instead, he presents a theory of the soul that seems similar to Aristotle's theory about unity of the soul and the body, and the material origin for the soul. Of course, he soon chooses another way that cannot harm human immortality after his death.

1. Substance Dualism and Immortality in Plato

From Homeric poems onwards, we find a development in philosophical theories of the soul, presented by Plato, in which a human soul would survive after death. Plato puts forward two theories of the soul in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. In the former, he mentions that after the death of a person, he "still possesses some power and wisdom" (70b). There one sees Socrates arguing that the soul is immortal after death and even contemplates truths after separation from its body. This argument shows that the soul not only has no parts (being simple), but also is intelligible and imperishable; accordingly, the soul is not a form (78b-80b). In fact, for Plato, body and soul are different; the former is perishable and perceptible, while the latter is intelligible and exempt from destruction, being deathless or immortal.

Socrates again states that since the soul, as an intelligible being is generally invisible and imperceptible, can share its natural function with the divine, especially for to ruling and leading (79c). It seems that for Plato a human being consists of two parts: soul and body. The essential part of the human is the soul, to which the mental life is pertained. This view, being known as substance dualism[1], normally includes the

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1. In the philosophy of mind there is another view that is called "property dualism": "A compromise position between substance dualism and materialism. Like materialism, it holds that there is only one type of substance: physical. Property dualism denies the existence of immaterial minds that somehow interact with the physical world, animating unconscious bodies. Where property dualism parts with materialism is that it does not attempt to reduce mental states to physical states. Mental states, according to the property dualist, are irreducible; there is no purely physical analysis of mind. Property dualism thus holds that although there is only one type of substance--physical--there are two types of property--physical and non-physical. Our bodies have physical properties such weight and height, and mental properties such as beliefs and desires. This position is intended to combine the plausible aspects of both dualism and materialism, while avoiding the problems of each". See:
http://www.philosophyofmind.info/propertydualism.html

theory that the soul is simple and has no parts; otherwise, one of its parts may have properties which another part does not. Here, for Plato, the soul and the body are separated. Accordingly, the body perishes at the time of death, while the soul would have another life. Plato, in the *Phaedo* (73a-78a) and *Meno* (81b-86b), gives several arguments to prove the immortality of the soul.

Moreover, while it is the soul that undertakes the important affairs such as thinking, feeling, and even choosing, body is responsible for other parts. It is undeniable that body and soul interact. Psychic states often cause bodily states and vise versa. In the *Republic*, Plato suggests the ordinary concept of the soul that seems somehow different (352d-354a). It seems that his concept of soul in the *Phaedo* is somehow narrower than his conception of mind in the *Republic*, where Socrates attributes to the body, and not to the soul, a large variety of mental states, such as pleasure, belief (83d), and also desire and fear (94d). In the *Timaeus,* he holds that plants in this sense have souls, exhibiting sense-perception and desire (77b). In the *Phaedo* the soul has desires too (81d). It also enjoys the pleasures of learning (114e). It seems that Plato in the *Phaedo* cannot support the unity of the soul. The various activities such as desire and cognition don't seem to belong only to a plurality of distinct units with separate operations. Socrates' contemplation in the *Phaedo* directly appoints to the soul and its desire for food as a 'bodily' desire that is related to the soul.

We can say that Plato presents the new theory of soul in the *Republic* in which at least the human soul has three aspects or parts of reason, spirit and appetite. Reason is the own nature of the soul and attached to truth and knowledge. It is the guide for regulating the life. We have to notice that though these three parts are separated, the soul itself is considered as a whole (442c).

Comparing both theories of the soul, in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, it seems that the first theory involves a division of the soul and the body and the latter presents the soul as an integrity that involves of mental or psychological functions that somewhat problematically had been assigned to the body. The conflict in the *Phaedo* is between the body and the soul, and in the *Republic* is between two aspects of the soul: spirit and reason. In the *Republic,* Plato states a theory of the soul which allows attribution of all psychological or mental functions to the soul as a single subject. Therefore, the theory respects the unity of the soul, while it seems that in the *Phaedo* the theory does not. Besides, In the *Republic*, the theory of the soul can support the articulation of desire into different kinds in a better way. Perhaps we can say that the concept of the soul offered in the *Republic* is somehow broader. It is important to notice that his theory of the soul is not completed, being incapable of answering this question: how can the soul relate to these non-mental vital functions? By concentrating on Plato theory of the soul in the *Phaedo*, we can say that, according to Plato's theory of the "Ideas", it is the soul which is real, and the body is just a shadow or a participation of the "Ideas". Though, there would be no soul-body problem for Plato, the opinion engaged him to another problem.

Accepting the Parmenidean constraint that knowledge must be unchanging, Plato must admit the obvious consequence of this idea that sense experience could not be considered as a source for knowledge. He has stated this point in the *Theaetetus*, where the objects apprehended are changing ones. But we know that humans have knowledge; accordingly, one might ask the question that how is it possible to attain knowledge? Plato holds that a human being attains his knowledge of the objects through perception of their earthly shapes in the first step; later on, his knowledge

ascends to the higher realm of the Forms, so that the human mind will be able to approach the Forms. In the seventh book of the Republic, while offering his famous myth of the cave, Plato resembles the philosopher to a man who is in a cave and looks at a wall on which he can see nothing but the shadows of real things (i.e. the real world of the Forms, behind himself). Coming back, he, due to the outside light, hardly can distinguish the shades. Accordingly, he attempts to conduct his life because he is the only one who knows the truth. In the *Theaetetus*, Plato also criticizes the empiricist theory of knowledge, arguing that knowledge through the senses is not always accurate. To him, genuine knowledge must be gotten by a thinking soul that would turn away from this world; it is the soul that can obtain knowledge of 'Forms'. Plato, in his theory of the Forms, states that the sensory world, being experienced as real by human beings, is just a shadow of a higher realm in which the Forms exist, so that this world is just a copy of these 'Forms'. Aristotle thinks in a different way and holds that sense perception is very important. Plato's theory of knowledge, as well as his view on soul and body, cannot be accepted by Aristotle.

3. Descartes' Dualism

Aristotle's view on both human immortality and human knowledge, compel some philosophers to restate Plato's view in such a way that the soul is separated from body. Among them, Descartes tries to establish the idea that soul and body are really distinct, so that one can distinguish them. In his *Meditations*, Descartes recognizes himself as an indubitable and substantial essence, i.e. a mind. For Descartes, a human being is a 'thinking thing', being a substance whose essence is thought. Think (mind), in contrast to mater (body), is of particular characteristics: it has no extension and spatial position, being invisible. After establishing the existence of

the mind, Descartes argues for the existence of external world, including human body that seems to belong to the corporeal world. It is important to notice his thesis that we can conceive ourselves existing without bodies; while it is impossible to conceive ourselves existing without minds. Indeed, using the "Argument from Doubt" in *Principles of Philosophy*, he establishes the "Cogito", leading to a "real distinction" between two substances (Descartes, 1985, Sec.60). To exist, a substance does not need any other existent but God (*Ibid*). Here Descartes states the idea that he, as a human being, is essentially and primarily a "res cogitans" (a thinking thing), and can be distinguished as a distinct essence. He again states that he is a "thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions" (Descartes, 1985, AT VII 28: CSM II 19).

