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**TOWARDS VIRTUE ETHICS: ACTION AND MORALITY  
IN ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE AND KAROL WOJTYLA**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AP	<i>The Acting Person</i>
DER	Double Effect Reasoning
e.g.	exempli gratia [Polish: na przykład; English: for instance]
etc	et cetera [Polish: i tak dalej; English: and so forth]
G. E. M. Anscombe`	Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe
GG	Guise of the Good
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
i.e	id est [Polish: to jest albo to znaczy; English: that is to say]
IEM	Immunity to Error through Misidentification
KUL	Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski JP II (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin)
MMP	Modern Moral Philosophy
PAS	Personal Assisted Suicide
PDE	Principle of Double Effect
PSE	Principle of Side Effect
S. Th,	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>
VMPC	Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex

## INTRODUCTION

All serious discussion of moral thinking would benefit from recognizing and giving due attention to the element in our moral thinking which is concerned with virtue and character. But after decades of neglect this is a difficult task to carry out. Reflection on ancient ethical theory may make it easier for us to do this; for we need to study theories which make these notions primary in order to recover a proper understanding of them.<sup>1</sup>

Most contemporary philosophers begin by distinguishing two types of reasoning which underlies human action: the first are “normative reasons”, and the second is “motivating reasons”. Normative reasons are those reasons which roughly favor or justify an action, as being judged by a well-informed, impartial observer. Motivating reasons roughly speaking are those reasons that an “agent” (that is, the person acting) takes to favor, and justify his action, and which guides him in acting. Our two protagonists – Karol Wojtyła and Elizabeth Anscombe are examples of philosophers who fit into proponents of both normative and motivative grounds for human actions respectively. Of course, there are other reasons which can explain an action without necessarily justifying it, and without being the reasons which is motivating the agent. Nonetheless, I have taken these two trajectories so as to distill out the significant elements in human action which contribute to the development of virtue ethics.

One could ask, why the fuss about the analysis of human action? If we are able to distill out the significant element of human action and morality from either normative or motivative grounds, or perhaps from both perspectives, of what relevance is any virtue ethics developed therefrom for our contemporary society? Answers to these two questions become quite obvious if we consider that it is moral virtue rather than economic growth or even technological advancement which drives any sustainable development in all societies and in all ages right from antiquity to date. There is no gainsaying the fact that the vast array of technological discoveries man has made down the ages can be deployed for enhancing human flourishing or destruction of whole societies. The development of nuclear warheads is a clear testimony to this assertion. In fact, without moral virtue, the human person is tempted to thinking that he is the measure of all things, and that he possess an infinite capacity for reshaping the material world in which he lives. Hence the need to undertake and fashion out a vision of virtue ethics which can regulate human action and morality in view of a more sustainable development in

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Annas; *The Morality of Happiness*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. 1993, p. 455.

our world today. I consider the visions of both Karol Wojtyła and Elizabeth Anscombe quite helpful in retooling the elements of human action and morality for such a project of developing a suitable virtue ethics for today. Both philosophers are themselves contemporary ethicists who, even though did not correspond with one another, have arrived at the same conclusion albeit from different normative (metaphysico-anthropological) and motivative (psychological) starting points. Hence, they provide for us rafters to construct a theoretical framework for the project of virtue ethics for our contemporary society.

On the level of moral praxis, the question remains to be answered concerning what constitutes an adequate moral standard by which a person is to act and order his or her life. Likewise, the need exists for human society as a whole to discover those essential principles which are necessary for the development of a truly human and just society. It is in this sense that it is necessary to have an objective standard for evaluating and distinguishing the moral quality of human actions as either moral good or moral evil. This objective moral standard is necessary so that we can strive for and achieve those good values and expunge the bad ones from the hearts of man, and so make it possible to build truly habitable societies. At the center of this issue is man himself. It is good to note that man or the human person is a being in the world faced with multiple choices, and is a being who seeks to live in the world and in relation to it. For this reason there is a need to understand the whole essence of the human person, and the reasons why he acts or performs the certain actions that he does.

A panoply of literature abounds on human action and morality and so the many different philosophers who lived in the different epochs of history beginning from ancient times until today, philosophers like Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, Max Scheler, and Foot, have proposed ideas and theories that could contribute in understanding human action and morality. Hence it is an arduous task to sift through the available tons of work in view of selecting operational protagonists in this kind of research. My choice of Wojtyła and Anscombe however is not arbitrary as it is the fruit of a series of considerations amidst several alternative protagonists, with an eye on the continuity of the classical tradition (Aristotle-Aquinas) on the theory of virtue ethics. Amongst most contemporary works in this regard, I consider the works of Elizabeth Anscombe and Karol Wojtyła quite congenial to my project of retooling virtue ethics with key elements of human action and morality. In Elizabeth Anscombe I am focusing on two of her works. The first is titled: "Intention", and the second is titled: "Modern Moral Philosophy". In the works of Karol Wojtyła I am focusing on his work titled: "The Acting Person". Likewise, I will also be investigating how Anscombe's moral philosophy and Wojtyła's ethical theses are in conformity with Aristotle's virtue ethics, and its suitability for

contemporary man and his ethics of living. Karol Wojtyła, in one of his most celebrated philosophical works, *The Acting Person*, explains how he tries to combine a personalistic phenomenology with Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, and tries to understand who and what the human person truly is.

For Wojtyła, the human person could be understood through his actions. He believes that “the activity of a thing (*operari*) depends on and follows the being or existence of that thing (*esse*), or that a thing acts according to the way it is.”<sup>2</sup> This means that for Wojtyła, to understand the nature of man, one needs to understand his action. Man being the centre of morality means also that man must be involved either as the subject or object when it comes to moral issues. As such, Wojtyła viewed the human person as a moral agent – one who is capable of causing an action to take place and to evaluate if such action is good or bad. Man becomes good or bad in the result of acting therefore in the theoretical framework Wojtyła’s philosophy of action opens a prospective to base virtue ethics on considerations regarding action and becoming or self-fulfilment of man in action. The main problem in this matter and which is the subject matter of this work would be – Virtue Ethics which gives rise to the following questions:

1. How can man achieve goodness?
2. How possible is it to attain a virtuous character?
3. Which are anthropological foundations of the moral virtue?

These are prevailing questions that have kept the philosophical milieu in an active debate and critique which this research is to synthesize.

This work shall highlight Elizabeth Anscombe’s call for a return to Aristotle, and as such will use Anscombe’s call,<sup>3</sup> and Wojtyła’s notions, as anchor points to explicate the notion of virtue ethics and its relevance for 21st century man. It is also worth noting that I do not aim at a conclusive solution to the theoretical and practical challenges of constructing a suitable theory of virtue ethics for today but rather to modestly open-up new vistas of interest as well as raise new questions that will remain open for further revision and constructive criticisms.

With regard to its method, this work is basically expository, analytic and discursive in nature. It is expository in that it stems out from the work of philosophy beginning from

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyla*; Australia: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>The assertions of Elizabeth Anscombe on virtue ethics is a wakeup call to a return to the Aristotelian virtue which secularism has undermined and her demand for philosophy of psychology as the basis to do moral philosophy. While Wojtyła’s concept of virtue ethics with focus on his work on the acting person and man’s social responsibilities, exposing his moral standing as a Roman Catholic clergy by bringing to light his positions.



Aristotle's concept of virtue down to medieval philosophers like Aquinas, and up to modern philosophers such as Philippa Foot and other contemporaries of Elizabeth Anscombe, and then Karol Wojtyła on the nature of the acting person. We would seek to espouse their thoughts and ideas. It is analytic because it highlights key elements of action and morality in Elizabeth Anscombe, with a special focus on the sense and meaning of "intention" in Anscombe. In addition, it will also highlight key elements in Karol Wojtyła's theory of "human action". Finally, the work's method will also be discursive and so will give room to engage divergent opinions and take a more dialogical stance which promotes the possibility of raising critical questions and ideas in relation to virtue ethics.

## **I. Basic Concepts on Virtue Ethics**

### **1. Understanding Virtue**

The ancient Roman World used the Latin word *virtus* to refer to all of the excellent qualities of men, which includes valorous conduct, physical strength and moral rectitude. The French words *vertu* and *virtu* were from this Latin origin. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the term virtue was "brought into English."<sup>4</sup>

A theory of the virtues can explain why an action is in accordance with certain character traits, or possession to them, for example: obligatory or prohibition. Virtue, by definition, is the moral excellence of a person. The character of people who have achieved moral perfection are people who possess moral virtue, which are defined as good. A virtuous<sup>5</sup> person is a morally good person. He is honest, respectful, courageous, forgiving and kind. They do the right thing and do not yield to immoral impulses, urges or desires, but act in accordance with morally good values and principles. Some might say good qualities are innate, but this does not mean that he possesses moral virtue automatically and without effort. Virtues need to be cultivated in order to be actualized and more prevalent in the life of the individual human being. With the habit of being virtuous, we take the helm of our own life, redirecting its course towards greater happiness and fulfillment.

When we talk about virtue we are talking about morality. Aristotle was one of the earliest writers to ground morality in nature, and specifically human nature. According to

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<sup>4</sup> "The Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories". Merriam-Webster Inc., 1991. P. 496.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara MacKinnon, *Ethics, Theory and Contemporary Issues*, United States of America, Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2011, p. 64.

Aristotle there are two basic types of virtues: intellectual virtues and moral virtues. Intellectual virtues are perfections of the mind, such as the ability to understand, to reason, and to judge well. These perfections are learnt from teachers, while moral virtues on the other hand, dispose us to act well which are acquired through repetition.<sup>6</sup> As the old adage goes: “practice makes perfect”.

Richard Price in his moral philosophy distinguishes between abstract and practical virtues<sup>7</sup>. Abstract virtue for him denotes “what an action is independently of the sense of the agent; or what it is in itself absolutely, it is right for such an agent; in such circumstances”<sup>8</sup>. But the actual practice of virtue for Price depends on the opinion of the agent concerning his action. Thus, practical virtue may diverge from abstract virtue but be no less obligatory insofar as the agent acts from a free will or what he calls ‘consciousness of rectitude’.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Why Practice Virtues?

Virtues are universal and recognized by all cultures as basic qualities of well-being. When we practice virtues we build character, we develop what may have been previously missing in our life, i.e., fulfilling relationships and the achievement of goals. But developing virtue is not easy to do. We know that it takes perseverance to achieve our goals, and sometimes we still are unable to achieve the desired goal. Take forgiveness for example. We know that if we forgive we will feel better and be less angry and resentful. Likewise, we know that it takes courage to accomplish great things. G.H. Von Wright says we need the virtues in order to protect our welfare when passions would otherwise master reason and cause us harm. He defines welfare as what someone would want, if that person knew the cost of getting it.<sup>10</sup> For Aristotle, a man was basically virtuous because he displayed a beautiful balance in his moral actions, not unlike the harmony displayed in a work of art. The result of living virtuously is eudemonia, which Aristotle explains in terms of “happiness” or most generally a state of well-being.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Price (1723-1791), born at Tynton, a preacher and a moral philosopher from Calvinist background and was a minister as a domestic chaplain. His contribution to moral philosophy is *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals*, which has been published with a critical introduction by D.D. Raphael Oxford, 1948, pp. 235-39.

<sup>8</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Volume Five*, edited by Paul Edwards, London, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. and The Free Press, reprint edition 1972, p. 451.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Von Wright, 1963, pp. 103-108. This is the Aristotelian notion of a characteristic of human activity.

<sup>11</sup> Steve Wilkens; *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right and Wrong*, United States of America. InterVersity Press, 1995, p. 124.

### 3. Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics systematizes the data of moral philosophy around a different question.<sup>12</sup> Instead of asking for a list of good and bad human actions, virtue ethics asks, what is a good human person? What are the virtues to be developed and the vices to be rejected in order to become a morally good person? Instead of the list of rules about human behavior we synthesize a list of virtues to be acquired and vices to be avoided in the development of moral virtue. Virtue ethics focuses on the definition of virtues and vices, the education or discipline necessary to become virtuous, the difficulties encountered and the end to be achieved. Educators and parents spontaneously use this medium when appealing to those entrusted to their care: ‘be courageous’, ‘do not be selfish’, be ‘self-disciplined’, ‘be mature’, have ‘self-control’ etc.

Virtue ethics is primarily a normative view and hence the central position has to do with what is basic in a normative sense. This means that the answer to traditional normative questions about the differences between right and wrong, i.e. good or bad, and what makes life worth living and meaningful, are questions pertaining to moral virtue, and as such the last issue forms a basis for the answers to the first two. Those actions are right and those things good when they correspond to the ideal of the person. Hence, you should act in ways that are in conformity with this ideal, and valuable states of affairs are just those that characteristically come from living that ideal.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, pluralists will reject the idea that any of these notions should be the basis of the others. But those virtue ethicists who think there should be some account of right action and of good states of affairs typically have in mind accounts that appeal to flourishing, as an ideal of how to live, as the foundation for right action and valuable states. These features the form of virtue ethics in fact show it to be, not the novel alternative to deontological or teleological ethics, but one possible instance of such an alternative.

To assume that virtue ethics represents the alternative to deontological or teleological approaches to ethics is already to assume too much, that the only possible ideal are those that fall under the heading of eudaimonia. But it is, or at least can be, a substantive issue what sort of life is ideal and whether that ideal is an eudaimonic life. Hence, strictly speaking it is virtue, not virtue ethics; that is the alternative to deontological and teleological approaches to ethics.

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<sup>12</sup> Brian Cronin, *Value Ethics: A Lonergan Perspective*, Nairobi, Consolation Institute of Philosophy Press, 2006, p.32.

<sup>13</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 28

It is a bi-conditional according to which the left-hand side speaks of actions in deontic terms such as “right”, and on the right-hand side speaks of the behavior characteristic of some ideal. The alternative theory says that we should generate an account of right action by appeal to the conduct characteristic of that ideal. For Aristotelians, P is the eudaimonic or flourishing person. But others, armed with a different ideal would come up with a different set of actions that are right or to be done on V. What all such views share is the notion of an ideal, however that idea is spelled out, it is the standard of correct conduct (and valuable outcomes) however that ideal is pointing to.

Some authors often consider virtue ethics as against or as a rival to the Enlightenment due to the shift from traditional virtue ethics of Aristotle, while others postulate that virtue ethics is subsumed in deontology and utilitarianism, in that, it is neither fundamentally distinct from, nor does it qualify as a rival approach to deontology and utilitarianism. Whatever is the case, Martha Nussbaum has argued philosophers from deontology and utilitarianism include theories of virtue, example is Kant’s “Doctrine of Virtue” in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, where he offered a full account of virtue, in terms of the strength of the will in overcoming wayward and selfish inclinations; and analyzed the standard of virtues such as courage and self-control, and of vices such as avarice, mendacity, servility, and pride.<sup>14</sup> She maintained that while Kant in general portrayed inclination as inimical to virtue, he also recognized that sympathetic inclinations offer crucial support to virtue, encourages them to be freely cultivated.

Virtue ethics is also not in conflict with the consequentialist theory as Nussbaum points out in some utilitarians such as Henry Sedgwick in his work: *The Method of Ethics*, and Jeremy Bentham in work: *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*, and Mill who expound on moral development as part of an argument for the moral equality women. She argues that some contemporary virtue ethicists such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Bernard Williams, Philippa Foot, and John McDowell have few points of agreement, it is all about differences in points of view, and that is why it is a philosophical dilemma. In the Aristotelian view of virtue ethics, the individual is the center of society. This is the fundamental goal of virtue ethics. In Mill utilitarianism takes the opposite view. For him society is the focus of fulfillment and ultimate good, because what is good for society is good for the individual.

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<sup>14</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category?* *The Journal of Ethics*, Volume 3, 1999, pp. 163-201. She has argued that ‘virtue ethics’ is not a useful category at all, but instead loosely picks out a number of critical projects utilizing a host of targets, more or less only unified by their rejection of the ethical paradigm that has reigned supreme in the anglosphere since the 1950’s. That is, a particular approach by both Utilitarians and Kantians that conceives the paradigmatic ethical object as the ‘choice’, free from all situational and particular conditions.

#### 4. The Human Person

Alfred Adler, one of the renowned 20<sup>th</sup> century American psychologists, is noted for such witty aphorism as follows: “men of genius are admired, men of wealth are envied, men of power are feared; but only men of character are trusted”<sup>15</sup>. It is no gainsaying the fact that everything about virtue ethics is about the human person and his action. This remains true whether one considers morality from the subjective perspective, *the goodness or badness of moral intention*, or from the so-called objective perspective, *the rightness or wrongness of human behavior*. 'Subjectively', for a behavioral event (act or omission) to be considered moral, it must exhibit elements of freedom and intention. According to Joseph Selling's perspective, although there is a growing tendency to factor animals, and even 'nature', into our moral considerations, the concepts such as 'animal rights' and 'the integrity of creation' remain passive items that are reflected *upon* rather than functioning as agents. Only human persons are considered moral agents, precisely because they are capable of self-direction (intention) and presumably because they enjoy the knowledge of and the ability to make choices (freedom). Random events, no matter how 'good' (bumper crops) or 'evil' (earthquakes) human beings might like to call them, are not of themselves moral events. Only human events are properly referred to as moral, although again it is necessary to qualify only certain kinds of human events in this way.

Human acts (*actus humani*) are actions that proceed from insight into the nature and purpose of one's doing and from free consent of free will, and are to be differentiated from acts of men (*actus hominis*), which are performed without intervention of intellect and free will.<sup>16</sup> They comprise all spontaneous biological and sensual processes, like breathing and nutrition, sensual impressions; all acts performed by those who have not use of reason, like lunatics and drunken people. How then can we judge actions to determine the state of the mind whether it is done by a malicious will? Today we might suggest that merely describing the gestures or actions of a human *being* does not yet deliver us into the moral realm. Something more is needed before we can speak of human events as moral events, namely freedom and intentionality. Such events are uniquely perpetrated by the human *person*, a term that describes

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<sup>16</sup> Karl H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, Volume 1, Bangalore, Theological Publications in India, 2013, p. 228.

not a mere object or being but an active, existential phenomenon.<sup>17</sup> The human person is not a static, ontological thing; the repository of a 'nature'. Rather, the human *person* is always dynamic, situated and (intentionally) engaged.

Considering morality 'subjectively', then, must always include reference to the human *person* because freedom and intention, unique characteristics of the human person, are indispensable elements of moral decisions. Considering the 'objective' perspective of morality, we see that behavioral events are complex phenomena, consisting of acts (and omissions) that take place within the context of an entire range of circumstances. These behavioral events may, of course, be described without reference to intention or freedom. Not every *actus hominis* is an *actus humanus*. Nevertheless, for such an event to qualify as a candidate for moral analysis, it must again be related in some way to the human person. The rightness or wrongness of human behavior is never determined on the basis of a single, isolated component of a behavioral event, but rather on the basis of several, interrelated components which, together, render a description of an event sufficient to demonstrate its relevance on moral analysis, that is, an event that exhibits a complex and ambiguous conglomeration of good and evil: (ontic, pre-moral). In turn, the evaluation of these components, rendered by assigning the adjectives 'good' or 'evil', begs the question of how we are to determine what constitutes the meaning of these adjectives.

On what basis do we label the components of human behavior good or evil? Several answers to this question are possible, ranging from authority (commandment)<sup>18</sup> to statistics (nature)<sup>19</sup> to the anticipation of pleasure or pain. A personalist view of morality suggests that the answer to this question is founded upon *observation*: the shared, interpreted experience of the human community through time. True personalism, then, is always phenomenological.<sup>20</sup> Further, personalist morality (mores) is always elaborated within a community and supported by consensus. What is 'good' is always considered 'good-for-persons'; what is 'evil' is 'evil-for-persons'.<sup>21</sup> No matter which criterion one subscribes to for analysing the components of human behavior, some notions of the person will constitute a necessary element of performing moral decision-making; for without the freedom and intention exercised by the person, we are not speaking in moral terms. If one opts for a 'personalist' kind of morality, then the notion of the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph A. Selling, 'Veritatis Splendor and the sources of morality', *Louvain Studies* 19(1994), pp. 3-17.

<sup>19</sup> Cynthia S. W. Crysedale, 'Revisioning natural law: from the classicist paradigm to emergent probability', *Theological Studies* 56 (1995), pp. 464—84.

<sup>20</sup> Kenan Osborne, 'A phenomenology of the human person: a theo-anthropology', Presidential address delivered to the Catholic Theological Society of America in 1979, *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Convention of the CTSA* (1979), pp. 223-33.

<sup>21</sup> Louis Janssens, 'Ontic evil and moral evil', *Louvain Studies* 4 (1972), pp. 115—56; idem, 'Artificial insemination: ethical considerations', *Louvain Studies* 8 (1980), pp. 3-29

person functions not only on the subjective pole but on the objective pole as well, forming the reference point for the determination of good and evil, and subsequently right(ness) and wrong(ness).

## **II. Alternative Conceptions of Virtue Ethics**

Aside the above considered basic conceptions of virtue ethics, there are also alternative conceptions which have been proposed in more recent times. It is evident that in the history of philosophical reflections on morality and human action, various routes to virtue ethics have always existed side by side. There have also been a few dominant trajectories, hence in the ancient period, the classical tradition retained amidst other contending alternatives such normative trajectories like the Socratic ‘the good life worthy of man’, the Platonic participation of individuals and states in the idea of Good as harmoniously realized in tripartite balance of parts of the soul or members of the society, and the Aristotelian actualization of eudamonia by the practice of virtue. Also, in the middle, Aquinas entertained diverse disputations on the nature of virtue and how it is acquired and lost. And in the modern and contemporary times, we have also seen more and more aspective dimensions of the ethical reflection on virtue as it pertains to human action and morality.

In the paragraphs that follow, I shall attempt a short overview of the contending alternative routes to ethical reflection on virtue which were contemporaneous to our protagonists – Karol Wojtyla and Elizabeth Anscombe. This overview of alternative routes to virtue ethics available to them is undertaken in order to contextualize their own solutions and more so, to highlight what is unique or rather what contributions they have brought on the table of discourse about virtue ethics. A sample selection of these alternative conceptions of virtue ethics include deontologism, utilitarianism, consequentialism and circumstantialism. A short overview of these alternatives routes is undertaken below:

### **1. Deontologism**

Deontology ethics also known as duty ethics holds at its zenith the adhering to ethical principles of obligation. But how is this duty defined? This has been a bone of contention and argument in deontological ethics. Deontology, which emphasizes duty to rules puts its yard stick on one’s duty, which is established by some sort of moral imperative, that is, obedience

to some higher moral absolute known as Divine Command. Immanuel Kant is referred to as the father of deontological theory, but he replaced heteronomy of Divine Legislator by autonomy of the human moral self-legislator. This theory also depends upon meta-ethical realism, in that it postulates the existence of moral absolutes that make an action moral, notwithstanding the circumstance.

The 'kpim'<sup>22</sup> of deontology is that it focuses on the act, its rightness or goodness in keeping with moral standard, that is, a principle, rule, maxim, duty, which is itself, derived from an underlying moral philosophy. The standard of action may be utility, beneficence, justice,<sup>23</sup> or the Categorical imperative. Deontological theories have normative force with a specificity not shared by concepts like virtue or caring. With this theory however, there is always the difficulty of closing the gap between general moral norms and their applicability in particular moral events.

## **2. Consequentialism and Utilitarianism**

Consequentialism bases the morality of an action upon the consequences of the outcome. It judges rightness or wrongness of one's action from the outcome of the act itself. Instead of saying that one should not steal, consequentialist perspective would be that one should not steal because it leads to an undesirable effect. The Greatest Happiness Principle of John Stuart Mill is one of the most commonly adopted criteria. He contends that our determinant for the desirability of an action is the net amount of happiness it yields, the number of people involved, and how long this happiness lasts. Mill also tries to delineate classes of happiness, some are more desired than others, but there is a difficulty in classifying such concepts. A clearer understanding of Mill's contention is seen in his Utilitarianism. Though John Stuart Mill is regard as the father of Consequentialism and the Utilitarianism, we shall subsequently focus on the utilitarian position of Jeremy Bentham. Utilitarianism justifies everything and was not very far from hedonism and libertarianism.

## **3. Circumstantialism**

This a "particularizing" perspective theories that lay emphasis and base their moral position upon situations, the circumstances, the historical, cultural and personal attributes that make each moral to stand out. This theory according to J. Martineau include ethical theories

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<sup>22</sup> The term 'kpim' is an onomatopoeic expression (a sound which has meaning to the users) which means the core of an assertion, or an articulation from someone which is the central point or the theory from a school of thought.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Mark, p. 149.



based on, historical, cultural or genetic predispositions, lived experience, caring for particular individuals, hermeneutic interpretations, and the motivational ethics. These theories according to his dictum enhance the rich detail of a moral event not grasped by virtue-based or deontological perspectives.<sup>24</sup> Just as moral psychology, particularizing theories are most valid for explanatory and heuristic purposes, but not normative in the true sense of it. All circumstantial theorists suffer by being too entangled in concrete details to be normative, unless one is willing to accept situation ethics and its conceptual liabilities as a normative theory.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 150.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS ON VIRTUE ETHICS

This discussion begins from the ancient Greek conception of virtue and virtue ethics by considering some of our present-day notions of virtue ethics and virtuous living. Aristotle's notion of a moral virtue is what he calls the "Golden Mean,"<sup>25</sup> a balance between two behavioral extremes. The moral virtue of courage for example is the midpoint between an excess of courage and foolhardiness, and the deficit, a deficit of courage, or cowardice. For Aristotle, then, the virtuous and happy life is a life of moderation in all things. Modern virtue ethicists follow Aristotle's lead in many respects. Some thinkers take issue with his teleological theory of human nature and his concept of virtue as a mean between opposing tendencies. Some have offered interesting alternatives to his virtue ethics, but almost all virtue theories owe a debt to Aristotle in one way or another. Like Aristotle, contemporary thinkers put the emphasis on quality of character and virtues, rather than on the adherence to a particular principle or rule of right action. Virtue ethicists for example are less likely to ask whether lying is wrong in a particular situation, rather than asking the question if the person is honest or dishonest, or if honesty precludes lying in this case, or whether an exemplar of honesty (say, Gandhi or Jesus) would lie in particular situations.<sup>26</sup>

Contemporary virtue ethicists are also Aristotelian in believing that a pure duty-based morality of rule adherence represents a barren, one-dimensional conception of the moral life. First, they agree with Aristotle that the cultivation of virtues is not merely a moral requirement - it is a way (some would say the *only* way) to ensure human flourishing and the good life. Second, they maintain that a full-blown ethics must take into account motives, feelings, intentions, and moral wisdom - factors that they think duty-based morality neglects. This view

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<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, ed. by I. Bywater. Oxford: Clarendon Press, repr. 1949. Audi 1997: p. 114. Robert Audi, 'Moral Judgments and Reasons for Action', in Garrett Cullity and Berys Gaut (eds.), *Ethics and Practical Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; see also *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by W.D. Ross, Book II, p. 45-53.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis Vaughn: *Doing Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues* 4<sup>th</sup> edition. W.W. Norton and Company, New York-London, 2016, p. 137.

contrasts dramatically with the notion that morality is simply to act out of duty - that is, to do our duty *because* it is our duty. We need not act out of friendship, loyalty, kindness, love, or sympathy.<sup>27</sup> But in virtue ethics, acting from such motivations is a crucial part of acting from a virtuous character, for virtues are stable dispositions that naturally include motivations and feelings. Contrast the action of someone who methodically aids his sick mother solely out of a sense of duty with the person who tends to her mother out of sympathy, love, and loyalty (perhaps in addition to a sense of duty). Most people would probably think that the latter is a better model of the moral life, while the former seems incomplete.

Virtue ethics is still a controversial concept among contemporary philosophers. A case can be made against virtue ethics by some philosophers especially evolutionists and existentialists on the ground that it is rooted on the principles of man's freedom. While in contrast, a case for virtue ethics is based on how well it seems to explain important aspects of the moral life. Some philosophers, for example, claim that the virtue approach offers a more plausible explanation of the role of motivation in moral actions than duty-based moral systems do. By Kantian lights, your conduct may be morally acceptable even if you, say, save a friend's life out of a sense of duty alone (that is, without any sincere regard for your friend). But this motivation, your calculating sense of duty, seems to be a very cold and anemic motivation indeed.

## 1.1 Classical Traditions of Virtue Ethics

### 1.1.1 Aristotle's Notion on Virtue Ethics

Aristotle in his '*Nicomachean Ethics*' advances an understanding of ethics known as *virtue ethics* because of its heavy reliance on the concept of virtue. For Aristotle, virtue is the golden mean between two vices, the one of excess and the other of deficiency.<sup>28</sup> The word we translate as *virtue* is *aretê*, and it could equally be translated as "excellence." Something has *aretê* if it performs its function well. A good horseman, for example, has the *aretê* of being good at handling horses, and a good knife has the *aretê* of sharpness. For the Greeks, moral virtue is not essentially different from these other kinds of excellence. The Greeks do not have a distinctive concept of morality like we do, which carries associations of sanctity or duty. Moral virtue is simply a matter of performing well in the function of being human. Every action

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<sup>27</sup> Louis P. Pojman, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle: *The Nicomachean Ethics*; Book Two, Translated by J.A.K. Thomson, Penguin Books, 1955, p. 107.

and pursuit should aim at some good; and for this reason the good as has rightly been said, is that to which all things aim.<sup>29</sup>

Considering the genealogy of morals, we can establish that the great poet Homer has enormous influence on the moral philosophy of ancient Greek world, especially that of Aristotle. Aristotle states in his *Nicomachean Ethics* with an insight from Homer's *Odyssey*, that only the Spartans binds their citizens by law to a proper diet and exercises, but other states do not value this matter, they let every man live as he pleases, like the Cyclopes of Homer, 'laying down the rules for his wife and children'.<sup>30</sup> This indicates the moral function of law as a tool for ethical conduct in a society.

For Homer a virtue is what enables a free man to fulfill his role in life and death. Physical strength and boldness enabled the Homeric hero to excel at challenges such as those of the battlefield, and thus achieve fame, honor and glory.<sup>31</sup> For Homer misdeed requires punishment as Odysseus did to those who dishonored his house while away on an adventurous voyage, for the hero, vice is intolerable. Self-restraint is not a Homeric virtue; rather, disrespect must be avenged for personal gain and pleasure; it is seen as a Homeric code of honor. From the perspective of the ancient Greek society, however, the insult against Odysseus, and the abuse of hospitality fully deserved a rather harsh response. In these brutal contexts the Homeric virtues of cunning, strength and the seeking of personal glory start to look a little more like virtues and less like vices. Indeed to Homer the Christian virtues of meekness and modesty would be vices, as is the virtue of Aristotle, in that they show weakness and interfere with the hero maintaining his personal status. The notion of Greek *aretē*, applies to objects as well as persons. So we might speak of an excellent sword – a sword which has the virtue of sharpness (and is thereby useful for beheading unwanted guests, a punishment Odysseus inflicts on the innocent priest Leodes)<sup>32</sup>. The virtue of an object thus relates to that object's function or *ergon*. A sword has the function of cutting, so sharpness is a virtue or *aretē* of a sword for Homer. If

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<sup>29</sup>*Great Book of the Western World*; "The Works of Aristotle II", edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins et al, London, William Benton, 1952, p. 339.

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* 1180a, 24-29. For further reading go to Homer; *The Odyssey* (tr. E.V. Rieu) London: Penguin Classics, 2003, (ix). P. 114- 115. Homer is not a man known to have existed, and the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as imputed. Not a contradiction, but Homer is the author of the Homeric poems, a hypothesis constructed to account for their existence and quality. History shows there are several "Lives of Homer" in antiquity, with uncertain dates, but the Homer they present is a figure of romance and conjuncture seven cities as his birth place and six centuries containing his birth –day were all ascribed to him. Samuel Butler contended that the *Odyssey* was authored by a woman. This note is from biographical note of Homer in *The Great Books of the Western World* Vol. IV, The University of Chicago, 1952, preliminary page, iii.