Insisting on the view that mind is a 'complete thing' leads Descartes to state that mind does not require other attributes than its sufficiency, yet the claim does not explain how it prevents the body of being an essential part of him. Even his explanation on the basis of God's lack of deception shows that he may make a mistake. In fact, these kinds of critical objections prevent Descartes' Cogito to continue to assert existence of the soul without its body, for the soul may require some corporeal attributes to be capable of thinking. In order to distinct soul and body, Descartes tries to attribute certain opposing properties to them, showing the mutually contrast between matter and thought. Matter is divisible, while thought is not. On the other hand, it seems that mind cannot occupy a particular physical position, not being divisible or extensible. At the end of the arguments, Descartes establishes the dualism. Moreover, he accepts that soul and mind are identical in order to prove the immortality of the soul. For this purpose, he must prove that the human essence

is the same as his 'thought'; in other words, he starts with the traditional term of the soul and ends with the term of the mind. Besides, Descartes' argument makes his readers wonder about his absolute conclusion: Human beings have immortal souls and their souls are continuously thinking. His devaluing the human body to emphasize the existence of human soul after the death reminds of Plato's metaphor in proving the immortality of the soul. It seems that Descartes is not a pioneer who appeals the dualistic distinction between soul and body in order to prove the soul's immortality.

In addition to the substantial theory, with respect to totally physical things, Descartes mentions the doctrine of "configuration and motion of parts" by saying that each body is determined by the motion and configuration of its parts. He indicates that voluntary movements of the body and sensations are solely not modes of the mind or body, but rather could be modes of "the soul and the body together." Descartes confirms (at least partially) this idea in *Principles of Philosophy*, part I, article 48:

> But we also experience within ourselves certain other things, which must not be referred either to the mind alone or to the body alone. These arise, as will be made clear in the appropriate place, from the close and intimate union of our mind with the body. This list includes, first, appetites like hunger and thirst; secondly, the emotions or passions (AT VIIIA 23: CSM I 209).

It seems that the main problem for Descartes' dualism is with the restrict division of the body and the mind, not being capable to explain the interaction between these two distinct substances. The problem is about the voluntarily bodily actions in the framework of contacts between the body and the mind: because of non-extended nature of the mind, such actions would not be possible. Descartes must explain that

how there would be a contact between these two surfaces when the surface is considered as a mode of the body, as he maintains it in section 15 of part II of *Principles of Philosophy*. Accordingly, there is no surface for mind to help it in contacting with the body in order to move it. Therefore, if he considers body and mind totally different, how he can intelligibly explain the voluntary bodily movements. Hence, as he doesn't have recourse to the substantial forms, Descartes not only cannot have recourse to the configuration of matter but also to the dispositions to which it gives rise, including "all the dispositions required preserving that union" (AT IV 166: CSMK 243). Thus, any effort to classify Descartes in "Cartesian Dualist" class would be inconsistent or simplistic. On this basis, we may not consider Descartes as a real 'Cartesian Dualist'. Instead, this definition seems too loose when considering Descartes' conception of human nature as a blending of different elements such as sensation and imagination, a conception that tends to put his official dualism under considerable pressure. Partly as a result of this, we often see in Descartes' writing on human psychology an emergence of a grouping of not two but three notions- not a dualism but what may be called "trialism".[1] At the end of his contemplation, Descartes implies almost trialism by listing 'primitive' categories, including body-mind union to accommodate the 'passions and sensations'. May be it seems easier and more meaningful to state that this kind of trialism seems necessary to help him to distinguish between inanimate objects and animals, though he is careful to avoid the situation that the third category is established

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1."Trialism in philosophy was introduced by John Cottingham as an alternative interpretation of the mind-body dualism of Rene Descartes. Trialism keeps the two substances of mind and body, but introduces a third attribute, sensation, belonging to the union of mind and body. This allows animals, which do not have thought, to be regarded as having sensation and not as being mere automata." See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trialism

ontologically not epistemologically.

In a letter to Elizabeth, of 21 May 1643, Descartes mentions three *primitive* notions or categories for models on which all our knowledge is patterned. One is 'extension' that comprises motion and shape, and can be assigned to the body alone; the second one is 'thought' that comprises volition and understanding and can be assigned to the mind alone; and finally there is the notion of the 'union' of body and mind that comprises the results of psycho-physical interactions like "sensations and passions" (AT III 665; Ki38. See also letter to E of 28 June 1643: AT III 691;K141). On this account, we can conclude that Descartes' arguments for the mind/body distinction are amongst the most contested in his works. Besides, we can find lack of coherence and compatibility to dualism in some of his writings, recalling that there is also the problem of incorporating the subjective phenomena which take both domain of body and mind.

Accordingly, the question remains to ask: are there compelling reasons to introduce a doctrine with materialistic explanations based on mind as a proper alternative to dualism? If the answer is yes, how can Descartes' theory on soul/mind prove the immortality of the soul?

4. Unity of the Soul and the Body

In contrast to Plato, who is known for dually of the soul and the body, Aristotle is famous for his doctrine on unity of the soul and the body. In his major work on psychology, "*De Anima*" (or "*On the Soul*"), **he** gives us some coherent explanations concerning all living organisms and their functions. There he can claims that a living thing (an animate thing) is able to move itself just because of having soul, so that all human beings, animals and plants are like each other, all,

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unlike inanimate objects, possessing soul. According to Aristotle, such beings may have different kinds of souls. All of them are enjoying a nutritive soul by means of which they are initiating their basic needs such as growth, the food absorption and reproduction of their kinds. Besides, all of the animals have a sensitive soul that helps them to have a perception of their environments. In addition to nutritive and sensitive souls, Human beings possess a rational soul too by means of which they can think and understand. Though he mentions different kinds of soul for each living thing, we must note that they have only one soul with different degrees of nutritive, sensitive, and rational functioning in itself. Thus, the soul is the final cause for the organism's existence; it is also formal and efficient causes. Therefore, the body possesses only the material cause in itself. Hence, all of the organism's operations can be considered as the function of its soul.

Now we can ask the question: what is the nature of this soul? Aristotle in *De Anima*, defines the soul as "the first entelechy (or perfection) of a natural organized body having the capacity of life" (II, 1,412 a 27; 412 b, line 5). The definition clearly means that the soul is a form or function for an organized body and is incapable of independent, separate existent. Aristotle holds that the forms are universals and they are capable to instantiate in different kinds of things. It is all the properties such as appearance, shape, pattern and even reaction that make the soul the kind of thing it is. For a living thing, its form is the soul that may change over action and time. He maintains that plants enjoy vegetative souls while animals have sensitive and vegetative souls, human beings ,besides, possess rational or intellectual ones. He claims that the separated human soul is not united with matter and cannot be instantiated in many different individuals. The matter of human body makes the particular

human the one it is. In Aristotle's view a form of a thing, that is instantiated in it, cannot be separated from its particular substance. Consequently, the human soul also cannot exist apart its body. If we, like Aristotle, claim that a soul has parts, the whole soul remains united to the body (413a), though we can say that some parts of the human soul (e.g. the mind that is responsible for thought) may be separable.

Aristotle claims that the soul is created with the body. Indeed, he, contrary to Plato, does not believe in the spirituality of the soul. According to him there is a natural relationship between the body and the soul. In other words they are not two different things in the real world, but a natural unity that can be considered separately just in the mind. The soul-body relationship is almost alike the relationship between the material basis of a statue and its Hermes-shape; indeed, human being cannot be separated in reality. There are inevitable consequences regarding such a relationship between soul and body. An interesting one is that it seems true to claim that his view is similar to what the materialists say about soul-body relation: the mental states are the same as physical states; this is in contrast to the substance dualists' view that the human soul is the subject for mental states and is able to exist alone after its separation from the body. Furthermore, if it is not important or interesting to ask whether the statue and its material basis are really one, we are not forced to answer the same question concerning the soul and its body. Hence, Aristotle claims:

> "It is not necessary to ask whether soul and body are one, just as it is not necessary to ask whether the wax and its shape are one, nor generally whether the matter of each thing and that of which it is the matter are one. For even if one and being are spoken of in several ways, what is properly so spoken of is the actuality" (ii 1, 412b6-9).

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Here it seems that he does intend to say that it is meaningless to ask of the unity of the soul and its body; rather, he perhaps wants to show that the problem is unimportant and needless to be answered. We have no time to worry about the unity of wax of a candle and its shape; we must not spend time over the same question about the body and the soul, too. Here, Aristotle applies his famous hylomorphic[1] pattern for the relation between soul and body to avoid of arising the normal question about their unity. Indeed, he does not say that they are identical. He neither insists that soul and body are one in some weaker sense; instead, he evidently rejects this idea (ii 1, 412a17; ii 2, 414a1-20). In contrast, we may deny the unity of the shape of a candle and its wax by saying that the wax may exist while that shape of a candle has of no more existence. Accordingly, we can deny that the body and the soul are identical.

Since the soul for Aristotle is generally the form of its body, we can derive from Aristotelian hylomorphism a question concerning the separability of the soul from its body that reminds us of the possibility of Plato's substance dualism. According to Aristotle's hylomorphism, if the Hermes-shape dose not persist after melting the bronze, how we could hold that the soul survives after the death of the body. Hence, according to him, "it is not unclear that the soul - or certain parts of it, if it naturally has parts - is not separable from the body" (*ii* 1, 413a3-5). Therefore, if the forms generally can exist without their material bases, the souls should not be considered as some exceptions. By itself, Aristotelian hylomorphism is not capable to refute all kinds of dualism; there is no reason, thus, to hold that the souls are separate from the bodies, even if they act as distinct from their

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1. Hylomorphism' is a Greek compound word that is composed of two terms: matter (**hulê**) and shape or form (**morphê**); so it can be translated to "matter-formism."

material bases. On the basis of his view on denying the separability of the soul, Aristotle holds that it is possible for some parts of the soul to be separable, since these parts are not parts of the body's actualities (ii 1, 413a6-7). He actually points to an important part of the soul, i.e. the mind (nous) that is an exceptional faculty among other ones of the soul.

Viewing the relation of the body and the soul as a special case of the relation between form and matter, the soul could be considered as a whole part of any kind of perfect explanation for a living being. We may be inclined to treat the soul like the dualists such as Plato. It should be emphasized that Aristotle doesn't decide to stress on the soul-body separability just because of the soul's being the actuality of the body. Thus, he does not claim that the soul is capable of existing without the body. According to Aristotle, the universal intellect is eternal. But in his work, *On the Soul,* Aristotle faces the question: is it possible for the soul to be the entelechy of the body in the sense that a shipmaster is the entelechy of a ship? (413 a, lines 8-9) This question reflects his hesitation about the separability of the human intellect after his physical death, while the rest of the soul perishes. It is quite probable that he believes in the survival of the human intellect after it is developed by purely intellectual operations. It is obvious that, basically, these objections arise against a philosopher as the author of the soul's definition as entelechy of the body who at the same time regards the souls of the heavens as eternally actual and movers of the heavenly bodies (Aristotle. *Physics,* 259 b 20 ff).

Though it seems that Aristotle's hylomorphism provides no grounds for Platonic dualism or reductive materialism, perhaps it is better to say that the Aristotelian view on soul may express the view that human beings do not have souls, but consist only of matter in a very complicated way. That is

the reason that it is possible to say that Aristotelianism is a kind of materialism. According to him, psychology (i.e. the science of the soul) is a part of physics, although he, in some of his works, prefers not to classify the science of the soul as a branch of the natural science. When he says, in *De Anima*, that the study of the soul "is already in the province of the natural scientist"(i 1 403a16-28), he seems to involve the body in some psychological states such as anger, joy, courage, pity, hating and loving; while in holding that the mind (**nous**) may not be related to the body as these sorts of states are, he seems reluctant to put entirety of the study of the soul into the natural sciences (Metaphysics. vi 1 1026a4-6).

It remains unanswered that, having such a naturalistic view on the soul, how can Aristotle interpret the human knowledge. Plato holds that we can attain knowledge of first principles just by acquainting with Forms. Sensory experience is not capable to provide us knowledge, since they are changing, imperfect and particular (in contrast to first principles, which are necessary, unchanging and universal).,, so, he claims that knowledge is possible only with universals. An acquaintance with the Forms, before joining the bodies, is the cause of human souls' knowledge. According to what Plato holds concerning the universals and Forms, there would be no real relation between a singular thing and universals. In contrast, Aristotle holds that universals exist in particulars, for they are phenomena immanent in reality. We can interpret this to imply that comprehending the universals (essences) is at root a passive receptivity or intuition.

For Aristotle, alike the naturalistic realists, humans sense experiences are the origin of their valid knowledge, and can help them as valid evidence to be used for reasoning and thought, and there is no need to join or contact other external

objects.[1] Hence, according to Aristotle, thinking isn't potentially dependent on the objects of thought. Even the imagination involves the common sense operation without being stimulated by the bodily sensory organs. Thus, though our knowledge should begin with some information attained through our senses, these are the rational means to achieve its results. Indeed, the soul makes use of some formal logical methods to cognize the relationships among abstract (*De Anima*, iii4).

To sum up, we may rehearse that when one believes that the soul/mind is a form of the body, being united with a physical matter (body), challenge will arise over explaining the nature of the unity of the immaterial soul. In other words, one must explain how the notion of immaterial substance could be understood; otherwise it seems that the human knowledege and his thouths in some way depend upon something like God or God's intellect. For some philosophers, on the contrary, it is important to try to prove immortality of human soul.

5. *Mullā Sadrā on Unity of the Soul and the Body*

Among Muslim philosophers who concerned themselves with the subject of the soul (*nafs*) and its relationship to the body, Mullā Sadrā, Descartes' contemporary, presents the most detailed works on this subject and, as compared with other Muslim philosophers, pays more attention to this topic.[2] At the first step, he excludes the soul from physics and

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1. One can find doubt in Aristotle's view on essences as metaphysical rather than as epistemological which is how we regard them. One can oppose his intuitionist view that essences are only "intullectually seen" and contend that concepts or universals are the epistemological productions of a classified process that represents specific entity types.
2. About one forth of his major works, Asfar, is about his anthropology, consisting of different aspects of the human being and his journey from the beginning to the end. He also wrote about soul and body in his other works.

establishes the knowledge of the soul as a branch of the metaphysics. Mullā Sadrā brings an important change in philosophy, leading to what he has named the "Transcendent Theosophy" (*al-hikmah al-muta'liyah*), with an emphasis on the priority of psychology (the science of the soul = *'ilm al-nafs*). In his major work, *Al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a* (The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect) he brings a new philosophical insight into human nature. He tries to create a new theory concerning the formation of the soul, its unity, its relationship to the body and, its immortality.

As a preliminary point, it must be said that definition of the soul for Mullā Sadrā(1383, p.6) is closely connected with the body, i.e. the soul cannot be defined as proved in separation from the body. In the forth book of the *Asfar,* devoted to the science of the soul, he defines the soul as the first perfection of the natural body. At the first glance, it seems that Mullā Sadrā accepts Aristotle's definition of the soul as "the first entelechy of a natural, organized body possessing the capacity of life."

One may considers Mullā Sadrā with the entire Aristotelian tradition, for he accepts that the soul is originated but not eternal and claims that the soul cannot be separate and independent of matter, unlike the Platonists and neo-Platonists believe that the soul is pre-existence and therefore is separate and independent of matter. Paying more attention to his doctrine, we can find that the soul takes on a meaning totally different from the quasi-material substance of the Aristotelians. Perhaps it is possible that Sadra's well-known principle, i.e. "the soul is corporeal by its origination (*hudūth*) and spiritual by its subsistence (*baqā'*)", implies the impossibility of any kind of pre-existence of souls to bodies. Indeed, his definition of soul is based on his thesis that the

soul is created with the body but becomes immortal and spiritual through the Spirit, or, using his own terminology, the soul is *"jismaniyyat al-huduth wa ruhaniyyat albaqa"* ("the soul is corporeal in its origination and spiritual in its survival)(Mullā Sadrā, 1383, p.402). Mullā Sadrā even argues that at the beginning the human soul is the same as the body and only through gradual trans-substantial motion[1] does it separate from the body until it achieves complete catharsis *(tajrid)* (1382, pp.7-10). The human soul is related to its body through substantial motion, and it helps the human to reach the development of his soul at the final stage. A soul at this point, is no longer the same as previous one, but becomes an actual intellect and gets ready to join the Active Intellect. According to Mullā Sadrā, though the soul is the independent substance, yet it needs its corporeous bodies (*ajsād*) as a tool for certain organism actions and operations. Indeed, the soul's relation to its body is for governorship (*tadbīr*) of human's affairs, but in its operation and government (*tasarruf*), the soul needs another substance, with a less spirituality, to fill the gap and operate as an intermediary. This intermediary is "the animal spirit" (*al-rūh al-hayawānī*) and it also needs another intermediary – the heart (*qalb*).