<sup>31</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, Book 22, p. 475.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 325.

a man's function is seen as heroic, then the Homeric virtues will be such as to enable a man to undertake heroic acts and thus achieve a heroic reputation.

More evidently, Aristotle sees Homer as a teacher of virtues, because Homer's epics as we can affirm are stories of men in action. Aristotle in his work discusses how the deliberative orator must exhort men to be expedient and dissuade them from being inexpedient, he equates experience with goodness. Assessing it is necessary for grasping first the basic notions of goodness and expediency, he assumes goodness to be 'whatever is desirable for its own sake, or for the sake of which we choose something else'.<sup>33</sup> Pleasure and happiness are good he said, and they are desirable with the exclusion of evil and possession of good. Some of the necessary virtues of the soul that he listed are: justice, courage, self-control, magnanimity. Likewise, he lists health, beauty, wealth, eloquence, a good memory, the arts and sciences, and life itself as virtues of the body. Arguing from the general notion that everything desired deliberately appears to be good, Aristotle reasons that whatever is preferred by one who is enlightened must be good, as when Athens preferred Odysseus, Theseus Helen, the goddesses Paris, and Homer Achilles.<sup>34</sup> The Homeric work has an imaginary form, but Aristotle transformed them into the real life experience of men, of the Greek society. For the Greeks, the motivation for being good is not derived from a divine legislator or a set of moral prescriptions and prohibitions, but is rather the same kind of striving for excellence that is found in an discipline of an athlete. The Greek word *ethos* from which we derive the word *ethics* literally means "character," and Aristotle's goal is to describe what qualities constitute an excellent character.<sup>35</sup>

Aristotle defines moral virtue as a disposition to behave in the right manner and as a mean between extremes of excess and defect, which are vices. We learn moral virtue primarily through habit and practice, rather than through reasoning and instruction. Virtue is a matter of having the appropriate attitude toward pain and pleasure. For example, a coward will suffer undue fear in the face of danger, whereas a rash person will not suffer sufficient fear. A virtuous person exhibits all of the virtues: they do not properly exist as distinct qualities but rather as different aspects of a virtuous life. Aristotle claims that each virtue comes between two vices. An oft-repeated criticism of Aristotle's view is that one can find more than two vices to flank particular virtues. In fact one can find more than two vices for any Aristotelian virtue, and one could argue that there is still a point to the triadic system, because it highlights three importantly

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<sup>33</sup> Donald J. McGuire, S. J.; *Aristotle's Attitude towards Homer: "Dissertations"*, Chicago, Loyola University, 1977, p. 110. <https://ecommons@luc.edu/>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 111.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Enoch Stumpf: *Socrates to Sartre. A History of Philosophy*. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975, pp.103-104.

different mentalities, as can be gleaned from Aristotle's account of self-love and a puzzling passage about practical wisdom itself being in a mean in the *Eudemon Ethics*. A practical consequence of abandoning Aristotle's triadic framework is that one may mistake one of the true vices for a virtue.<sup>36</sup>

### 1.1.1.a Virtue as Pursuit of Happiness in Aristotle

Aristotle begins his book on ethics by observing that all human action aims at some end. He presents an important argument relating human happiness and the virtues to human nature. The history of the idea of happiness could be summarized in a series of bumper sticker equations: happiness=luck (Homeric era), happiness=virtue (classical era), happiness=heaven (medieval era), happiness=pleasure (Enlightenment era), and happiness=a warm puppy (contemporary era).<sup>37</sup> Happiness consists in carrying out distinctively human activity well, that is, in accordance with virtue (and it also requires the wherewithal to do so). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect the particular virtues to allow their possessors to make good use of their specifically human attributes and hence to flourish as human beings. All the ethical virtues involve reasoning, a central human activity, but they each pick up on other particular aspects of human nature as well. All intermediate goals must ultimately aim at some at some final good we desire for its own sake, and at what is the ultimate desire for man.<sup>38</sup>

The answer is simple from the Aristotelian perspective; the final goal of all human desire is happiness. The Greek name that Aristotle uses is *eudaimonia*. Happiness in Aristotle should not be taken to be pleasure; rather, it is best interpreted as "well-being" or "having a life that is worth living". It becomes absurd to ask why someone is striving for happiness? It requires no further justification other than to say that it is the final goal of human life. Many people associate living well with pleasure, wealth, honor, and a wide variety of things. But Aristotle agrees with the following statement that "to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude and a clearer account of what it is still desire".<sup>39</sup>

As we observe in his metaphysics, the purpose or function of something constitutes its real nature. Notwithstanding, this will constitute its virtue or the standard of its excellence as

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<sup>36</sup> Paula Gottlieb; *The Virtues of Aristotle*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Diener, Ed, and Pelin Kesebir. "In Pursuit of Happiness: Empirical Answers to Philosophical Questions." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* (Association for Psychological Science) 3, no. 2 (March 2008): 117. Accessed March 10, 2020. <https://internet.psychology.illinois.edu/edienes/review>.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross. Book, p. 7.

well. The good carpenter according to William F. Lawhead, is one who fulfills the purpose of carpentry, which is construction. A good eye is one that fulfills the function of seeing. Becoming a good human being for Aristotle is therefore fulfilling the ends which are unique for man and not the ends which are specific for any other animal. Going after that which is not proper for man becomes animalistic, he stated thus:

Happiness, therefore, does not lie in amusement; it would, indeed, be strange if the end were amusement, and one were to take trouble and suffer hardship all one's life in order to amuse oneself. For, in a word, everything that we choose we choose for the sake of something else—except happiness, which is an end. Now to exert oneself and work for the sake of amusement seems silly and utterly childish.<sup>40</sup>

Having established that pleasure does not equal happiness, Aristotle points out that a minimal amount of pleasure is an ingredient in the good life. According to Aristotle, those who claim that those who suffer for want or misfortunes are happy, whether they mean it or not are talking nonsense. While virtue is not the goal of life, Aristotle proposes that it accompanies the life that is morally excellent.<sup>41</sup>

#### **1.1.1.b. Prudence as the Queen of Virtues in Aristotle**

It can be argued that prudence is the queen of virtues in Aristotle. Taken in its most basic understanding as finding a balance between extremes, it can stand for Aristotle's description of virtue in general. Aristotle argued that all virtue in life is achieved by "maintaining the Golden Mean". This means that, in order to find happiness, people should always strive for a balance between two extremes. "Virtue lies at the middle."<sup>42</sup> *Let's take an example:* Did you ever encounter someone who is a bit of a coward? Typically, he or she doesn't dare to speak up or act when facing danger, opposition or threat. Now, did you ever encounter someone who is totally reckless and unconcerned about the consequences of his or her actions? A courageous person is someone who is neither a coward, nor reckless. He has learnt to find a balance between these two extremes. This person, Aristotle argues, will be a virtuous and happy person. He has developed the proper understanding of when he should act and when he should not act. He has found the *Golden Mean*. In a society where non-stop

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<sup>40</sup> *Great Book of the Western World*; "The Works of Aristotle X, p. 525.

<sup>41</sup> W. F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, United States, Wadsworth Group, 2002 p. 81.

<sup>42</sup> William F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery* *ibid.*, p. 81.

stimulation is widely available, I see a lot of people have not yet developed the virtue of prudence.

Moral virtue is promoted by regular practice, which induces habits; and it involves following a mean course between extremes, which are vices- as courage is a mean between rashness and cowardice. But action is not virtuous because it follows a mean course- it is virtuous because it is in conformity with reason, and as a result it will in fact involve a mean.<sup>43</sup>

Sometimes people overindulge in accumulating material good such as wealth, food, drugs, alcohol with the corresponding result of a defect and insufficiency of attention to other goods such as education, physical health, sports, or intellectual pursuits. One of the examples that strikes me the most is the tremendous imbalance between consuming and producing, for example when people spend too much time watching television, media, news, etc. (consumerism tendencies), instead of producing things themselves. While relevant consumption is important, this imbalance is striking and causes a lot of frustration amongst people who don't seem to find a way to produce valuable things. Aristotle recommends moderation. We all know too much alcohol will cause a hangover. We all know sleeping only 3 - 4 hours will harm our body and health. We all know that too much sunlight will give us sunburn. But what is it that makes living in excess or deficiency so tempting? Aristotle argues that people who don't respect the *Principle of the Golden Mean*<sup>44</sup> are focused more on immediate gratification and short-term goals. Maintaining a relative balance between these two extremes requires will power and thinking about the long-term consequences of one's choices. In this sense the virtue of prudence is a very powerful help us to keep in check the excesses and defects. Aristotle's doctrine of the mean has the following three aspects. First, virtue, like health, is in equilibrium and is produced and preserved by avoiding extremes and hitting the mean; it is self-sustaining. Health and strength according to him are analogous to virtue. Hence, becoming and remaining healthy and strong is analogous to becoming and remaining virtuous. Therefore, to take the example of courage, if one fears and flees everything and withstands nothing, one will become a coward; whereas if one generally fears nothing but advances towards everything, one will become rash. Similarly, too much or too little physical pleasure will prevent one from becoming or being temperate. Aristotle explains that the extremes are destructive, whereas courage and temperance are preserved by the mean. Second,

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<sup>43</sup>*The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: Volume One, "Aristotle"; edited by Paul Edwards, London, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. and The Free Press, reprint edition 1972, p. 161.

<sup>44</sup>*Great Book of the Western World*; "The Works of Aristotle I, p. 218. Our current world bombards us with temptations, either causing us to over-consume or stay in our shells out of fear and anxiety.



virtue is in a mean “relative to us”. Temperate action is always right, but what counts as a temperate action in particular circumstances is not easy to ascertain and is “relative to us”. Third, each virtue is in a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency. Aristotle himself says that his account is “true, but not at all clear.”<sup>45</sup> According to Aristotle, virtue is also a state of character. By this he means that a morally good person is not just one who performs morally right actions but one who has developed a habit to do what is right at any given time. At the beginning of Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle tells us that there are two different kinds of human excellences, excellences of thought and excellences of character. His phrase for excellences of character – *êthikai aretai* – we usually translate as “moral virtue(s)” or “moral excellence(s)”. The Greek *êthikos* (ethical) is the adjective cognate with *êthos* (character).<sup>46</sup> When we speak of a moral virtue or an excellence of character, the emphasis is not on mere distinctiveness or individuality, but on the combination of qualities that make an individual the sort of ethically admirable person he is.

This discussion shows “moral character” in the Greek sense of having or lacking moral virtue. If someone lacks virtue this person may have any of several moral vices or may be characterized by a condition somewhere in between virtue and vice, such as continence or incontinence. Aristotle criticizes philosophers who think that being moral is simply a matter of knowing the good.

A state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.<sup>47</sup>

Aristotle clarifies the motives and reasoning of virtuous people by contrasting genuine self-love with a defective type that is reproachable.<sup>48</sup> People with reproachable self-love want most to have the biggest share of money, honors, and bodily pleasures. Because one person cannot have a big share without denying these goods to others, these are the goods that are contested and fought over. This competitive approach to these external goods leads to all sorts of morally vicious behavior. Because an individual’s good is included in the good of community, the full realization of an individual’s rational powers is not something he can achieve or maintain on his own, therefore, for him there is need for relationship in a community and we must find the means relative to us. The nameless virtues in Aristotle specifically

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<sup>45</sup> Paula Gottlieb 2009, p. 19.

<sup>46</sup> William F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery*, p. 82.

<sup>47</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, p.6.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* IX, p. 8,

concerns human relationships and community, in both the ways which the agent should present himself and treat other people, and the ways in which he should accept their treatment of him. These virtues therefore deal with a most important aspect of human nature, the social. As Aristotle points out, “human beings are political animals, tending by nature to live together”.<sup>49</sup>

### **1.1. Thomas Aquinas’ Notion of Virtue Ethics**

Thomas Aquinas is a Christian scholar based his philosophy of the human person upon Biblical and patristic sources and the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle. Aquinas rooted his ethics in the teleological metaphysics of Aristotle. Aristotle’s philosophy can be very attractive those who reads his work with care and attention, such is the case with Aquinas. St. Thomas Aquinas followed Aristotle’s line of thought very closely. Thomas has great respect for Aristotle and refers to him as the “Philosopher”, but this admiration does not prevent him from criticizing and correcting Aristotle’s positions when they do not agree with reason. He believed that reason can stand on its own two feet as an independent and autonomous source of knowledge apart from faith. For Aquinas, the only faith necessary in pursuing philosophical truth is faith in the power of reason or human intellect and the intelligibility of the cosmos.<sup>50</sup> He advanced the philosophy of Aristotle and shared his views and commitment with some philosophers in the West. Since habits are either good or bad, Thomas proposes to speak in the first place of good habits or virtues and in the second place of bad habits or vices. When habits are directed toward the morally good, they are called virtues, and when they are directed toward the morally evil, they are called vices. His virtue ethics shifts the emphasis from a rule-based decision-making (deontological ethics) or of the consequences of an action (utilitarianism) towards the ethics of individuals and the ethics of human character.

Since a virtue is the habit of the soul which is formed by striving for personal perfection virtue resides in the soul. The rational appetite of the soul consists of the intellectual appetite and the appetite of the will. The rational appetite is perfected in the possession of truth. It is for this reason that the intellect constitutes the basis of all the virtues. Since the intellect serves as the basis of both the intellectual and moral virtues, the intellect is primary for its role is to inform the will in the actualization of the will. It is for this reason that “Truth” constitutes the basis of the perfection of the intellect. And insofar as the rational appetite of the will is perfected by love: the possession of the good, the will is absolutely dependent upon the intellect to

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. IX, P. 19.

<sup>50</sup> Lawhead, *Voyage of Discovery*, p. 169.

adequately inform it by what is true. For the will is perfected by love, and truth and love are absolutely necessary to direct a person toward love of God and love of his or her neighbor. There are five intellectual virtues in all: understanding, science, wisdom, art (*recta ratio factibilium*), right reason regarding things to be made and prudence (*recta ratio agibilium*), that is right reason regarding things to be done<sup>51</sup>.

Aquinas gives three reasons that determine whether or not an action is morally good or evil. They include: (1) the object of the action, (2) circumstances for which an action is performed, (3) the end that is sought. Since these three can differ in their goodness or badness, Aquinas says that an action is not absolutely good unless the object, circumstances, and end are all good.

As we know that Aristotle has a purely naturalistic ethics, he sees man as though they were simply one species among many in nature and Aquinas' ethical notion is fairly consistent with that of Aristotle. Aquinas' notion is unique because it encompasses the notion of obedience, man's spiritual nature and his relationship with God, but Aristotle's model lacks them. Aquinas believed that Aristotle gave us the insight about imperfection and temporal happiness and what man can accomplish with his natural resources. Nature will not fulfill our desire for spiritual goods, but points beyond itself to what will fulfill us. Our ultimate desire is afterlife.<sup>52</sup>

### **1.1.2.a. Acquisition of Virtue Through Habitual Exercises**

Etymologically, the word *habit* (*habitus*) is derived from "habere" meaning to have. Now habit is taken from this word in two ways; in one way, inasmuch as man, or any other thing, is said to "have" something; in another way, inasmuch as a particular thing has a relation [se habet] either in regard to itself, or in regard to something else.<sup>53</sup> For us to understand his treatise on the virtues, we have to understand this treatise on habits. Thomas places habits within the general category of a quality. A habit is a quality which disposes a person for better or for worse either in regard to himself or to another.

At first, we must observe that "to have," as said in regard to anything that is "had," is common to the various predicaments. And so Aquinas says: "to have" among the "post-

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<sup>51</sup> Edward J. Gratsch, *Aquinas' Summa: An Introduction and Interpretation*. Bangalore, Theological Publication of India, 1984, pp. 106-107.

<sup>52</sup> William F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery*, p. 177.