Accordingly, one should recall that in Mullā Sadrā (1375, p.132)'s view the human soul has two aspects: it is corporeal regarding its origination and operation in the body, and is spiritual regarding its intellection. It means that at the beginning the human soul is 'in the body' and gradually would actualize and reach intellectual level so that, at the same time, its material aspect will dwindle. Therefore, the soul operates in its body corporeally, while its intellection makes the soul more spiritual. More importantly, the

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1. This is the motion for the substance of a being not its accidents.

separated intellect is spiritual in both essence and action, though the nature is corporeal both in essence and action. There are certain stations for both separated intellect and natures. When Sadra (1382, p.113) says that the soul is "going through (different) states" (*tatawwur*), he does not mean this to be the case with separated intellect and natures, but he means that the soul passes through different stages or levels of being. In other words, the soul is initially a bodily substance that passes internally through various stages till absolute releasing from the bonds of matter and change. All of these levels are hidden in the primary substance or a life-germ that passes through all the substantial stages, by way of the substantial motion, in order to detach itself from the matter and potential, and attain eternity in the world of pure intelligence. In his opinion, soul is an independent substance, which at first appears as a body. It should be emphasized, however, that the body is not a distinct part of the soul, but is a descendent level of it. For Mullā Sadrā, it is the soul that "carries", and, indeed, it is the subject of the body, not vice versa. For Mullā Sadrā the soul is capable to operate and administrate the body, while the body is the follower of the soul. As a subjugated of the soul, the body is an existential trace (*athar*) of the soul. Surely, Mullā Sadrā holds that the soul is something that gives the forms to the body and its different organs, puts together the opposite elements of the body, and raises the bodily affairs and sense perception. The souls can operate all their affairs by means of the substantial motion and passing through the different levels or stations from beginning of their origination, i.e. the material level, till reaching the levels in which the souls would be to imagine and intellect.

This is the process that makes the soul spiritual and helps it to be united with active intellect, which is none else but the spirit of holiness (*rūh al-qudus*). The soul will be developed,

according to Mullā Sadrā (1383, p.445), by increasing unity and simplicity through passing its successive stages, an evolution that is indeed an application of his principle of substantive motion. Finally, the soul will contain all its lower forms and faculties within its simple nature while achieving its highest form as true unity. Every form includes perfection of previous forms (*lobs ba'd allobs*).

In accordance with the principle of substantive change or transformation, which has close connection with the doctrine of the gradation *(tashkik)* of being[1], Mullā Sadrā (1383, p.384)holds that the soul emerges as vegetative soul in the first step. In the next step it emerges as locomotive and perceptive animal soul that belongs to the animal stage. To get closer to the human soul, it emerges as potential intellect which is a specific human property; at last the soul would be completed as pure intellect. It should be emphasized that the soul is the same being at all these stages and possesses its own being at each of these levels. In other words, this is the same being, i.e. the soul, which is capable of passing through all of these stages and developing itself by increasing its being. Indeed, when reaching its highest level and unity, the soul contains all the lower faculties, having, as well, all the forms within its simple nature. Hence, the soul that was brought into being with the body, is now an independent spiritual subsistence that can exist without the body. Importantly, at the beginning of origination of the soul, it "is" the same as body, and through an inner transformation becomes absolutely free from matter and changes by passing through various levels from materiality and change.

However, the soul-body relationship is not very similar to

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1. By gradation, Sadra means that though there are different stages for different beings, they are all noting but simply being, so perfection and imperfection or strength and weakness of everything is subject to its portion of being. The more being it possesses the more perfect it would be.

the relationship of any other normal physical form with its matters. Their relationship is in such a way that they are so fused together and can form an integral unity *(ittihad)* in being but not a constitute or a composite *(murakkab)* of two existentially distinguishable elements, they are totally fused together to form a complete unity *(ittihad)* in being, and consequently, the action of the soul in the body is simple, direct, and natural. The body is not the subject or the carrier of the soul; so it should be emphasized that the soul is not following the body when the soul ascends its stages from the beginning. In contrast, the body is the follower of the soul, even in the lowest level of the soul's existence when it is a concomitant of the body. The soul "obtains" its body and other faculties, so is the carrier of all of them. This is the soul that operates according to its will, and makes the body to follow it, as it wishes, through ascending the levels (stages). Or, to be more precise, the soul is the controller of the body and not vice versa. Of course it is necessary for the soul to separate from the body in order to rise to the spiritual heaven and to gain its happiness. It is important to realize that even though the soul leaves its (dark and heavy) corporal body, it carries the (light) imaginal one with itself in another world. Obviously the soul in the imaginal world[1] (the world of the imagination) makes use of imaginal body as it used to operate its affair with the material body in the material world (i.e. the world of the nature). Sadra insists that the imaginal body is the same as material body. This imaginal body is the creation of the soul with the help of the same material body. Hence, the imaginal body is the work of the soul that is made of sensory and imaginal perceptions by soul's different faculties. This phenomenon, in which one power or form works on

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1. Sadra holds that there are three worlds: material, imaginal and intellectual worlds. The human being will live in each world according to that, so in he has a material body for material world, an imaginal body for imaginal world and accordingly in intellectual world his body would be intellectual.

matter not directly but through other forms, leads to the meaning of Sadra's definition of the soul as "the entelechy of a material body", implying the fact that the soul "operates through faculties". In fact, it works on its matte through the intermediacy of other lower powers or forms. To sum up, the real perceptive and motive is the soul, and its faculties are necessary to do the actions. By faculty he does not mean "physical organs" of body, like hand or heart, but faculties are soul's powers or actualities through which the soul fulfills different operations such as nutrition, digestion and so on (Mullā Sadrā, 1383, pp.261-267).

It is obvious that this novel interpretation is an intensive violence against Aristotelian theory of the soul, in which the soul appears as a function of the body, clearly attributing the quality of "being organized" or "possessing organs" to "the natural body". On the contrary, Mullā Sadrā attributes to the soul the quality of having "organs" or "faculties". In fact, the position is a radical departure from Aristotle and must be regarded as a first step toward the final idealization of his account of the soul. Defining the soul as an entelechy covering all things from plants to heavenly spheres, and interpreting the term "organ" in such a way that the soul works through its faculties on its body, Mullā Sadrā tries to remove the difficulties experienced. How, then, are we to conceive of the relationship between the soul and its faculties? In this case Mullā Sadrā (1382, p.79) has an innovatory opinion. According to him, the soul is a single totality that contains all of its faculties, since every higher faculty has its lower faculty as a subjugated one. Saying that "the soul *is* all of the faculties", Mullā Sadrā (1375, p.132 & p.74) insists that the soul comprises all of its faculties. It is important to realize that his claim must be understood on the basis of another general principle in which he states that "the simple reality is everything".