<sup>53</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, New York, Benziger Brothers Inc., Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. With commentary, 1948, pp. 49-50.

predicaments," so called because they result from the various predicaments; as, for instance, opposition, priority, posterity, and such like. Now among things which are hard, there seems to be this distinction, that there are some in which there is no medium between the "possessor" and that which is had: as, for instance, there is no medium between the subject and quality or quantity. Then there are some in which there is a medium, but only a relation: as, for instance, a man is said to have a companion or a friend. And, further, there are some in which there is a medium, not indeed an action or passion, but something after the manner of action or passion: thus, for instance, something adorns or covers, and something else is adorned or covered: wherefore Aquinas says that "a habit is said to be, as it were, an action or a passion of the possessor and that which is had"; as is the case in those things which we have about ourselves. And therefore these constitute a special genus of things, which are comprised under the predicament of "habit": of which Aquinas says that "there is a habit between clothing and the man who is clothed."<sup>54</sup>

But if "to have" is to be taken according to as a thing has a relation in regard to itself or to something else; in that case habit is a quality; since this mode of having is in respect of some quality: and of this Thomas says that "habit is a disposition whereby that which is disposed is disposed well or ill, and this, either in regard to itself or in regard to another: thus health is a habit." And in this sense we speak of habit now. Wherefore we must say that habit is a quality. Habits can be formed by repetition of an act, for example, one becomes a habitual liar by telling lies repeatedly.<sup>55</sup> The intellect is the subject of habits called intellectual virtues; habits in the will are the moral virtues and vices.

### **1.1.2.b. Kinds of Virtue in Aquinas**

This is a sketch of Aquinas's understanding of the nature of virtue and its role in human life, stressing some of the advantages his account has over Aristotle's and touching on such matters as the distinction between acquired and infused virtues, the essentially corrective character of virtue on Aquinas's account, and some ways in which his undeniably theological account might nevertheless be useful for non-theistic moral philosophers. Aquinas on human nature emphasizes the sense in which humans are meant to pursue virtue and avoid vice reasonably, even though we are rarely entirely well governed in this sense.<sup>56</sup> In different ways,

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. pp.51-54.

<sup>55</sup> Gratsch, p. 104.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

both acquired and infused virtue help human beings to order themselves and their lives, enabling smoother, wiser, and less fraught lives.

Since habits are either good or bad, Thomas proposes to speak in the first place of good habits or virtues and secondary of bad habits or vices. A virtue, he argues, is a habit which perfects a power that a thing has.<sup>57</sup> Among the powers that we have as human beings are the intellect and three appetitive powers: the will and two kinds of irrational appetites—one which accounts for our desires for various physical pleasures (called the ‘concupiscible appetite’) and another which accounts for emotions such as anger and fear (called the ‘irascible appetite’).<sup>58</sup> These powers are capable of being determined in a variety of ways and towards a variety of ends. Some of those are good for us, others are not. For instance, we can have desires for foods that are healthy, and desires for foods that are unhealthy. Hence, we need good habits to dispose us to act in good ways for the sake of ends that are suitable and good for us, including our ultimate end and highest good—genuine happiness. These good habits are the virtues and many of them are necessary in order to attain perfect happiness, which Aquinas argued earlier in the *Summa Theologiae* is the vision of God, the blessed experience in heaven.<sup>59</sup> Following St. Augustine, Aquinas defined ‘virtue’ as a habit “by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us.”<sup>60</sup> As we will soon see, this definition does not apply to every kind of virtue that Aquinas discusses. Nevertheless, Aquinas uses it because it captures the essence of what he thinks are the most important kinds of virtues.

Aquinas distinguishes three main categories of virtue: intellectual, moral, and theological. First, Intellectual virtues, as the name suggests, perfect the intellectual powers of the human being. Following Aristotle,<sup>61</sup> Aquinas distinguishes the functions of speculative reasoning from the functions of practical reasoning. The intellect, in its speculative activities, has as its object truth that cannot be otherwise. The intellect, in its practical activities, has as

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<sup>57</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 55, a. 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, I, qq. 79-82; I-II q. 56, a. 4. See also Gratsch, p. 105.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* see also *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapters xxxvii-xl, xlvii-xlviii. Cited in Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa contra gentiles: a guide and commentary*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 16-63.

<sup>60</sup> St. Augustine, *On Free Will*, II 19; S.T. I-II, question 55, article. 4. P. 282. Of the other virtues as to other essences (in Four Articles), Augustine says, since habits, as we have said in question 54 are divided into good and bad, we must speak in the first place of good habits, which are virtues, and of the other matters connected to them, namely the gifts, beatitudes and fruits ; in the second place, of bad habits, namely of vices and sins. Five things considered of virtue are: the essence, its subject, the division, the cause and certain properties.

<sup>61</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* III 7; *Nicomachean Ethics* VI 1-2.

its object truth about things made or actions performed.<sup>62</sup> Aquinas discussed three virtues that perfect the intellect in its theoretical activities: understanding, science, and wisdom.

Second, the moral virtues perfect the appetitive powers of the soul.<sup>63</sup> Four moral virtues are called cardinal or principal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. To give three examples, the virtue of temperance (which concerns pleasures that come from the table and the bedroom) is one of the virtues that perfects the concupiscible appetite. The virtue of courage (which concerns the emotions of fear and confidence) is one of the virtues that perfects the irascible appetite.<sup>64</sup> The virtue of justice (which concerns the interactions of people with each other) is one of the virtues that perfects the will. Following Aristotle,<sup>65</sup> Aquinas stressed that the moral virtues are unlike the intellectual virtues mentioned above in at least two significant ways. First, the moral virtues make their possessor a good person as such. In other words, a human being is a good person because that person is prudent, temperate, courageous, and just. While the moral virtues and practical wisdom are necessary for happiness, Aquinas denies that they are sufficient for the perfect happiness that consists in the vision of God in heaven.

Third, the theological virtues, are those which focus upon God as our supernatural end, and are infused by God into the human soul, and are revealed to us through Divine Revelation. Since such happiness is beyond what humans can achieve on our own, we need the aid of God in order to achieve it. The theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are three such aids. The virtue of faith, which perfects the intellect, concerns those truths about God that the intellect assents to “by means of a Divine light”<sup>66</sup>. Aquinas defined ‘faith’ as “a habit of mind, whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is non-apparent”. The virtue of hope, which perfects the will, concerns the movement of the will toward perfect and eternal happiness as an end, that is by God’s help attainable. The virtue of charity which also perfects the will concerns the love and friendship which unites the human being to God. The theological virtues like the infused moral virtues are habits that fully embody Augustine’s definition of virtue.<sup>67</sup> Finally, just as the moral virtues and practical wisdom are interconnected, the infused moral virtues are interconnected with charity. Aquinas argued that when God infuses charity into the human soul, He infuses all of the other moral virtues as well.

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<sup>62</sup>*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 57, aa. 3-4. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI 2, 1139 a 20- b 14.

<sup>63</sup> Gratsch, pp. 106-107.

<sup>64</sup>*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 60, a. 4; cf. II-II, qq. 123-124, 128. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III, pp. 6-9.

<sup>65</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II 6, 1106 a 15-24.

<sup>66</sup>*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 62, a. 3

<sup>67</sup> St. Augustine, *On Free Will*, II 19; S.T. I-II, q. 55, a. 4; q. 65, a. 2.

Finally, both the moral and intellectual virtues will remain in the next life. Of the theological virtues, only charity will remain in the next life. Since faith will give way to vision, and hope to possession <sup>68</sup>.

## **1.2 Contemporary Rediscovery of Virtue Ethics**

### **1.2.1 Philippa Foot's Notion of Virtue Ethics**

Philippa Foot has for many years been one of the most distinctive and influential thinkers in moral philosophy who is devoted to the renewal of virtue ethics. Long dissatisfied with the moral theories of her contemporaries, she has gradually evolved a theory of her own that is radically opposed not only to emotivism and prescriptivism but also to the whole subjectivist, anti-naturalist movement deriving from David Hume. Dissatisfied with both Kantian and utilitarian ethics, she claims to have isolated a special form of evaluation that predicates goodness and defect only to living things considered as such; she finds this form of evaluation in moral judgments. Her vivid discussion covers topics such as practical rationality, erring conscience, and the relation between virtue and happiness, ending with a critique of Nietzsche's immoralism. This long-awaited book exposes a highly original approach to moral philosophy and represents a fundamental break from the assumptions of recent debates. Foot challenges many prominent philosophical arguments and attitudes in relation to virtue ethics; but hers is a work full of life and feeling, written for anyone intrigued by the deep questions about goodness and human action. For the philosophical assumptions associated with human action she notes using prudential reason:

Prudential reasons seem to me to provide the most obvious counter-examples to the thesis that all reasons for action depend on the agent's desires. By 'prudential reasons' I mean those having to do with the agent's interests. There are, of course, problems about the limits of this class, but these need not concern us here. It will be enough to take some uncontroversial example of a prudential reason<sup>69</sup>

Foot uses the analysis of a hungry man to elucidate her prudential reason theory of human action. Consider the case of a man who knows he will go hungry tomorrow unless he

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<sup>68</sup> Gratsch, pp. 110-111.

<sup>69</sup> Philippa Foot: *Virtue and Vices and other Essays in moral philosophy*. A Clarendon Press Publication, 2002, p. 97.

goes shopping today. We will suppose that circumstances are normal; he has no reason for wanting to be hungry tomorrow, and his house is not on fire. He has a prudential reason for visiting the shop today so as not to go hungry tomorrow. She advances her dictum by clarifying the notion of “desire”, which seems to be the resulting factor for action, like the desire to eat tomorrow requires a pre-conceived harmony between my desire and getting ready not just my want but my need. She expresses Thomas Nagel view in the following way: That I have the appropriate desire simply *follows* from the fact that these considerations motivate me; if the likelihood that an act will promote my future happiness motivates me to perform it now, then it is appropriate to ascribe to me a desire for my own future happiness.<sup>70</sup>

In advancing Kantian moral philosophy of action as a viable route for the renewal of virtue ethics, Foot says that in acting morally Kant thinks that we do as reason dictates<sup>71</sup>. In acting immorally we are acting irrationally, and if this is not how Kant puts it, it is what he must show in order to make his point; if it could be proved, then any man, whatever his desires, could be shown to have reason to act morally, since one has reason to do what is rational to do. The difficulty, as everyone knows, is to accept Kant's arguments purporting to show that morally bad actions are those whose maxim could not belong to a universally legislative will, and moreover that action according to such maxims is irrational an action. Considering the difficulty in advancing this argument she said that arguing further is irrelevant affirming Kant's hypothetical imperative:

All I would claim to have shown is that no one who rejects Kant's attempts to derive morality from reason has been given any reason to reject the hypothetical imperative in morals. It is commonly believed that even if Kant has not shown the connection between reason and morality he has at least destroyed the hypothetical imperative. I have urged that, on the contrary, there is no valid argument against the hypothetical imperative to be found in Kant should the argument from reason fail <sup>72</sup>.

Thus far, it is evident that in widening the scope of morality to include non-human beings such as animals and plants provides a new way to reach a form of, more or less, provable objective morality. That which is moral is that which corresponds to the essential nature of the existence of the particular being. For example, a student is a good student if he or she fulfills the responsibilities that are common for a good student. Through a series of clear arguments,

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Nagel: *The Possibility of Altruism* (O.U.P., 1970) pp. 29–30.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives’ originally appeared in *The Philosophical Review*, Volume 81, Number 3, July 1972; Foot: *Virtue and Vices*, p. 167.

<sup>72</sup> Philippa Foot: *Virtue and Vice* 2007, pp. 165-169.



both found in secondary literature and formed by Foot herself, and possible counter-arguments, Foot attempts and mostly succeeds in showing in her moral philosophy how the goodness of irrational living things like plants or animals is applicable to the rational humans.

### 1.2.1a Happiness, Virtues, and the Human Good

Foot begins her notion on happiness by arguing earlier that it is wrong to look for an independent criterion of practical rationality to which goodness in action must somehow be shown to conform. Instead, rational choice should be seen as an aspect of human goodness, standing at the heart of the virtues rather than out there on its own<sup>73</sup>. She now wants to discuss in more detail an objection to her view of practical rationality: an objection that stands in a threatening posture just offstage. That is, the thought that practical rationality is the pursuit, and nothing but the pursuit, of happiness. Surely this is rather odd to consider the importance of the topic in the history of moral philosophy? How can rationality of action be discussed without a word about the relation between virtue and happiness? Is not happiness humanity's good?<sup>74</sup>

She further proceeded to place the concept of happiness within the context of the goodness of human action. If vice is 'a form of natural defect' and virtue and goodness are of the will, where in the schema of natural normativity does the idea of human happiness belong, she asks? In proposing her concept, Foot first separates it from the once influential, now largely discredited, idea that no one ever *does* (can) pursue anything except his or her own happiness. This was a theory based on a heady mixture of conceptual intuition and psychological skepticism. The first probably coming from a confused acknowledgement of real conceptual relations between the concept of desire, achievement, and satisfaction. The second from the everyday observation that people often seek their own happiness while denying that they do. Neither psychological hedonism nor psychological egoism can be established in either way<sup>75</sup>. Happiness is not the universal aim of action she noted. Brave people choose great and immediate evils, such as certain death, in order to rescue or defend others. And even in their choice of lives some reject happiness for the sake of some other goal. Foot asserts that:

What is problematic for morality about the relation between virtue and happiness does not come from the direction of such theories as psychological hedonism or psychological egoism, but rather from the

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<sup>73</sup> Philippa Foot; *Natural Goodness*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 81.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 2001, p. 82.

idea that happiness is Man's good, together with the thought that *happiness may be successfully pursued through evil action*. For then it would seem that there is an independent criterion of rational action—the pursuit of happiness—with rationality on occasion demanding what virtue forbids.<sup>76</sup>

Evidently, the thought that happiness is humanity's good may seem to disrupt the argument on natural normativity through the idea that the instantiation of human life lies in happiness, which should therefore be the determinant of virtue. She poses the following questions: For how then could it be that virtue sometimes requires the sacrifice of happiness? And how is it that happiness can, it seems, be obtained by wickedness? Can these things be denied? She also asks how happiness can be taken *tout court* to be Man's good, arguing that on some interpretations of the word 'happiness' is unacceptable<sup>77</sup>. Firstly, however, the thought that happiness can successfully be pursued through doing evil needs to be corrected. I shall therefore give a sketch of happiness as there construed, with the plea that we should not *too quickly* reject each and every picture of wickedness and happiness conjoined.

We may begin again by saying something about the different ways in which happiness is predicated of human beings—as we speak, for example, of their being happy doing something, being in a happy frame of mind, or having a happy life. Some of these different predications will appear in the discussion of the relationship between happiness and virtue; so one needs to keep in mind that this word has a variety of meanings. Foot begins with the proposition that someone is happy doing something or other with the resultant effect of goodness<sup>78</sup>. What is intended here may be quite minimal: when we say 'happiness' we may signify nothing more than an absence of restlessness, or efforts to change a situation, so that we can say even of an animal that, for instance, it is 'quite happy where it is'. And when said of human beings, who, unlike animals, can be contented or discontented, are 'happy doing such and such a thing' may simply mean the absence of discontent. 'Happiness' is, however, more likely to tell of enjoyment, or pleasure, or liking-to do something. Here enjoyment comes on the scene as something that must, one would think, be part of a happy *life*. How does enjoyment fit into a happy life? Let us examine Foot's discussion which determines the role of enjoyment in human action.

Foot sees *enjoyment* as a difficult concept. Activities are most often what people are said to enjoy, and when they enjoy such things as merriment, tourism or jobs, enjoying

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. 83.