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Mullā Sadrā maintains that in comparison to multiplicity, unity is at a higher and simpler stage of being. The soul indeed is a unity of being that comprises all of faculties that are different modes or manifestations of the soul. It should be emphasized, however, that Mullā Sadrā does not here decide to say that faculties are not real; on the contrary, he insists that because of the simplicity of the soul, various levels of faculties, at their own level, are swallowed up by the very soul that is at the higher and simpler level. Each faculty is connected to the soul and serves as a servant. One should realize that the faculties are also based on the different organs in the body and totally construct a human being. Consequently, faculties cannot be considered as quasi-independent or independent *entities that* possess essential differentiae, in the same way vegetative or animal species do. Faculties, as such, do not *exist;* yet Sadra does not say that they are distinguishable only conceptually, and thinks that they are, in a sense, real. Whereas the plants' faculties are diffused throughout their body, animal's sensitive soul achieves a higher level of unity, since the sensitive soul, at the stage of *sensus communis,* is capable of combining all sense perceptions. However, the sensitive soul operates through bodily organs which are diverse and spatially localized even though the subject of perception is not one of these organs but the soul itself (Mullā Sadrā, 1383, p.155).

To sum up, according to Sadra the human soul like every other entity in the world, develops and moves toward the end of all of them, i.e. God. Every being, including the soul, has its "afterlife". An "afterlife" is a relative term. For the organic matter, the plant is an "afterlife", and for the plant, the animal is an "afterlife". Accordingly, the man is an "afterlife" for the animal. In that sense, Mullā Sadrā shows how the soul, by passing through different "afterlives", moves from its multiplicity on the path of perfection towards its unity and

simplicity, reversing to its origin i.e. the One. So, the soul is incorruptible in itself, will not die with the death of body, and enjoys its immortality for its development that is marked by successive levels through increasing its simplicity and unity - an application of Sadra (1383, p.384)'s principle of substantial motion.

Conclusion

From the time of Plato onward, there are many philosophers who insist on immortality of the soul. Among them, Descartes restates Plato's dualism to prove human soul's immortality. Hence, Descartes is like Plato in some respects. He, similar to Plato, believes that surviving of a human soul (or maybe mind) after the demise of its body shows the presence of that soul to other human beings in the same way which in turn makes them present to it through their respective bodies. So it can be said that soul (mind) can exist independently from body. These would be the reasons why Plato and Descartes are often grouped together in the substance dualist theory in comparison to non-dualist theories.

On the other hand, we find that Plato's soul-body dualism is fundamentally different from Descartes' mind-body dualism. Plato accepts the idea that the soul or mind is identical with what animates the body, while Descartes rejects this. Another main difference is about the term "soul" *(psuche)* that is exploited consistently by Plato; instead, Descartes prefers to make use of "mind". In the preface of *Meditations,* we find his claim, addressing the theologians at the Sorbonne, that he is able to prove the soul's immortality. He makes use of the same label that is used by the church for his doctrine. Later on it is doubtful whether he is successful in proving the thesis in the same sense as what church means. Finally, Descartes

states that he succeeds to prove the immortality of the human mind or human intellect rather than the human soul. Descartes, at first, identifies the soul with mind, but he explicitly distinguishes soul from mind in his more philosophical texts, where he reserves the term "soul" for the entity which animates the body. To this respect, Descartes rejects the existence of any such principle, or reduces the soul to a physical configuration. He is aware that the biological difference between a corpuse and a living body is the purely physical difference that exists between an unfixed working machine and the fixed one.

Perhaps we can say that though the substance dualism can be an acceptable explanation for the immortality of the soul after the death, the interaction between soul and body cannot be explained by a pure substance dualism. This is the point that Mullā Sadrā understands well. He introduces an innovatory theory concerning human being and his soul. First, he removes the discussion of psychology from physics or natural philosophy and makes it a branch of metaphysics, a study that is complementary to the science of the origin of things, to show the spirituality of the soul as a "being". Then, he argues that the soul's origination and its relationship to its body is through its development in the line leading to afterlife. He holds that there are many degrees or stages (i.e. modes or states of being) for the soul, from its beginning to its end, to reach its ultimate goal or principal origin, i.e. God. At the stage of attachment to its body, the soul is a corporeal substance that gradually progresses to self-subsistent and spiritual existence through separation from body and material world. The whole journey is a return to God. The soul, that has been corporeal in the origination, would be spiritual in the survival. Indeed, the substantial motion of the soul and its gradation are the keys of solving the problem of soul-body interaction. He introduces different stages for the

soul and body instead of naming them as different substances. The human soul is a "being" and, like all of the creative beings, enjoys motion and progress. The soul's development in the material world is done through its perfection, i.e. the life as prime faculty of the soul. The soul and its faculties are receptive: it acquires the habit of intellection and learning, achieving the capability of gaining knowledge through which the perfection of its intellect occurs so that it becomes a properly trained acquired intellect. In the next stage, by being an "active intellect", the soul would be capable of producing knowledge actively; at last, it can acquire certainty through its union with the Active Intellect, and this would be the end of travel of the human being (= soul + body) to its goal.

To sum up, it seems that Mullā Sadrā 's view on the immortality of the soul, based on unity of the soul as a being, is more interesting than those that are based on substance dualism. In fact, Sadra, being influenced by both Plato and Aristotle, is able to present a more acceptable theory than Descartes' view. Sadra accurately applies his interesting principles (i.e. substantial motion and gradation of being) to show the unity of soul and body, prove the immortality of the soul, and to solve the problem of the soul-body interaction.

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Otherness: the Most Essential Component of Intercultural Ethics:
A Transdisciplinary Study of the Other

Hamīd Rizā Ziāei[1]
'Ali Rizā Sayādmansūr[2]

ABSTRACT: This paper engages in a transdisciplinary approach to and an intercultural perspective on the phenomenon of 'otherness' at the intersection of Ethics, Esthetics, and Cultural Studies. One of the most important contributions to the understanding of otherness is the careful deconstruction of dichotomies and generalizations. It also gives an example of intercultural understanding of otherness by a transdisciplinary deconstruction of the racial-esthetic black-white dichotomy. Since a transdisciplinary approach will be exploited for an intercultural topic the paper has to explore *en passant* the concepts of multi, inter and transculturality and – disciplinarity. Besides its philosophical rootedness the paper additionally utilizes the first person singular accounts and personal intercultural experience.

KEY WORDS: Esthetics, Black and White Dichotomy, Culturality, Intercultural Ethics, Otherness, Transdisciplinarity.

1. Assistant Professor of Ethics, Department of Ethics and Philosophy, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran.
2. MA Student of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. sayadmansour@ut.ac.ir.

Introduction

With due regard to a globalized context, in which people move from one place to the other and in which goods, finances, but also services, information and values are exchanged around the globe, it is easy to sympathize with those who claim that identity is a notion which is hard to define; some even argue that the term should be abandoned (cf. Ylander, 2004,p.36). Sure, they still exist those 'classic' identities – a shepherd in the Maluti Mountains in Lesotho, a rice farmer in Chinese or Indian rice fields and a cashier in an Iranian supermarket. Some of those identities might still not be very complex, singular (e.g. having one profession or one single ethnic background), exposed to many different influencing incidences of otherness and thus more or less definable. But identities in the globalized context are constantly exposed to diverse phenomena of otherness; identities are 1) influenced by many different factors, 2) contingent to circumstances (cf. Mawondo, 2007,pp.12-13), 3) multiple (e.g. having different professions or diverse educational or ethnic backgrounds, or two nationalities), 4) changing and thus 5) complex and lastly 6) indefinable. Identities in the globalized context are not only confronted frequently with the phenomenon of otherness, but are quite often the 'other' themselves. So, how should one deal with otherness in the globalized context?

It must be noted that I will not proceed with the term 'otherness' in the Lacanian sense, as a psychoanalytical category where – in terms of the development of child - the first other is mother (cf. Žižek, 2006,pp.7-11; Homer, 2005,pp.70-79). 'Otherness' in this paper describes that

which is in one or the other aspect different to one's own identity (this should not be read as a definition, since I do assume that otherness is indefinable in a philosophical sense). Identity refers to that which is constituted by physical, psychic, or mental characteristics and is shaped by numerous diverse socio-cultural factors. Factors which contribute to shaping identity are such as family, history, peer group, education, profession, partner(s), religious belief(s), political orientation, ethnic group, 'race', culture, nationality, experience, social 'class', milieu, talents, (dis)abilities, sexual orientation, hobbies, and so forth. Since identities are contingent to specific circumstances and depended upon some or more of the above mentioned factors, they are changing, complex, multiple, and thus not definable.

Before giving my simple answer to the normative question of how to deal with otherness in the context of globalization in particular and multi-, inter- and transculturality in general, the paper touches some basics in ethics. Here I will try to clarify what ethical approach we will favor - namely none in particular, but a combination of the three standard approaches. After that it will clarify the notions of multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinarity and multi-, inter-, and transculturality. With the help of that I will go on to illustrate a transdisciplinary approach by exemplifying a pertinent issue in intercultural ethics – the South African black and white discourse. Thereafter I intend to show how stereotypes and narcissism can be discovered in any social and intercultural context. Finally a simple normative outlook will be given suggesting how to deal with otherness in an intercultural context.

1. Normative Ethical Considerations

In the area of applied ethics one or more normative theories are usually applied to a practical problem in question: 1) deontology or duty theory, most famously associated with Immanuel Kant's *categorical imperative*, but often expressed also in *The Golden Rule* argument (which is not the same as the categorical imperative), 2) virtue ethics, which can be traced back to its most prominent protagonist Aristotle in the western context and to the even much older virtue philosophies in the Asian context, and 3) consequentialism, elaborately established by the famous utilitarian philosopher, John Stuart Mill. Deontological theories have the metaphysical problem that they need to explain where the duty originates. Virtue ethicists usually discover that in different cultures virtues and values might be different as well; and consequentialists face the problem that evil means might have to be defined as 'quasi-' good, if and only if, the end is good or beneficial for a majority. I claim – without engaging myself into the metaphysical discussion, which I leave to metaethicists – that it is difficult to prove that duties come from somewhere beyond the human being and its existence. Of course if we bring a God into play the problem is solved more easily. But not all cultures and religions believe in such a kind of universal valid duties generating by God. And I hold it with Lessing's *Natan der Weise* (1779, III,p.7) who states that it is quite difficult to say which of those religions (or cultures) is the best, real, or the ideal one. In spite of the fact that there are commonalities which can be found in different cultures and religions, a certain degree of cultural relativism seems to be unavoidable. Virtue ethics opens the ground for cultural different virtues and thus for relativity of values (e.g. values pertaining to community issues, life and death in Asian African and Central-European cultures). As such, of course, values and virtues deriving from

different cultures can be in line or compatible with each other, but can also clash (e.g. the value and honor of elderly people in Central European, African, and Asian cultures). The greatest benefit, happiness, or good for the greatest number of people is a theoretical powerful tool and strong like 'dynamite', for getting the most out of a 'quarry', but the theory and its practical application notoriously neglects minorities and otherwise disadvantaged or less privileged groups, which is like sensitive material hidden or scattered within the 'mass'. However, consequentialism gives a good rough orientation but it needs to be supplemented with other ethical approaches if it comes to practical issues. Consequentialism in the form of Utilitarianism alone is a theory which works fine from a distant perspective because the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people seems to be obvious with a cursory glance. But it gives us an additional problem if we take the time line into consideration as well: what do we mean by the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people: The greatest benefit for the greatest number of people or sentient beings now, tomorrow, in one week, two months, three years, four decades or five centuries?

From an extremist holistic non-anthropocentric environmentalist viewpoint to kill all those humans who permanently act in a malevolent way against nature would be the greatest benefit for the greatest number of sentient beings on this planet, although no law on the earth would justify such a killing. The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima, and Nagasaki had been justified on consequentialists grounds (cf. Walzer, 1977,pp.263-283) since – according to consequentialist reasoning – it could be argued that a greater evil (prolonging the war and thus even more casualties) had been avoided by dropping the bombs. Walzer himself notes that this line of argumentation is tricky.

Since the USA war policy only wanted to accept an unconditional surrender of Japan it was expected *"that the Japanese would fight almost to the last man"*, to make US *"invasion so costly that the Americans would agree to a negotiated peace"* (*Ibid*,pp.266-267). However, what is to be illustrated here is that the supposedly greatest benefit for the greatest number of people is sometimes questionable as a general guideline, if not supplemented by additional elements, for example elements of virtue ethics.

Exaggeratedly and aggregately it is often argued that on the daily basis it appears that many Germans are duty driven, but also consider the consequences of their acts as highly important, while many Africans act according to specific African virtues, values, and duties. For instance the *Ubuntu* concepts hold that a person is constituted by the society in which it is embedded (cf. Ramose, 2003, pp.230-238). Asians influenced by Confucian ethics seem to be virtue and duty driven, while in many aspects of British and American culture utilitarianism mainly seems to rule the conduct of life. All these statements are made – of course – from a superficial standpoint. However, those statements might still be acceptable for a travel guide book, but their acceptability for a philosophical account is limited owing to the generalizing momentum; although the philosophical and ethical implications of the 'culture' sections in guidebooks usually helps a great deal to find the moral mainstream in a particular culture. In globalized multi-, inter-, and transcultural contexts, theoretical reasoning about practical moral issues is more complex than in 'monocultural' ones.

Be that as it may, but in every day conduct most humans are guided by many principles and their conduct cannot be pinpointed to one single motivational moral theory. If we calculate why one should help an elderly lady to go across the

street, the decision is usually driven by virtue, duty, and responsibility, but also by consequentialist considerations. I hold – and that might not even be provable through empirical sociological and psychological research, but elucidated by honest introspection – that we more or less take all three moral accounts into consideration. It is beneficial for all (except for those who don't like her), if she goes safely across the street, but despite that it is also virtuous to help in such circumstances, and it is according to duties we should perform. Now, the descriptive ethical consideration can be turned into a normative suggestion, or more precisely we should act according to good virtues, duties, and keep an eye on relevant consequences as well. A good person having sufficient time and not acting in an emergency situation usually thinks and acts according to such considerations. In emergency situations which high numbers of casualties are involved professional guidelines shift more into the direction of consequentialism (Kipnis, 2004, pp.98-100), although the same behavior and professional guideline could also be developed from virtue ethical and duty theoretical point of view, because one can always maintain that it is a virtue to act in such and such a way in such and such circumstances, the same applies to the duty theoretical explanation. In short, the three theories are different - analytically distinguished - explanations and recommendations for good moral conduct. In moral reality – if time in accordance to circumstances allows – all three accounts have to be taken into consideration to approach ethical dilemmas at hand.

2. Multi-, Inter-, Trans-, -Disciplinarity and –Culturality

Before giving an example in the field of investigation I should differentiate between often interchangeably used terms: Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary;

Multicultural, Intercultural, and Transcultural. From the Latin origin we come to know that *multi* means 'many', *inter* 'between' in terms of time, space, and other phenomena, *trans* means 'beyond' or 'from - one time, space, phenomena, subject - (in)to the other'.