<sup>78</sup> Doreen M. Tulloch; "Ontological Goodness"; in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No 33, October 1958, pp. 317-328. <http://www.JSTOR.org/journalphilquar.html>. accessed on 10/03/2020.

activities will be a large part of what is meant. It does, however, make sense, though it is rare, to speak of enjoying the fact that such and such; and it turns out, interestingly enough, that enjoyment of activities often involves thoughts. For although one can enjoy sex, or eating and drinking, or movement, simply on account of what it is pleasurable to feel, it would be hard to explain enjoyment of philosophy, or even of gardening, in these terms. In a whole range of such cases, what seems to be important to the enjoyment is the perception of something seen as good. Often achievement itself will be the good, and that may be all there is to it, as when someone is doing a crossword puzzle or some other thing that in itself is pointless. But it may also be *what* is being achieved that is seen as good in itself. So if there were a people who accompanied their activities with variable movements of a hand, and a steady hum, we might find ourselves translating the first as, roughly, ‘Good, I’m getting on’, and the second as, ‘Good, something desirable is being achieved’, desirable and pleasurable, when each could, in the absence of negative factors, be seen as an expression of enjoyment. What is remarkable is that both of these bits of language would be propositional. I have been struck by how much the enjoyment of gardening is like this. It owes, I find, little to pleasant sensation or movement and much to awareness both of immediate achievement (‘That’s got it well dug in!’) and the prospect of good things to come; so that goodness is here prior to enjoyment, as well as (in some sense) implied by it; and the same is no doubt true of enjoying doing philosophy. What we have here is propositional, though not, of course, such as to require episodes of thought, because it is a sense of how things are, and therefore not essentially episodic. The resultant effect of goodness may be enjoyment or another good factor, but enjoyment can spring from either a good motive or bad, the later ends with anxiety.

This is one way in which thoughts, and particularly the thought of good, plays a part in happiness, but it is not the only way. For so far we have been dealing only with enjoyment and enjoyment does not have to be seen as the chief element in happiness. If someone has much to enjoy in his life this is at least a factor counting in favor of his happiness. But happiness is also a matter of that to which one might give the general title of gladness. Sometimes the gladness will be attached to a particular moment, as when good news is heard, or good things especially salient in one’s mind, but gladness, unlike enjoyment, does not as such occupy clock-able time, and this part of happiness may also take the form of a *sense* of being well, rather than of thoughts that occupy the mind<sup>79</sup>. Being content, by and large, with the way things are in one’s life, or at least being conscious of the good things in it is obviously a large part of happiness.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 84.

The question ‘Are you happy?’ sometimes pertain precisely to this contentment with one’s live. In contrast, happiness that is derived from morally good actions actually increases the well-being of the person, but happiness that is derived from immoral actions is defined as a disordered happiness, such as the pleasure that someone may experience over another’s misfortune.

### 1.2.1b. Moral Arguments

For Foot, those who are influenced by the emotivist theory of ethics, and yet wish to defend what Hare has called ‘the rationality of moral discourse’, generally talk a lot about ‘giving reasons’ for the rightness, and wrongness of things or attitudes. The fact that moral judgments need defense seems to distinguish the impact of one man's moral views upon others from mere persuasion or coercion, and the judgments themselves from just expressions of likes and dislikes. He projects that the version of argument in morals currently accepted seems to say that, while reasons must be given, no one need accept them unless he happens to hold particular moral views<sup>80</sup>. It follows that disputes about what is right and wrong can be resolved only if certain contingent conditions are fulfilled; if they are not fulfilled, the argument breaks down, and the disputants are left face to face in opposition which is merely an expression of attitude and will. Much energy is expended in trying to show that no skeptical conclusion can be drawn. It is suggested, for instance, that anyone who has considered all the facts which could bear on his moral position has *ipso facto* produced a ‘well founded’ moral judgment; in spite of the fact that anyone else who has considered the same facts may well have come to the opposite conclusion. How ‘x’ is good can be a well-founded moral judgment when ‘x’ can be equally founded as bad is not always easy to see<sup>81</sup>.

Foot’s moral philosophy was difficult to digest as she herself emphatically stated that some elite confronted her thesis. She mentions Professor Frankena, in particular, who noted that her philosophy is an attack on moral philosophy and renewal of virtue ethics. But Foot responded to Frankena’s accusation in the following statement. She said that:

I should state, for the record, that I do not hold the view of reasons that Professor Frankena attributes to me, and I do not think I have ever said anything to imply that I did. I do not use ‘reason’ for ‘something that tends to move to action’. I believe that a reason for acting must relate the

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<sup>80</sup> ‘Moral Arguments’ originally appeared in *Mind*, Volume 67, and 1958.1 *The Language of Morals*, p.69.2 *Ethics and Language*, pp. 170–1.3 W. K. Frankena, ‘The Naturalistic Fallacy’, *Mind*, 1939.4 A. N. Prior, *Logic and the Basis of Ethics*, chap. I.5 *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, chap. I, x.6 *Universalizability*, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1954–1955, p. 304.

<sup>81</sup> Philippa Foot: *Virtue and Vices and other Essays in moral philosophy*. A Clarendon Press Publication, 2002, 97.

action directly or indirectly to something the agent wants or which it is in his interest to have, but an agent may fail to be moved by a reason, even when he is aware of it, and he may also be moved by something that is not a reason at all, as e.g. by the consideration that something is contrary to etiquette. Being moved is therefore neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of having a reason.<sup>82</sup>

The final essay by Foot is about moral dilemmas, the subject of her well-known article titled: *Moral Realism*. The essays mainly critique the views of Bernard Williams and Ruth Marcus. Foot's opinion depends on a distinction between two kinds of moral statements. One is a practical *ought* of advice, that tells us what morality entails, and morally speaking what is the right or best thing to do. The other kind has several varieties, for example that promises ought to be kept, and these type 1 statements typically provide reasons for type 2 statements. For Foot, there can be conflicts of type 1 statements, that is type 1 and 2, but there cannot be conflicts of type 2 statements (incompatible actions cannot both be the best). Consider Rosalind Hursthouse assertion in Anscombean style, she thinks that one would be 'seriously lacking in virtue' if one has come to consider the world to be such that one is forced quite often to lie or to kill<sup>83</sup>. Again she maintains that 'too great a readiness to think that 'I can't do anything but this terrible thing, nothing else is open to me' is a mark of vice, of a flawed character'<sup>84</sup>. All this suggests a consequentialist attitude; for after one has checked, and double checked, to be quite sure one has not been 'too ready', one is presumably to go ahead. One ought not lie or kill innocent human life. To check and double check here means consideration, the mental process whereby a man has to weigh his/her action in the scale of preference of virtue and vice.

Foot set out to challenge Williams's argument that moral dilemmas undermine moral realism (or cognitivism)<sup>85</sup>, because moral conflicts are more like conflicts of desire than conflicts of belief. Foot argues, convincingly in my view, that Williams was mistaken. Once again, Foot stakes out a middle position. On the one hand, she allows that there are moral dilemmas in which, even when doing the best thing, there is some moral loss or cost, as Williams and also Isaiah Berlin emphasized. Specifically, in doing what is best, we may be

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<sup>82</sup> Foot; *Virtue and Vice*, pp. 178-180. A Reply to Professor Frankena was first published in *1 Proc. Brit. Acad.*, LVI (1970). Reprinted in Burnyeat and Honderich (eds.) *Philosophy As It Is* (Penguin, 1978).<sup>2</sup>Reprinted in this volume.<sup>3</sup>*Philosophy* 49, 1974, pp. 345-56.<sup>4</sup>Op. cit. p. 347.<sup>5</sup>'Goodness and Choice', reprinted here.<sup>6</sup>Frankena, op. cit., p. 349. In this reply, Mrs Foot admitted her lack of explicit and vividness that resulted to Professor Frankena's critique. But Foot has to remember that every philosophical supposition is open for critique.

<sup>83</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 86.

<sup>84</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse: *On Virtue Ethics*, p. 87.

<sup>85</sup>D. Alm, "Noncognitivism and Validity," *Theoria*, 2007, p. 121-147. Non-cognitivism is a variety of irrealism about ethics with a number of influential variants. Non-cognitivists agree with error theorists that there are no moral properties or moral facts. Cognitivism is the denial of non-cognitivism.

required to sacrifice some human goods. For example, in war we may have to sacrifice “great architectural monuments for lives”<sup>86</sup>. On the other hand, she rejects the positions of Williams and Marcus that there are dilemmas in which it is inescapable that a person acts wrongly. In her introduction, Foot says that she has “never believed” that there are moral dilemmas in which a person “necessarily acts badly whatever he does”<sup>87</sup>. In this respect Foot emphatically rejects the possibility that a person could be good in one way only by being bad in another.<sup>88</sup>

It could be asked what exactly is Foot’s contribution to the renewal of virtue ethics? From our considerations, I can sieve out two significant threads from her position in relation to the renewal of virtue ethics. The first is with regard to her insistence on the relation of the practice of virtue to realization of happiness. This takes on a deontologist approach to the renewal of virtue ethics and it seems to me that this can be placed side by side with normative grounds for virtue ethics as we shall find in Karol Wojtyla later on in the subsequent chapters of this work. The second thread is her critique of the emotivist theories of ethics which raises other corollary issues associated with motivational grounds for the renewal of virtue ethics, a stance which can be associated with Elizabeth Anscombe’s own approach to virtue ethics. It is thus evident the Foot’s considerations can be reconciled with the view of Wojtyla and Anscombe, even if from a somewhat different perspective than theirs.

### 1.2.2 Iris Murdoch’s Ethical Theory.

The acceptance of death is an acceptance of our own nothingness which is an automatic spur to our concern with what is not ourselves. The good man is humble; he is very unlike the big neo-Kantian Lucifer. He is much more like Kierkegaard’s tax collector. Humility is a rare virtue and an unfashionable one and one which is often hard to discern.<sup>89</sup>

Dame Jean Iris Murdoch DBE was a British novelist and philosopher. Murdoch is best known for her novels about good and evil, sexual relationships, morality, and the power of the unconscious. Arguably, Murdoch (1919–1999) who wrote – amongst others – *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992), along with her contemporaries, Philippa Foot and Elizabeth Anscombe, pioneered the resurgence of Aristotle’s virtue ethics. Furthermore, she influenced

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<sup>86</sup> Philippa Foot: *Moral Dilemmas and Other Topics in Moral Philosophy*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2002. Pp. 184.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 2002. P.2.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 2002. p.218.

<sup>89</sup> Iris Murdoch; *The Sovereignty of Good over other Concepts*, London, Ark Paperbacks, 1985, p. 103

Alasdair MacIntyre in the field of philosophical enterprise. Heather Widdows, in her biography of Iris Murdoch lists Alasdair MacIntyre amongst those ‘thinkers she inspired’<sup>90</sup>. At the beginning of *The Sovereignty of Good*, Murdoch writes:

I wish in this discussion to attempt a movement of return, a retracing of our steps to see how a certain position was reached. The position in question, in current moral philosophy, is one which seems to me unsatisfactory (...) <sup>91</sup>

Murdoch’s intention is to go back in time in order to see the paths that have led to the current situation, in which the reigning moral theory ignores certain facts and prevails without any relation to other moral theories. In “Metaphysics and Ethics”, she states “To understand current moral philosophy it is necessary to understand its history”<sup>92</sup>. Contemporary moral philosophy speaks of a self that lacks the foundations that historically supported it. For Murdoch, it is important that the idea of goodness (and of virtue) has been largely superseded in Western moral thought by the idea of rightness, supported maybe by some conception of sincerity. This is to some extent a natural outcome of the disappearance of a permanent background: a permanent background, whether provided by God himself, by Reason, by History or maybe by the self<sup>93</sup>.

Andrew Seth writing on Man’s Place in the Cosmos notes that the Buddhist and the Stoic attempts to grapple with what are considered problems, and are found to end alike in absolute renunciation. "By the Tiber, as by the Ganges, ethical man admits that the cosmos is too strong for him; and, destroying every bond which ties him to it is an ascetic discipline, he seeks salvation in absolute renunciation"<sup>94</sup>. Is antagonism then final and hopeless, or can modern science and philosophy offer any better reconciliation the man of ethics with nature in which he lives as an animal, and to whose vast unconscious forces he lies open on every side? As Professor Huxley<sup>95</sup> puts the question in his opening pages: Is there or is there not "a sanction or morality in the ways of the cosmos?" Man has built up "an artificial world within the cosmos, "any underling factor-like or force that determines man’s morality, and has at its roots human

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<sup>90</sup> Heather Widdows, *The moral vision of Iris Murdoch*, Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 2005, p. 10.

<sup>91</sup> Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., *Metaphysics and Ethics*, in: *Existentialists and Mystics*, New York, Penguin Books 1999, p. 59.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.; *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 53.

<sup>94</sup> Andrew Seth: Man’s Place in the Cosmos Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 1893, p. 29.

<sup>95</sup> T. H. Huxley, 1825-1895 was the President of the Royal Society, lecturer on “evolution and ethics”, a "Darwinian" and projector of “Darwinism”, a type of materialism; as agnosticism; as an assault on the historical validity of scripture; and as a model for the design of a political and economic community. Huxley's career testifies to the richness of scientific investigation, the establishment of young rebels as a powerful party, and the pervasive intrusions of secularism during the Victorian period.

society and its justification in the underlying nature of the cosmos, or is it in truth an "artificial" world, which is at odds with nature and must be in perpetual conflict with it?

According to Murdoch:

The self, the place where we live, is a place of illusion. Goodness is connected with the attempt to see the unself, to see and to respond to the real world in the light of a virtuous consciousness. This is the non-metaphysical meaning of the idea of transcendence to which philosophers have so constantly resorted in their explanations of goodness. 'Good is a transcendent reality' means that virtue is the attempt to pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is. It is an empirical fact about human nature that this attempt cannot be entirely successful.<sup>96</sup>

Iris Murdoch is trying to explicate the nature of man founded on the Kantian supposition, saying that "Kant abolished God and made man God in His stead. We are still living in the age of the Kantian man, or Kantian man-god. Kant's conclusive exposure of the so-called proofs of the existence of God, his analysis of the limitations of speculative reason, together with his eloquent portrayal of the dignity of rational man, has had results which might possibly dismay him. How recognizable, how familiar to us, is the man so beautifully portrayed in the *Grundlegung*,<sup>97</sup> who confronted even with Christ turns away to consider the judgment of his own conscience and to hear the voice of his own reason. Stripped of the exiguous metaphysical background which Kant was prepared to allow him, this man is still with us, free, independent, lonely, powerful, rational, responsible, brave, the hero of so many novels and books of moral philosophy. The *raison d'être* of this attractive, but misleading creature, is not far to away. He is the offspring of the age of science, confidently rational and yet increasingly aware of his alienation from the material universe which his discoveries reveal; and since he is not a Hegelian (Kant, not Hegel, has provided Western ethics with its dominating image) his alienation is without cure. He is the ideal citizen of the liberal state, a warning held up to tyrants. He has the virtue which the age requires and admires, courage. It is not such a very long step from Kant to Nietzsche, and from Nietzsche to existentialism and the Anglo-Saxon ethical doctrines which in some ways closely resemble it. In fact Kant's man had already received a glorious incarnation nearly a century earlier in the work of Milton: *His Proper Name Is Lucifer*.

One may freely asked what is Iris Murdoch's notion about "love," and how does she advance her argument about the account of it? She takes love to be a virtue, and as such an

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<sup>96</sup>Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 15.

<sup>97</sup>Immanuel Kant's *Grundlegung zur metaphysik der sitten* By Kant, Immanuel, 1724-1804; Kirchmann, J. H. von (Julius Hermann), 1802-1884 Berlin: L. Heimann, 1870.



ideal of perfection. She begins with what she presents as a bit of common sense, a "simple and obvious fact" that "love is a central concept in morals," and complains that widespread commitments in the philosophy of mind have made the value of love "non-expressible." These commitments for her yield an account of the nature of moral activity that is both psychologically implausible and morally un-endorsable.<sup>98</sup>

It is certain that she is after a different conception of the nature of moral activity, one she arrives at by taking up the simple and clear fact in question. For Murdoch love is *the* central concept in morals, *the* fundamental moral activity, as emerges in the overarching thesis of: *The Sovereignty of the Good*. The central concept of morality is 'the individual' thought of as knowable by love, thought of in light of the command "Be ye therefore perfect." It is widely taken that Kantian ethics disregards individuals, since we don't respect individuals, but the universal quality of personhood they instantiate.<sup>99</sup>

Immanuel Kant and Iris Murdoch share a view about the centrality of love to virtue, both stress on virtue as an ideal: a standard of perfection, which we can in some sense grasp from our position of imperfection, but can never fully realize. For Kant, virtue is the mindedness that follows from the free adoption of two morally obligatory ends: one's own perfection, and the happiness of others. This leads him to distinguish self-regarding and other-regarding dimensions of virtue. He also distinguishes "narrow" and "wide" obligations of virtue. The narrow obligations are effectively duties of recognition respect: that one acknowledges oneself, and others, as persons. Duties of respect are articulated negatively, in terms of prohibitions that constitute their violation<sup>100</sup>.