Let us consider some examples: *multilingual* are persons speaking - or media using - more than two languages (meaning at least trilingual, not bilingual); a *multinational* company operates and/or has branches in more than two countries. A *multidisciplinary* approach exploits other approaches and knowledge originating from different disciplines, and a *multicultural* society is one which is composed of several (distinct) cultures. An *interstate* highway is a wide road facilitating fast travel between states (in the USA or in Australia). Travel or transport between planets or stars is called *interstellar* (especially in science fiction literature and films). An *interlude* is a piece of music (or performance) connecting two bigger parts of a composition. *Interdisciplinary* studies or subjects handle phenomena or approaches situated between two or more disciplines, e.g. the issue of ethnic identity can be situated between cultural anthropology, cultural sociology and cultural studies. The interdisciplinary approachable phenomenon of consumerism is situated at the *intersection* of ethics, psychology, sociology, economics, and education. The word *intercultural* best describes phenomena influenced, or do take place in the context of two or more each other approaching, merging, or advancing cultures or subcultures; for example *interfaith* or *intercultural* dialogue (cf. Yusuf, 2007). A *transvestite* is a person who adopts the dress (vestimenta: Lat. clothes) of a 'different' gender. The usage of 'opposite' gender is less problematic than 'different' gender, because it can be argued that more than only two (opposing) genders exist (cf. Baudrillard, 1996). An example is the Thai

'ladyboy' Thai: *kathoey*), a male to female transgender (also referred to as 'shemale' or 'the third sex'). Transgender persons are of a particular gender but have an urge to belong to a different one. To *transcend* means to go beyond the limits of something, to *transport* is to bring something from *a* to *b* and to *translate* is to render content of language *a* into language *b*. *Transdisciplinary* refers to 1) an approach usually used in discipline *a transferred* to or applied in discipline *b*, e.g. using psychoanalytical theory in film studies or marketing, or to 2) an issue traditionally treated in a particular discipline *a* is transferred into discipline *b*, say the discussion of color theory usually discussed in art and esthetic context can also be utilized in discussing racial and ethical issues – this approach is exemplified in the section *The South African Black and White Discourse* further down. Music is mostly *transcultural*; the producers of Madonna's music, since the turn of the millennium, import Asian features in her dance-pop music. Many African musicians use typically Western (US-American and European) elements in 'traditional' African music (the question here is, if the term 'traditional' is still appropriate). And again, many types of "American" forms of music (e.g. Blues, Jazz, Rock'n'Roll) have been strongly influenced by traditional African elements. Multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinarity can of course be better distinguished analytically than in real life phenomena, the same applies to multi-, inter-, and transculturality. While in multidisciplinarity and multiculturality three approaches or cultures have at least to be involved, for inter- and transdiciplinarity and inter- and transculturality the involvement of two disciplines or cultures is respectively sufficient. So if a Pakistani uses typical Pakistani elements to make Indian food this style of cooking is a case of 'intercultural' or 'transcultural' not multicultural cuisine. If the Malaysian Muslims prepare Italian, Malaysian

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and Vietnamese dishes in a relatively distinct manner, their menu offers multicultural dishes.

 In South African culture many elements of multi-, inter-, and transculturality can be discovered as well: If it comes to some cases of South African architecture or interior design diverse elements from different cultures are merged (very often the case in guest houses or B&Bs); for instance elements taken from Basotho, British, Dutch, Xhosa and Zulu culture; a concrete example is Dutch or British colonial style architecture of outer appearance of houses, especially walls, but a Basotho style thatched roof, and inside the typical South African mix of interior architecture might be found: western style furniture with African motifs and patterns.

If it comes to the living together of members of diverse cultures and subcultures, a very crucial aspect is the qualitative facet of their 'being-together'. The terms multi-, inter-, and transculturality do not usually qualify how members of different cultures live together – segregated, assimilated, or integrated. This issue is a very problematic one and not easily discussable in this single contribution, and needs thorough separate consideration and discussion (cf. Bohlken, 2002 ; 2003,pp.406-426).

3. Otherness

Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* analytically distinguishes between three kinds of friendship: friendship based on utility, pleasure, and virtue. According to Aristotle only friendship based on virtue is really realized as *telos* and the other two types are just called friendship but are not real friendship since for these two kinds of 'friendship' the friend is not another self but just a means to an end – for pleasure or for some kind of utility. It must be noted that Aristotle maintains that friendship based on virtue incorporates pleasure and utility as well, but they are

not the main features. Aristotle further elaborates on the question if friends are attracted to each other by otherness or similarity (1159b-1160a). He holds that it can be both similarity and otherness, but long lasting and intensive friendship seems to be more signified by similarity, *"because what is common holds things together"* (1162a-b). Having empirically treated, it seems that Aristotle is right here, since we can observe that long term friendships are also held together by common interest, characteristics, virtues, culture, and sub-culture, respectively, language, religion, profession (and leisure time activities, this applies especially in countries robustly driven by economic interests – economy driven countries, so called 'developed' countries)

The other side of the coin of vice versa attraction in human nature is 'neophilia', the 'love of the new'. By nature humans are not fixed constantly and uninterruptedly to one object for a very long time. But every friendship begins also with the discovery of the other and the unknown (cf. Meinhold, 2005,pp.81-83). So it appears that humans are attracted by both otherness and familiar commonalities, but the commonalities are responsible for long run friendship. Our own observation of virtuous long term relationships (friends and life partners in an Aristotelian sense) suggests that in many cultures the combination of three factors play a crucial role for such relations 1) similar values, 2) compatible lifestyles, and 3) compatible future perspectives.

In cultural sciences the inquiry into otherness often results in the discovery of commonalities. One such example is the comparative religious scholarship by Mircea Eliade (1951; 1954; 1957; 1988). He discovered many common phenomena in different cultures and religions such as *imitatio dei* (the imitation of divine and quasi-divine figures by priests or other members of a society), transition rituals, and

shamanism just to name a few. In comparative studies, Commonalities discovered in otherness do not only show cultural similarities but also point to fundamental roots of human nature – e.g. human's drive to imitate, the spiritual and intellectual ability to create myths and metaphysical endeavor. Saint-Exupéri in his *Little Prince* (1974) describes that the establishment of friendship takes time - otherness gradually becomes familiar.

I am now making an example of a transdisciplinary approach applied to an intercultural phenomenon of 'otherness'. We are transferring an esthetical approach into the political, ethical, and 'racial' black and white discourse[1]. With this approach I attempt to portray that otherness is often dichotomized, politicized, and 'constructed' and has to be 'deconstructed' to reconstruct the relation between different cultural groups which regard their fellow human beings with different cultural backgrounds as 'the other' (e.g. 'the black man' and 'the white man'). Deconstructing 'otherness' reveals that the 'other' is less different than what has been claimed by mainstream opinions in every day discourse. This deconstructing process is a necessary (pre-) requisite for mutual understanding.

4. The South African Black and White Discourse

The so-called black and white people in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) are statistically and aggregately seen very clear economic opposites, the economic 'color divide' is obvious – that is without doubt.

'Blacks' and 'Whites' – these labels help to distinguish one from another. But they are wrong – at least, if seen from an *esthetic* point of view: This dichotomy applied to the description of the

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1. For a more detailed account cf. Meinhold, 2007,pp.12-20

density of human skin pigment does not reflect the whole esthetic reality. Human beings are not simply black or white in skin color; this categorization is not precise, and the black and white scheme is a simplifying reductionism. Black and white 'colors' are *opposites* or *extremes*, while humans with contrasting skin pigmentations are by no means necessarily opposites or extremes. This esthetic opposition may lead to an anthropological extremism and thus to an ethical problem.

In esthetics – a diversity of African contrasting accounts are still desiderata – black and white 'colors' are considered as special or even 'unreal' colors. Black and white – but also grey and neutral – are often called 'achromatic' colors. The Greek word *chroma* [gen. chromatos] means color, the prefix 'a' – an *alpha privativum* – negates the following word: *chroma*; thus black and white are 'non-color-colors'. Black and white are so to speak 'off limits': they do not appear in the spectral wheel as well as all other color mixtures which need black or white pigments as elements, such as pink (red and white) or dark blue (blue and black). In light of that, a number of applications of color schemes to humans appear to be imprecise.

A symbolically valuable but imprecise application of a color schema to humans is the notion of the 'rainbow nation'. The notion was first used by Nelson Mandela in a symbolic and normative way: the different ethnic groups in South Africa should be brought together harmoniously in the same way as the color harmony in a rainbow could be observed. Between the colors of the rainbow there is no clear line of demarcation, rather a borderless flow from one color into the other. But when it comes to the application of the colors of the rainbow to humans themselves the symbol fails to be precise and correct: the rainbow has no black and white components but red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple

ones. The so-called black and white people do not find their skin color represented in the colors of the rainbow. Even a slightly more adequate color description for black and white skin, like the colors brown and beige-rosé, do not describe colors which can be found in the rainbow. Neither the majority of South Africans are represented in that symbol nor minorities such as Indians and the so-called 'whites'.

As we can see from the approach taken above, the black and white schema is imprecise because so-called black or white people are not really and entirely black or white, but darker or lighter *brown* and white ones are not really white, but rather lighter or darker *beige-rosé*. Brown and beige-rosé are not esthetic *opposites* or *extremes* like black and white. Black and white '*colors*' are extremes and opposites. On the same basis tall and small people could be considered as extremes, people with blue and brown eyes, those with big and small noses or ears, lighter and darker hair and so forth... so we would not talk about blacks and whites, but about 'talls' and 'smalls', 'browns', 'blues', 'greens' and so on. Because if you can signify a man by his skin color *alone*, why should it be not possible to signify a person in the same way by body height or eye color?, despite that we do not really need to signify and categorize human beings by colors and measures.

The achromatic black and white opposition also entails symbolical implications. Black and white '*colors*' are opposing extremes – black and white *people* are not, but the usage of the terms black and white and its opposing implications suggest that everything that *is* black or white must somehow be one part of an opposing extreme. Additionally in many cases, black is the negative side of the two extremes, whereas white is seldom connoted negatively, usually black and white are also symbolical extremes (again additionally a specific African perspective is essential to complement the picture).

Examples are: black sheep, black market, the black man (somebody to be afraid of, dark, unknown, dangerous), black as symbol of death, (mourning clothes and black bands). From these examples we can see that *black* 'color' – not exclusively, but quite often – symbolizes the *negative* side of two extremes while white stands for the positive aspect. And – this is already included in the former argument – black and white always symbolize two *extremes* which normally *exclude* each other (day–night; life–death; male–female). Black and white playing figures and opposed squares of the chess board do not only display opposites but antagonists and enemies. The effect of these symbolical implications of the two colors is that we think about opposites, dichotomies, extremes, and antagonisms if we speak of black and white, and this engram of polarity cannot be erased easily.

It is essential to note that some research must be undertaken so as to realize what color analysis well suits a pre-colonial African esthetic perspective. Here it would be necessary to find out if black and white hues were as well seen as extremes and opposites and what symbolical meanings they had or still have.

From an esthetic point of view, 'brown' and 'beige-rosé' are more adequate color descriptions for the skin of so-called 'black' and 'white' people than the labels 'black' and 'white'. Beige-rosé and brown are neither esthetic extreme nor are they part of an esthetical polarization. Nevertheless individuals should not be named 'browns' or 'beige-rosés', because *skin* is only the 'wrapping' of the body. Individuals should not be signified by their skin color alone, even if the skin is the largest surface which can be seen of an individual. We do not signify individuals by eye color, but sometimes by hair color and use descriptions like she *is* blonde/fair or he *is* grey. But in both cases we would suggest not to signify an

individual by a color *alone*, because this kind of reductionism omits too many elements of a person and her/his personality.

 In light of the above-mentioned arguments, my normative suggestions are (1) to abandon the term 'white' for descriptions of individuals – because nobody's skin is really an entirely white – and apply the term 'black' only for those very few whose skin is really black, but not (dark) brown. I would also like to suggest (2) to abandon the signification of a human being by color *alone* – irrespectively if skin, hair or eye color – because that reductionism and oversimplification omits various other important innate or socio-cultural aspects more important in the context of daily life-centered solving problems. Thus one should *not* say "She *is* black or white", but "The color of her skin is (dark or light) brown or beige-rosé". In that way we would not talk about the *entire person*, but about her/his surface; our words describe something superficial with a "superficial" term. If we say "S/he *is* black" we use a term which is meant to describe a surface, but we signify the *whole* human being or maybe even the *essence* of the being.

5. Narcissism

The imprecise application of the black and white color schemes to humans shows how easily stereotypes and dichotomies are used in every day discourse. An additional problem arises with arrogance and narcissism. While arrogance is often based on fear, ignorance or narcissism, on a parochial discernment, can be seen as both, as a fundamental anthropological feature and/or as a psychopathological disorder; each human being's personality is probably situated somewhere between narcissism as human fundamental feature and psychopathology. A certain degree of self-love seems to be natural and even essential or vital in human beings.

But narcissism as an exaggerated self-love is also not unusual in everyday life. The DSM IV categorization mentions following features or symptoms of narcissism: strong feeling of own importance, exaggeration concerning one's own talents and achievements, strong fantasies regarding one's own power, success, beauty etc., expectation of strong admiration, taking advantage in social relations (philosophically seen: treating people as means, not as ends), low compassion, jealousy and arrogance. Interestingly such personal traits or features cannot only be discovered with individuals, but with social groups as well. So the categorization can be transferred to family, gender, religion, village, nationality, culture, 'race', ethnic group, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, social class or milieu and species (cf. Cohen, 2002,p.193). A few examples for illustration (I will use the words 'some' and 'many' to illustrate unqualified generalizations and stereotypizations based on narcissism in the wider sense): some feminists claim that masculine part of the society has a positive attitude towards themselves and a negative one towards women, so many men think that they are more powerful and successful in art, science and politics than women. Some men are proud of their house-external achievements, while women are not admired in the same way for achievements at home, related-to-family issues and child bearing. And again, the same narcissist features can be discovered in racism. Some African Philosophers claim, that (some) Europeans think they are more important than Africans and some Europeans hold that they contribute more to culture and technology, because some of them are more powerful or successful in art, science and politics. So quite often some Europeans are admired for their cultural achievements, while Africans are not. Especially during colonial but also during Apartheid era in South Africa, some of the colonizers treated the native Africans not as ends in

themselves, but as means. And to date some Europeans feel little compassion for Africans suffering due to poverty, starvation, famine and HIV pandemic on the African continent. If we would apply the DSM IV category to this kind of Europeans the group had to be classified as narcissist. As mentioned before the same DSM IV categories can be applied to the other groups mentioned above and in the end to humanity as a whole as well, since humans usually think that they are more important than the rest of nature – a phenomenon which is called also speciesism, a term coined by the psychologist Richard D. Ryder and popularized by the philosopher Peter Singer (2009). A speciesist approach usually treats the rest of nature as means, but not as end.

Environmental ethicists, conservation biologists, animal rights activists, environmentalists, and sustainable development specialists have shown that this is not the strategy with the help of which humanity and the rest of nature will be able to survive in the long run and have therefore developed strategies which strive to minimize human narcissism, speciesism, and misbehavior towards nature. Of course here in the area of environmental ethics but also if it comes to nationalism, racism and patriarchy the first step is enlightenment and understanding with the help of deconstructing otherness as in the 'black & white' example above.

Conclusion and Recommendation

We are constantly confronted with the phenomena of otherness in today's world of increasing and accelerating globalization. Therefore it is even more essential than in the past to carefully deconstruct stereotypes, generalizations, and (over-)simplifications. History taught us sufficiently about the problematic consequences of parochial approaches and

worldviews. One viable method to overcome limited worldviews is to educate ourselves and critically question established dichotomies (as the black & white dualism) or simplifications such as "Muslims are terrorists" and the politically by the George W. Bush administration propagated 'axis of good and evil'. Otherwise a stand-up comedy sketch of an US American Muslim comes true: *"My name is Ahmed Ahmed and I really can't fly anywhere".*

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