Now, Kant says in several different ways that avoiding violating duties of recognition respect is not to be confused with virtue. First, a person could avoid treating another as mere means and yet "still be indifferent to them." Virtue requires that we take an active interest in the humanity of oneself and others. Second, for Kant the other-regarding dimension of virtue is articulated in terms of duties of *love* to others. If you are arrogant in your demands, if you defame and mock others - all ways of violating duties of recognition respect - then you are vicious.

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98 Melissa McBay Merritt, Love, Respect, and Individuals: Murdoch as a Guide to Kantian Ethics, in *European Journal of Philosophy*/ Volume 25, Issue 4, 28 July 2017, p. 322. <https://doi.org/10.1111/> accessed on 15/03/2020.

99 Melissa McBay Merritt, "The Centrality of Love: Iris Murdoch as a guide to Kantian ethics". In *ABC Religion and Ethics*, 2018, 120. <https://abc.net.au>. Accessed on 24/07/2020.

100 Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 455

Murdoch is not saying that all moral activity *is* love. "Often," she acknowledges, "for instance when we pay our bills or perform other small everyday acts, we are just 'anybody' doing what is proper or making simple choices for ordinary public reasons; and this is the situation which some philosophers have chosen exclusively to analyze. "Philosophers have been walking around in the penumbra, in other words, wherein lies not only perfunctory bill-paying, but also, I should think, things like making way for one another on the sidewalk, or taking turns to speak, and whatever other conduct reflects attitudes of civility and respect. But if love is the fundamental moral activity, then anything else we might think of as belonging to a picture of what it is to be morally active will need to be understood in relation to the ideal of love mentioned in the thesis. Love is not a fact about human life that needs to be *accommodated* by ethics; for Murdoch, we don't have a picture of moral life at all without it <sup>101</sup>. Since Kant presents his concept of love in relation to the biblical command to love one's neighbour as oneself - calling it the "ethical law of perfection" and presenting it as a "duty of all human beings to toward one another"<sup>102</sup> - the love at issue must be an *agapeic*, welcoming of some sort. Love in this sense is a dispositional readiness to cherish or welcome those with whom one shares a present <sup>103</sup>.

There is still need for clarification about whether love and respect in fact figure as feelings in Kant's Doctrine of Virtue. Kant begins by saying that they are feelings that accompany the fulfillment of duties of virtue to others; but soon thereafter he appears at least, from the perspective of Standard English translation - to deny that the love at issue is a feeling. However, in fact he only denies that this love is an "aesthetic" feeling (*aesthetisch*); the love of biblical command cannot be a matter of taking delight in another's pleasing qualities, he explains. With this he points to the possibility that the love at issue may not be the ordinary feeling of love that most of us are most familiar with. Here, it is worth observing that Kant's view of love as a concomitant to genuine benevolence bears comparison to the Stoic invocation of *eupatheiai* - the "good emotions" proper to virtue - as concomitant expressions of correct judgments of value. The Stoics stress, perhaps even more than Kant, that virtue is an ideal: thus what figures as part of the emotional life of virtue might be somewhat unrecognizable to us. I have been arguing that *agapeic* welcoming is central to the temperament of virtue by Kant's

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101 Ibid.

102 Melissa McBay Merritt, "The Centrality of Love: Iris Murdoch as a guide to Kantian ethics". In *ABC Religion and Ethics*, 2018, p. 120. <https://abc.net.au>. Accessed on 24/07/2020

103 It is a truism that even where it would be inappropriate to actively love another person - for example, when passing strangers on a walk through the village square- there should still be a readiness to do so, and this readiness should characterize what is distinctive about the virtuous person's consciousness in his/her respectful comportment to others.

lights. What this involves might be partly comprehensible to us within a certain range of circumstances, even if we recognize that we more often like the person in the sidewalk example. Most of us still know what it is like to regard others - sometimes complete strangers - with an open gladness that they are there. However, many people will also say that such an attitude is not always appropriate, asking if it we are expected to love a tyrant or a torturer? Murdoch notes the difficulty and suggests thinking of the love inflected as *mercy* or *compassion*.

Still, these are limiting cases that threaten to alienate us from whatever we can grasp about the *agapeic* ideal in the central cases, where love more readily figures to us as fitting and due; and some will no doubt take this as grounds to reject the *agapeic* ideal entirely. But Murdoch at any rate takes it that the central cases are comprehensible to us with sufficient richness to give us our bearings for a progressive perfection towards the ethical ideal: this is part of her point; I take it, when she presents the story of a Mother-in-law as a familiar and everyday example. Whether Kant takes this view, or something like it, is less clear. But since Kant takes love of humanity as a disposition to be cultivated, and rendered more skillful over time, perhaps he means to allow for something like Murdoch's point: that a loving comportment towards others in the central cases would, with proper cultivation, expand gradually to cover the more challenging cases, and finally the tyrants and torturers at the limit.<sup>104</sup>

Kant suggests that he takes the ethical ideal to be virtue as the holiness illustrated by Jesus, who is portrayed in the Gospels as capable of the mercy and compassion that Murdoch evidently has in mind. Moreover, Kant takes the Christian ideal of virtue as holiness to have an advantage over the Stoic ideal of virtue as the wisdom of the sage: for the sage is supposed to have transcended human nature, and Kant complains that pointing to such a genuinely unattainable ideal makes us moral fantasists. We might of course ask ourselves whether the Christian idea of virtue as holiness is any more genuinely attainable; but if what I have been arguing is correct, Kant has the resources to make the case in something like Murdoch's terms.

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<sup>104</sup> Carla Bagnoli, *Constrained by Reason, Transformed by Love: Murdoch on the Standard of Proof*. In: Browning G. (eds) *Murdoch on Truth and Love. Philosophers in Depth*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 20 June 2018, pp.63-88. <https://doi.org/10.1007/> accessed on 15/03/2020.

### 1.2.3 Alasdair MacIntyre's Notion of Virtue Ethics

Alasdair Chalmers MacIntyre is a philosopher best known for his 1981 book *After Virtue*<sup>105</sup>. That book and its sequels develop a critique of liberal modernity for its individualism and its inability to provide political and social structures that facilitate moral enquiry in the light of a common good. MacIntyre has been particularly influential in the development of contemporary virtue ethics. Most of his early career was spent in Marxist intellectual circles, but in the course of the 1960s he became increasingly critical of Marxism for its inability to provide a rational grounding for morality. Alasdair MacIntyre pays more attention to the idea of a human goal or purpose. He combines the notion of an activity or practice, and of goods internal to it, with a historicized teleology according to which our telos is our own creation. He formulates a three tiered definition of virtues as those character traits we need in order to achieve the goods internal to practice, to choose among the goods of various practices in pursuit of the good of a whole life, and to choose among competing notions of the good in the context of a continuing moral tradition<sup>106</sup>.

In his influential book, *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre describes the heyday of morality in the western world as a time when moral judgments were absolutely binding, 'at once hypothetical and categorical in form'<sup>107</sup>. They posited an authority which was at the same time non-empirical, transcendent, immanent and permanent, founded on a teleological narrative whose purpose was to reclaim a lost patrimony, the eternal paradise forfeited through sin. Divine law had its earthly equivalent in the king's sovereignty, and these two authorities together provided an inescapable framework for action. This morality emerges through a *longue durée*, stretching from classical times to the Christian Middle Ages and the early modern era, until it is dealt a deathblow by the secularizing effects of Enlightenment logic.

In so far as ideas of the moral 'ought' retained their hold in a later period (as in Kant's treatment of moral judgments as teleological imperatives), MacIntyre sees them as mere linguistic survivals, incoherent fragments of a system once undergirded by practice. The *telos*, or final purpose for human beings, was lost when the modern self was invented as 'the individual'. The resulting situation presented a paradox: the individual was liberated from the external authority of traditional morality, becoming an autonomous, sovereign moral agent, but in the same move the end purpose or *telos* that provided the 'authoritative content' for 'moral

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<sup>105</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre: *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. United States, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981. p. 1.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. pp. 178, 204, 207.

<sup>107</sup> MacIntyre 1984: p. 60.

utterances' was also lost <sup>108</sup>. Hence the solipsistic fears of existentialism. Why should anyone listen to us, asks MacIntyre rhetorically, if we speak 'unconstrained by the externalities of divine law, natural teleology or hierarchical authority?' <sup>109</sup>

A new teleology was needed to provide the basis for moral action, and several candidates were proposed: practical reason (Kant), the passions (Hume), choice (Kierkegaard), which are at the base of modern-day principles of morality. For MacIntyre emotivism is the death-knell of morality, as his (paraphrased) argument sets out:

Since my precepts of what is good were derived from my emotions, in pursuing the good I am pursuing my own ends. When I subsequently try to influence another person to adopt my precepts, I am treating that person as a means to my ends. Moreover, the very fact of deriving moral action from psychology '[entails] the obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations'. That distinction can be made only by 'impersonal criteria', which alone can determine what is in the other's interests. Since my emotions are elevated to criteria that determine the general good, they usurp the role of 'impersonal criteria', but without posing as impersonal. My treatment of the other as a means to my own ends is justified by the elevation of my emotions to the status of moral criteria. To treat someone as an end, by contrast, is to be unwilling to influence that person 'except by reasons which that other he or she judges to be good' and on the basis of 'impersonal criteria'.<sup>110</sup>

The interest in the recovery of virtue is the basics of MacIntyre's moral philosophy. His work over the last two decades forms an expanding yet consistent and influential project to address fundamental issues in ethical theory and most essentially, the American culture. Here we examine MacIntyre's analysis of the problem of incommensurability of modern ethical theories and his proposal for resolving the dilemma<sup>111</sup>.

MacIntyre's entire project can be seen as a response to this problem which appears not only to form an impasse to progress in moral philosophy, but to foment irreconcilable divisions within human values. Presenting his development of a virtue theory beginning with his seminal work, *After Virtue*, and his latest book, *Dependent Rational Animals*, will help us to understand his first conception about man by trying to avoid biology, and later we shall see how he embraced it and a conception of human flourishing that rejects some of the elitist flavor of Aristotelian ethics, incorporating a statement of human vulnerability and interdependency <sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 68.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> MacIntyre 1984: 23–4.

<sup>111</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 221

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 222.

In bringing attention to the importance of the relation between freedom and truth for contemporary philosophy and its impact on cultural realities, MacIntyre has set the tone for the study of ethics today, and his work in revitalizing the virtues as an essential feature of the moral life has made virtue ethics possible as a viable theory for study.

In *After Virtue*, which calls us to return to the traditional virtue theory just as Anscombe did, MacIntyre lays out the problem of the incommensurability<sup>113</sup> of modern ethical theories: that in determining which theory to take up, there is no neutral perspective by which to assess them, one against another<sup>114</sup>. As a consequence, argumentation about any number of contemporary issues tends to be never ending since the positions that are taken derive from reasoning based on certain irreconcilable presuppositions. These presuppositions are of course presupposed in justifying the particular position or view being espoused, and lend rational support or cognitive evidence to the claims being made.

Be it as it may, the proponents of the various ideological backgrounds cannot reach agreement or resolve their differences, because the different backgrounds share no universal principles, beliefs, or values. It was Aristotle who asserts that unless argumentation is rooted in shared values it will be ineffective, which entails that no terminus will be possible among the various lines of discussion. This irreconcilability results from their foundational approach. Each theory, MacIntyre argues, begins with certain first principles that have no further justification, so the choice among them seems arbitrary<sup>115</sup>.

Modern ethical theories are powerful systems of thought which collectively tend to capture the majority of ideological views that occur in one form or another. The theories are based on certain deep and profound philosophical principles that ultimately function as incontrovertible starting points, but since each begins from a unique fundamental position they generate disparity on moral problems, thus giving rise to distinct lines of argument. MacIntyre says that: "From our rival conclusions we can argue back to our rival premises; but when we do arrive at our premises argument ceases and the invocation of one premise against another becomes a matter of pure assertion and counter assertion"<sup>116</sup>. The choice then becomes which ethical theory one should choose, and here they can function much like political parties. For whatever reason, one commits oneself to one ethical theory

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<sup>113</sup> Incommensurability according to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* means 'to have no common measure'. The origin is from the Ancient Greek mathematics, where it meant no common measure between magnitudes. Here the term is used as criticism of the modern ethical theories that are not in conformity with the ethical foundation of Aristotle.

<sup>114</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 223.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>116</sup> Stephen Carden; *Virtue Ethics: Dewey and Macintyre*, New York, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008, p. 3.

over the rest and, if consistent, follows the ramifications of that theory wherever they lead, irregardless of the resulting position on any particular issue.

However, sometimes, as with political parties, one switches theories depending on which particular position seems best <sup>117</sup>. That is, rather than take the position that results logically from the ethical theory one is committed to, one chooses the ethical theory which will justify the particular position one wants to take concerning the dilemma. Nietzsche claimed that because of this the theories themselves are masks for the exertion of the will to power. MacIntyre explains:

Nietzsche understood the academic mode of utterance as an expression of merely reactive attitudes and feelings, their negative, repressed, and repressive character disguised behind a mask of fixity and objectivity.<sup>118</sup>

Once a person realizes that changing ethical theories will allow the defense of either side of the issue one wishes to support, it begins to appear that the theories themselves are nothing more than systems of thought that exist to justify particular ideology or beliefs system. Since when one reaches the level of theoretical discussion there are no common standards by which to adjudicate among theories, one may pick the theory that seems most comfortable given one's pre-existing views on various controversial issues. There is no impetus to change one's views simply because an ethical theory results in an unwanted position; one merely chooses the ethical theory appropriate to one's perspective in that context. Then one has the entire reasoning ability provided by these particular systems of thought to justify whatever position one wishes to take at the time. Ethical theories then do become masks, or pretenses to wisdom, not only concealing the basic emotional disposition or close-minded bias one already has which in turn needs bracketing, but, seemingly, justifying it as well.

MacIntyre suggests that Nietzsche's critique can be found today in the form of emotivism - the view that moral judgments are "*nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character"<sup>119</sup>. If the major ethical theories of modern times are irreconcilable, then no one theory can claim to be better or more correct than another. They become not so much systems of cognitive principles, but schemes of rationalization to justify one's pre-existing position on a particular issue; they become ways to defend one's preference; rather than being normative, they are merely effective. This leads to a morality in which anyone's view is as good or correct as anyone else's, regardless of experience or expertise, the only real difference being the effectiveness in the expression of one's preference. The more voices that align with any particular

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Dewey, MW, 6.

<sup>119</sup> Carden, *Virtue Ethics: Dewey And Macintyre*, pp. 11-14.

attitude, the more effective the expression, and the more power is exerted by the collective will. In this view, power becomes the arbiter of moral judgments.

According to MacIntyre, the irreconcilability of ethical theories is ultimately due to the failure of the quest for an independent rational justification of morality, an effort taken up by the Enlightenment in its attempt to discover universal first principles of ethics by assuming an unbiased neutral perspective. The attempt to find a ground of morality in something other than religion has occupied modern philosophy since Hobbes first took up the question. He, of course, argued that since empirical reasoning alone cannot replace religion, people must agree upon a secular sovereign to adjudicate all matters of disagreement. The notion of a social contract has long been acknowledged as one possible ground of morality, but its premise of individuals' choosing to leave a state of nature in order to form a society is contrary to what we know about the evolution of humans; people are social creatures, and the individual is more the creation of society than the other way around. Kant argued that reason is the only possible ground of morality since it possesses a universal structure, but his emphasis on absolute laws to determine conduct proves too inflexible a guide to the particular affairs of ordinary experience. When absolutes are applied to concrete situations, they either prove incommensurable or fail to provide the content necessary to engage in the concrete situations of life. Bentham proposed the fulfillment of desire as the ground of morality, but was unable to provide the motivation necessary to move from the psychological hedonism of individuals to the ethical hedonism he proposed for the collective <sup>120</sup>.

The enlightened self-interest necessary to realize that my good is best achieved by means of the good of all is evidently rare and difficult for people to acquire. Thus all these attempts failed to provide the necessary ground of morality that was sought, even though some justification independent of religion were still considered fundamentally essential for the establishment of a moral philosophy that would be acceptable in modern times. MacIntyre says that "the breakdown of this project provided the historical background against which the predicaments of our own culture can become intelligible." As a consequence our moral tradition has become broken and fragmented: We have a set of moral rules, but we disagree over what makes them normative. Each theory is internally consistent, given its initial approach, and each provides a cognitive structure for moral decision-making that is sufficient in most cases; yet in taking different approaches in their beginnings, these ethical theories remain incommensurable. Each possesses its own inherent value, but they cannot be evaluated against each other, as they share no common value or standard by which to make a comparison.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.



What this failure shows is that no unbiased neutral perspective is possible, and so, according to MacIntyre, either Nietzsche is correct or moral philosophy must work from within a tradition wherein certain first principles are assumed. In its belief that, once the ignorance and superstition of the past had been removed, a pure perspective would be possible from which a fresh look at things would reveal their true nature and provide for moral certainty, the Enlightenment looked to the future with confidence that human reason could solve problems in the areas where the institution and the practice of the Church had failed <sup>121</sup>. It was believed that human reason was up to the task and once all the obstacles to its natural functioning were removed it would be able to see the world correctly. It is true that many fresh perspectives were presented in intricate, systematic detail, each possessing an intriguing originality, but no perspective was unbiased and neutral. Each perspective seemed unique, but this was because it was premised on an individual mind abstracted from its environment - self-conscious, and situated somehow behind experience peering out upon it. It is clear now that such an abstraction is purely artificial, since any individual mind is also a human mind, and it will necessarily bring with it the experiences that formed it and the events, conditions, and personalities that shaped it. To this degree, MacIntyre says, Nietzsche is correct that there is no escaping personal bias. To claim, however, that all attempts at moral philosophy are nothing but the exertions of a blind impulsive will to power is unwarranted, because the personal bias that someone brings is not purely an individual creation, but also a product of the patterns of the human culture that spawned it. This opens then the possibility for an individual mind to turn to engage the traditions that set the conditions for its field of activity. In this case it is inevitable that within a tradition certain first principles are assumed, for, as MacIntyre states, it is the condition for the existence of any tradition. He states that:

Reason can only move towards being genuinely universal and impersonal insofar as it is neither neutral nor disinterested . . . [and] membership in a particular type of moral community, one from which fundamental dissent has to be excluded, is a condition for genuinely rational enquiry and more especially for moral and theological enquiry <sup>122</sup>.

It is this tradition, MacIntyre argues, that reason has become fragmented in the modern world, so that modern ethical theories generally prescribe very similar moral rules, such as those that value truthfulness, courage, temperance, and justice, but all for different reasons. It is the meta-ethical systems that are irreconcilable because of their failure to establish universal principles of ethics. Each ethical theory presents a mainstream view of right conduct, yet when differences arise over questions

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>122</sup> Dewey, MW, p. 8.

of justice, for instance, the contrary lines of reasoning which follow from each perspective prove incompatible.

MacIntyre's profound appreciation of history allows him to see that before the advent of modern philosophy, a powerful tradition of moral philosophy existed that had its roots in ancient Greece, yet had been incorporated into the Christian moral tradition by St. Thomas Aquinas. A major part of MacIntyre's argument is that one of the defining features of modernity is its rejection of Scholasticism with its basis in Aristotle's philosophy, and with it the rejection of teleology. MacIntyre explains that the reason moral rules seem to have been imposed from some external authority is that we have lost the concept of a *telos* for mankind; obviously, if the moral rules were to direct us toward human nature as it should become, they will be at variance with human nature as it is now<sup>123</sup>. So the Enlightenment marked the breakup of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition in moral philosophy, even though it has come down to us today in fragments. It has only been in the last few years that the concept of virtues has been accepted again as a viable solution for modern times. Part of the reason for its resurgence lies perhaps in the fact that still, for many people, the quest for living the good life draws the attention and excites wonder. In spite of recognizing the multiplicity of responses that are possible, one still contemplates the possibility of uncovering an answer to this question for oneself—what sort of person should I be? In his seminal work, *After Virtue*, MacIntyre tried to avoid biology altogether, by grounding the virtues in the three ideas of a practice, the narrative order of a single life, and a moral tradition, and with the virtues deriving from this prior account of our social and moral life. Intended as a continuation of the philosophical tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas, MacIntyre's theory presupposes neither biology nor Christianity. Rather, he grounds the virtues in community life, the activities we engage in with others; even the personal, reflective views we have of our own individual lives he shows to be ordered in our relations with others. These three ideas which he offers as a background to the concept of virtue are not intended to be discrete elements of the concept, but cumulative; all three are necessary in his view, and it is a mistake to focus on any one to the exclusion of the others. MacIntyre asserts that:

A virtue as an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods<sup>124</sup>.

The virtues, then, which he lists as "justice, courage, and honesty" are characteristics of human behavior the exercise of which furthers the activities of whatever practice in which we engage. They

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<sup>123</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 131.

<sup>124</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 191

are human qualities necessary to achieve the internal goods: justice in giving to each what is his or her due (which can only be known by those engaged in the practice); courage in taking risks necessary to promote the common goals of the practice; and honesty in listening to criticism from others engaged in the activity and speaking truthfully in return. These virtues of character cross boundaries and are not limited to one practice; also, they can be important in criticizing the practice itself from within, for the possibility does exist for practices to be counter to the good life. In fact, the necessity for criticism leads MacIntyre to place them within a larger social and moral context, the narrative order of a single human life. MacIntyre finds a return to tradition necessary because his approach to moral inquiry focuses on theoretical study in advance of its application to moral judgments. We have incommensurable views on major issues, he says, because we have no common conception of the good. His view is the revitalization of a moral tradition as the quest for that good in order to provide a consistent theoretical structure capable of justifying our moral judgments. Because liberalism is basically antagonistic toward a single conception of the good, it cannot provide appropriate conditions for a true community of persons to exist. Instead, we live fragmented lives in isolated spheres of activity with no authentic structure by which to adjudicate our differences.

From the standpoint of Ethical egoism, the theory argues that the right action is the one that advances one's own best interests. It promotes self-interested behavior but not necessarily selfish acts. The ethical egoist may define his self-interest in various ways—as pleasure, self-actualization, power, happiness, or some other good. The most important argument for ethical egoism relies on the theory known as psychological egoism, the view that the motive for all our actions is self-interest. Psychological egoism, however, seems to ignore the fact that people sometimes do things that are not in their best interests. It also seems to misconstrue the relationship between our actions and the satisfaction that often follows from them. We seem to desire something other than satisfaction and then experience satisfaction as a result of getting what we desire. Utilitarianism is the view that the morally right action is the one that produces the most favorable balance of good over evil, everyone considered. Act-utilitarianism says that right actions are those that directly produce the greatest overall happiness, everyone considered. Rule-utilitarianism says that the morally right action is the one covered by a rule that if generally followed would produce the most favorable balance of good over evil, everyone considered. Critics argue that act-utilitarianism is not consistent with our considered judgments about justice.

In some writings of mine on judgments of value considered as evaluations, there was no attempt to reach or state any conclusion as to the nature of value itself. The position taken was virtually this: *No matter what* value is or is taken to be, certain traits of evaluative judgments as judgments can be formulated. One can assuredly

consider the nature of impersonal judgments, such as “it rains,” without going into the physical and meteorological constitution of rain. So it seemed possible to consider the nature of value-judgments.<sup>125</sup>

In many possible scenarios, the action that maximizes utility in a situation also seems blatantly unjust. Likewise, the theory seems to collide with our notions of rights and obligations. Again, it seems relatively easy to imagine scenarios in which utility is maximized while rights or obligations are short-changed. An act-utilitarianist might respond to these points by saying that such examples are unrealistic—that in real life, actions thought to be immoral almost never maximize happiness. Rule-utilitarianism has been accused of being internally inconsistent—of easily collapsing into act-utilitarianism. The charge is that the rules that maximize happiness best are specific to particular cases, but such rules would sanction the same actions that act-utilitarianism does. Irregardless of the criticisms lodged against it, utilitarianism offers important insights about the nature of morality. The consequences of our actions surely do matter in our moral deliberations and in our lives. The principle of impartiality is an essential part of moral decision making. And any plausible moral theory must somehow take into account the principle of benevolence.

One of MacIntyre’s major contributions to virtue ethics has been to trace the entire history of the “moral ought” as a survival, from Butler to Hume, Kant to Sidgwick, and beyond. One of MacIntyre’s interpreters is David Solomon. He summarizes MacIntyre’s history in this way:

Our ability to know and act in accord with the divine law was denied by the voluntarism of the Protestant reformers and their acceptance of a strong doctrine of original sin, while the teleological conception of nature at the heart of the classical conception of human life was abandoned with the acceptance of the new mechanistic science. With these classical props for the moral rules no longer available, it was inevitable that some alternative structure for justifying the moral rules should be sought, and the Humean and Kantian constructions are the fruit of the search.<sup>126</sup>

From the philosophical periscope of Christopher Lutz he argues emphatically that for MacIntyre in: *After Virtue*, the turning point which created an ethics focused on the “moral ought” was not simply the Protestant Reformation or the scientific revolution, but a series of historical episodes that led away from the Aristotelianism, that is, the teleological way of

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<sup>125</sup>Hickman, Larry A., and Thomas M. Alexander, editors. “Value, Objective Reference, and Criticism: (1925).” *The Essential Dewey: Ethics, Logic, Psychology*, Indiana University Press, 1998, pp. 287–297.

<sup>126</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre; *MacIntyre and Contemporary Moral Philosophy*, edited by, Mark C. Murphy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. p135.

looking at ethics. As Lutz puts it, for MacIntyre, the discuss that led away from Aristotelian ethics “is the whole process of that turn from natural teleology to theological voluntarism and nominalism –the foundation of which is typically attributed to William of Ockham– that lead to the voluntarist theologies of Luther, Calvin, and Jansen <sup>127</sup>.For Aristotle, Alasdair MacIntyre instructs, “Virtues are dispositions not only to act in particular way, but also to feel in particular ways”<sup>128</sup>.To undertake an education of the sentiments, to cultivate certain sentiments over others, to learn to deal with conflicting desires and mutually incompatible goods, to cope with the complexities of our emotions, to work on moderating certain intensities of the emotional life, and to make an effort to understand the vulnerabilities and values that give rise to particular emotional experiences are all concerns that are centrally implicated in Aristotle’s account of the virtues <sup>129</sup>.Both the generative source and ends of such ethical efforts at cultivating morally appropriate orientations to sentiments were, for Aristotle, also significantly tied to the cultivation of practical wisdom or *phronesis*. Given this Aristotelian emphasis on moral sentiments, it is interesting to note that his virtue ethics has recently influenced a number of prominent anthropological accounts of morality.

For MacIntyre, the possibility of progress in inquiry depends ultimately on the manner in which the virtues, and their related normative requirements, such as that demanding narrative unity to a life, shaped and govern the context and practice of enquiry. As a follow up, MacIntyre has identified the role that moral failings can play in the aspect of intellectual error and unfounded forms of enquiry, this is known as moralization of inquiry. He is particularly interested in moral enquiry even though when it seems to remain in a limited boundary. To discover goodness, the subject must be good. The obvious question remains, what is the role of moral virtues in theoretical enquiry? MacIntyre moralization of enquiry encompasses all forms of systematic enquiries.

#### **1.2.4 Christopher Coope**

After twenty-four centuries, Aristotle’s influence on our society’s moral thinking remains profound even when subterranean. Much of the good work in recent ethics has been overtly Aristotelian in inspiration, especially, of course, in the area of virtue ethics though in

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<sup>127</sup>From Voluntarist Nominalism to Rationalism to Chaos: Alasdair MacIntyre’s Critique of Modern Ethics, *Analyse & Kritik* 30. 2008, p. 95.

<sup>128</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre; 2002, p. 149.

<sup>129</sup>*Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban*; “Anthropology and Ethics” in *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*, edited by Didier Fassin, United Kingdom, Wiley-Blackwell A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication, 2002, p. 103.

other areas as well. Many writers who would officially distance themselves from Aristotle and his contemporary followers are nonetheless indebted to him, most often in ways that they do not even realize. Here we gather together some of the best recent work in Aristotelian ethics and virtue ethics for a fresh understanding. The authors write on a wide variety of topics; yet what is striking, when their essays are presented together, is how strong the thematic connections are between them ranging from critique and appraisal. It becomes obvious that the very diverse research programs that they are pursuing are nonetheless parts of a single conversation. Christopher Coope<sup>130</sup> bases his argument on a survey of the development of ‘Modern Virtue Ethics’ since Elizabeth Anscombe’s classic paper, ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’ (*Philosophy*, 1958). Coope follows Anscombe’s lead in more than his title. His survey is not merely informative about how the argument has developed, but also highly perceptive—and provocative—about where, as he sees it, the argument has gone wrong.

We could say, with only a hint of paradox, that Coope is dubious about modern virtue ethics for Aristotelian reasons. Unlike some of the other contributors, Coope shares Anscombe’s doubts about contemporary moral theory. His worry is that to develop virtue ethics as another genus of moral philosophy, *alongside* consequentialism, deontology, and other rivals, and competing with them to give the best account of a supposedly uncontroversial notion of ‘moral rightness’, is to miss the most important point of doing virtue ethics in the first place—which is to demystify our discussions of moral matters by giving an analysis of the key notions, including that of moral rightness.<sup>131</sup>

The new approach in ethics now virtue ethics has been credited to Anscombe and subsequently by Foot,<sup>132</sup> such as it was, even lacked a name. For many years, no one so far according to Coope talked about ‘virtue ethics’. And that this title, when it eventually emerged, was singularly ill-chosen. If a name had been needed, he chose *good-sense ethics* to be far more suitable. He advanced his claim by saying:

If we are to detect a decline we must first establish what was once achieved. *Good-sense ethics* would have been a better name for two reasons. First, the very word virtue has a pious, if not faintly

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<sup>130</sup> Christopher Miles Coope is Senior Fellow in the School of Philosophy at the University of Leeds. He has published on ethics and applied ethics; one recent paper is ‘Peter Singer in Retrospect’, *Philosophical Quarterly*, 2003. His book *Worth and Welfare in the Controversy over Abortion*, and a paper in *Philosophy* ‘Death Sentences’.

<sup>131</sup> Christopher Miles Coope: *Modern Virtue Ethics in Values and Virtues: Aristotelianism in Contemporary Ethics*, Edited by Timothy Chappell, New York, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 20.

<sup>132</sup> What is now called ‘virtue ethics’ is everywhere said to owe its origin, or at least its revival, to Elizabeth Anscombe’s article ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’ (Anscombe 1958).<sup>1</sup> A series of deservedly famous articles by Philippa Foot, starting from that year, continued the work. In fact, this new approach in ethics was more or less the achievement of *The Somerville Two*, as we might nickname them.

ridiculous, aura in our modern world. ‘Virtues ethics’ would have been better, or ‘the ethics of the virtues’ (or ‘excellences’). The phrase *good sense* entirely lacks this aura. ‘Good sense’ is here intended as a colloquial phrase for ‘practical wisdom’ or *phronesis*, and *phronesis* is not one of Aristotle’s ‘moral’ virtues (to use the traditional translation).<sup>133</sup>

Unfortunately as we may note of Rosalind Hursthouse, perhaps the most noteworthy of recent writers on these topics, has taken to translating *phronesis* as *moral* wisdom, thus bringing back the unwanted associations.<sup>134</sup> Hursthouse demonstrates the emphasis in neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics on the lives of situated human agents (including the consequences of their actions), and the salient capabilities, character traits, and reasons involved in truly acting well, or as well as possible, within whatever situation an agent may find himself or herself. Admittedly it is not really clear what Aristotle has in mind by *phronesis* say to say. Sarah Broadie says that his discussions on the subject ‘can often seem maddeningly obscure’.<sup>135</sup>

Coope’s second claim follows thus:

But second, and much more important, good sense was clearly the fundamental thing for the Greeks. They considered practical wisdom the master-virtue: man was a rational animal, and his excellence lay in rationality. It is the return to this thought which made the revolution so revolutionary. For years people had been saying: ‘But that can’t have anything to do with ethics—it is just a matter of prudence!’ We were now to say (more or less): ‘That is not a matter of prudence—so it can have nothing to do with ethics!’ This is the big break. We were not just to be virtue ethicists but *phronesists*.<sup>136</sup>

More still, Elizabeth Anscombe’s paper sought to undermine a certain way of invoking ‘ought’ and ‘must’, where these notions were thought to have a unique moral role. What she said is often mischaracterized. It is a complete mistake to describe this as a flight from deontic terminology in favour of the *aretaic*<sup>137</sup> (as one sometimes hears). There is no suggestion in her work that she wished somehow to lighten our lives by replacing the stick-concept of duty by

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<sup>133</sup> Coope, *Modern Moral Ethics*, p. 21. Aristotle makes a number of specific remarks about *phronesis* that are the subject of much scholarly debate. It is therefore a truism that *phronesis* means practical wisdom in Aristotelian concept. Practical wisdom means the knowledge to live a good life.

<sup>134</sup> Hursthouse *Virtue Theory and Abortion*, 2003: p. 2, 3. Mary Rosalind Hursthouse (born 10 November 1943) is a British-born New Zealand moral philosopher noted for her work on virtue ethics. Hursthouse is Professor Emerita of Philosophy at the University of Auckland.

<sup>135</sup> Broadie and Rowe 2002, p. 5

<sup>136</sup> Coope, *Modern Moral Ethics*, p.22.

<sup>137</sup> *Aretaic* ethics is from the Greek ‘*aretai*’ meaning ‘virtue’ or ‘excellence’. A Normative Ethical Theory is commonly known as *Aretaic* or *Virtue Ethics* which emphasize virtues of mind, character and sense of honesty. While deontological ethics from the Greek word duty (*deon*), the moral rightness and wrongness of human action under a series of rule than the consequence of the action.

the carrot-concept of goodness—a comical idea. Anscombe had absolutely nothing against ‘ought’ and ‘must’—how could she have had? She said (naturally enough) that these everyday terms were ‘quite indispensable’. They come in all sorts of ways. Nor need we imagine that she would have wished to ban a term like ‘wrong’, a rather general term which has many rationally innocent applications. She simply suggested that it is often helpful to be more specific. Nor again need we suppose that she would have had us abandon the thought that justice ‘required’ this or that—the payment of one’s bills, let us say—or that the paying of bills was a duty of justice. She was merely inveighing against those who invested notions of ‘Ought’ and ‘Must’ and ‘Duty’ (capital initials supplied) with a purely mesmeric force. The habit of so doing, she claimed, was an unappreciated consequence of having abandoned the presuppositions of a law conception of ethics, a conception such as we find in Stoicism or Judaism, where of course the *ought* need never have been mesmeric. This ‘historical’ part of her paper I am going to regard as something of a side issue. But we should note at least this. The point at issue is not well expressed by reciting (the association is all too familiar): ‘If God does not exist then everything is permitted.’ It would be less misleading to say that if God does not exist then *nothing* is permitted. For the very concept of *permitted*, where that word has inherited a certain tone, simply falls out of consideration—or at least *should* do so. People have regularly criticized virtue ethics, saying that it is not very good at what is called ‘action guidance’, at telling us what we *ought to* do, and great efforts have then been made to provide an answer. But this criticism is quite indeterminate until we are told what kind of ‘ought’ is in play, the mesmeric kind or some other. In fact, it was the notion of force itself which was critical to the new outlook.

For the question of the force of the *oughts* of ethics seemed to have found an answer, in outline if not in detail, via the notion of good sense and its defect, foolishness. How else indeed could it have been answered? I say ‘in outline if not in detail’ because it is obvious that the picture we were given in ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’ was only intended as a sketch, with many gaps to be filled in later when more work had been done and we had acquired more insight. However, the question of force is gradually fading from the minds of modern virtue ethicists, and this is an enormous but unnoticed impoverishment. We retain the virtues-talk but not what made that talk of interest. It was possible to do moral philosophy without this dodgy notion of *ought*, Elizabeth Anscombe said: as witness the example of Aristotle, to whom our very notion of ‘morality’ would be quite alien. The word *moral*, she said,



‘just doesn’t seem to fit, in its modern sense, into an account of Aristotelian ethics . . . . If someone professes to be expounding Aristotle and talks in a modern fashion about ‘moral’ such and such, he must be very imperceptive if he does not constantly feel like someone whose jaws have somehow got out of alignment: the teeth don’t come together in a proper bite’.<sup>138</sup>

### 1.2.5 Michael Slote

Michael Slote (1992) developed his virtue ethics from the concept of act-utilitarianism and act consequentialism which frequently said to require too much moral agents.<sup>139</sup> This requires that one has to sacrifice personal interests or personal concerns to adhere to the demands of morality. Virtue ethicists especially defenders of common-sense, intuitive moral thinking, criticize consequentialism for making unfounded demands on moral agents, and it has been taken to be the advantage of common-sense morality, that handles our most fundamentals, our most important form of act-evaluation as in most cases requiring nothing like the kind of self-sacrifice entailed by a utilitarian or consequentialist form of morality stating thus:

It is a contradiction to make the perfection of another my end and to deem myself obligated to promote his perfection. For the perfection of another man as a person consists precisely in his being able to set his end for himself according to his own concepts of duty. And it is a contradiction to require (to make it a duty for) that I ought to do something which no one except another himself can do.<sup>140</sup>

Michael Slote developed his virtue ethics against moral aretaic concepts in favor of “neutral” aretaic like admirability and virtue, but more credence will be ascribed to common-sense morality. He argues that virtue ethics is morally superior to utilitarianism and consequentialism. The agent-neutrality of utilitarianism entails a fundamental equality of concern for every single individual, and it will be by contrast, that common-sense virtue ethics is committed to (aretaically formable) principles or rules recommending just a balance of concern as between oneself and other people considered as a group or class.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Anscombe 1958: 2, 1981: 26.

<sup>139</sup> Michael Slote; *From Virtue to Morality*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 8. Michael is a contemporary moral philosopher and a professor of Philosophy University of Maryland.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. p. 109.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

Much of recent interest in virtue ethics he observed has focused on the analysis and comparison of particular virtues and on the ways in which talk of virtue may importantly supplement what ethics needs to say about the rightness and wrongness of actions. But the virtue ethical advantages to be argued for in what follows support virtue ethics in a deeper sense. If (utilitarian) Consequentialism, Kantianism, and common-sense morality all give insufficient weight to the interests of the individual agent, then perhaps a virtue theoretic approach that avoids this kind of difficulty may in fact turn out to offer the best way of grounding our ethical thinking.<sup>142</sup>

From the perspective of moral asymmetry, there have been critical analysis and evaluation of the common-sense morality. Michael Slote criticizes the ordinary and Kantian moral way of thinking. He points out the evidence that common-sense thinking about right and wrong is permissive in the personal sphere in ways, and to a degree, that act-consequentialism and most familiarly, act-utilitarianism are not. He then used “consequentialism” and “utilitarianism” in place of these longer designations. The point he make here is that there is the distinction between consequentialism and ordinary morality by purporting that ordinary morality grants against a moral permission to pursue innocent projects and concerns in ways that are not optimistic, not productive of greatest overall balance of good.<sup>143</sup> In his *Utility*, Geoffrey Scarre (1996) says that it is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize the fact that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others, and an agent goes for the most advantageous even with its egoistic inclinations.<sup>144</sup>

### 1.2.6 The Problem of Vice

In recent years there has been a renewed interest the field of virtue ethics. Here I want take up a point which is quite surprising, namely, that this renewed interest on virtue has no counterpart on vice. Once you notice this you scan the many complex works on virtue in vain for anything comparably developed on vice. It seems to be assumed that an account of virtue does not need also to take into account vice for it to be adequate an account of virtue. I too have been guilty of this, and it may be that this assumption is not arbitrary. Aristotle, for example, tells us that we are studying virtue not for its own the sake, but to become better

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>144</sup> Geoffrey Scarre; *Utilitarianism: Problems of Philosophy*, Psychology Press, 1996, p. 92.

people, and so we can see why the study of virtue alone would suffice for that, bringing in vice only insofar as we need to understand it as it pertains to understand virtue.<sup>145</sup>

Strictly speaking vice is the contrary opposite of virtue. The etymology of the word is from Latin: *vitium*, meaning “failing or defect”. The modern English form of it is vicious, meaning “full of vice”. Vice is a practice, behavior or habit generally considered immoral, sinful, criminal, rude, taboo, depraved, or degrading in the associated society.<sup>146</sup> In lesser usage, vice can refer to a fault, a negative character trait, a defect, an infirmity or a bad or unhealthy habit. Vices are usually associated with a transgression in a person’s character or temperament rather than their morality. Thomas Aquinas’ treatise on vices and sins has a structure similar to that on the virtues. On vices and sins he discusses their nature, the manner in which they are differentiated, the comparison of sin with another, the psychological seat of vices and sins and their causes and effects. Our main concern is to look at Thomas’ own perspective and definition of vice since our study is on virtue ethics. Thomas’ notion of vice is that it is a bad habit, just as virtue is a good habit.<sup>147</sup> A vice is unnatural in the sense that it is contrary to human nature, because it is contrary to the order of reason. A sinful act is worse than a vicious habit or vice.

Thomas Hurka gives the recursive account by identifying vices as those attitudes to goods and evils that are themselves intrinsically evil. Given the account as developed up to now, he named the three categories of vices, which he calls pure vices, vices of indifference, and vices of disproportion. All involve attitudes that are intrinsically evil, but in each the attitudes are made evil by a different element of the recursive account. *Pure vices* he said involve attitudes that are inappropriately oriented to their objects, either love of an evil or hatred of a good.<sup>148</sup>

These vices are therefore made evil by the recursion-clauses or their relational counterparts. Malice for example is a pure vice in this sense. A malicious person desires, pursues, or takes pleasure in another's evil, (rejoicing over ones misfortune) for example, her pain or failure for its own sake, or desires to destroy another's good for its own sake. His attitude has the contrary view to one is virtuous and is therefore simply and purely vicious. A malicious person need not desire another's pain *as* something evil; it may be impossible to desire an object

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<sup>145</sup> Julia Annas, *Virtue, Skill and Vice*. An unpublished conference paper for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues conference at Oriel College, Oxford University, Thursday 7<sup>th</sup>- Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

<sup>146</sup> Karen M. Hess; *Introduction to Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice*. U.S.A. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009, p. 111.

<sup>147</sup> Edward J. Gratsch, *Aquinas’ Summa: An Introduction and Interpretation*, Bangalore, Theological Publications in India, 2004, p. 113.

<sup>148</sup> Thomas Hurka; *Virtue, Vice and Value*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 92

as evil. But he can desire her pain *as* pain, willing her suffering as an end in itself, or he can take pleasure in her pain *as* pain. Then he loves something evil for the very reason that makes it evil, which makes his love vicious.<sup>149</sup> Hurka here made mention of more specifically of other-regarding pure vices. One is anger, at least when it involves, as intense anger can, a desire to strike out at another or in some way cause her pain. Such anger is a specific form of malice, distinguished both by its cause—a belief that the other has mistreated one—and by its intensity and short duration. Related forms of malice include *Schadenfreude*, or pleasure at the misfortunes of others, and sadism, where one enjoys both another's pain and the process of inflicting it.

There are also self-regarding pure vices, such as self-hatred and masochism. Given agent-neutral base-clauses by desiring one's own pain and hating one's own pleasure and achievement are evil in the same way as are the comparable attitudes to other people's pleasure and achievement; in both cases, one is wrongly oriented to a base-level value. So self-hatred, too, is a pure vice.<sup>150</sup> Of course, self-hatred and masochism are often instrumentally evil because they cause their subjects pain, but they are also disfiguring themselves. Someone who injures himself or herself out of self-hatred is in a worse state overall than if the same injury had befallen him or her accidentally.

A more subtle pure vice is what he calls *cynicism*.<sup>151</sup> A cynic believes the world and people's lives are not as good as they are commonly believed to be and actually are. His cynicism can concern base-level goods such as pleasure and knowledge, which he claims are only rarely found. But its more common subject is virtue, so he claims that people are less virtuous and more prone to vice than they actually are in reality. This undervaluing of existing goods is not itself a vice, though it involves the non-moral evil of false belief. But in cynicism it has a vicious origin. The cynic does not want people to be good—in this sense he hates the good—and convinces himself, by wishful thinking or self-deception, that they are evil.

The second category, according to Hurka is the *vices of indifference*, which he says is a class that is a lesser evil, which involve not a positively inappropriate orientation to a good or evil, but the absence, at least to a minimum degree of intensity, of an appropriate one. They are therefore made evil by the clauses about indifference. Callousness, or caring not at all or insufficiently about another's pain, is another-regarding vice of indifference, in this case of indifference to evil. What Hurka means is that the subject lacks sympathy and empathy.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid. p. 93

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 94

Although it lacks a particular name, it is indifference to another's false beliefs or to her failing in important life projects. Such an agent lacks virtue and has no moral probity to encourage virtuous acts of another agent. The vices of indifference also have higher-level forms, such as shamelessness. A person who has acted from an evil or insufficiently good motive should feel pain and especially shame about this fact. If he does not feel shame, but instead is shameless about what he has done, he exhibits a higher-level vice, involving indifference to a higher-level evil. He is likewise shameless if he is in no way pained by an evil desire or feeling. Shamelessness is not as great a vice as the delight in moral evil which Hurka called moral depravity.

A great deal of attention has been devoted to issues of how we learn to be virtuous and to cultivate virtue, but very little has been devoted to the question of how we learn to be cowardly, brutal and so on. We can learn to have vices as we can learn to be virtuous, but the kind of learning is clearly different, since when we learn to be brave we aim to be brave, but although we can learn to be cowardly we typically do not, in doing so, aim to be cowardly. Vices are character traits that we aim not to have.<sup>152</sup>

More so, the third category of vices Hurka calls the *vices of disproportion*, which involves two or more attitudes both of which are appropriately oriented and above the threshold intensity, so that on their own they are good. But the intensities of these attitudes are so out of proportion to their objects' values that their combination is evil not just as a combination, as in some shortfalls in virtue, but on balance. He argues that selfishness and cowardice, at least in their extreme forms, are vices of disproportion. An extremely selfish person cares much more about his own lesser goods than about greater goods of other people; a coward cares much more about his safety or comfort than about some greater good he could achieve by risking them. These initial vices of disproportion are accompanied by two contrary vices of self-abnegation and foolhardiness. Given agent-neutral base-clauses, it is just as evil to care too little about one's own good as it is to care too much. A person who discounts his good to an extreme, or is extremely self-abnegating, has a combination of attitudes that is on balance evil. Such a person need not be self-hating or even indifferent to his own good; he need have no self-regarding attitude that on its own is evil. But he does lack a kind of self-respect, respect for his own good as equal in importance to other people, and this lack of self-respect is a vice of disproportion.

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<sup>152</sup> Julia Annas, *Virtue, Skill and Vice*. An unpublished conference paper for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues conference at Oriel College, Oxford University, Thursday 7<sup>th</sup>- Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

A similar point applies to foolhardiness. Just as it can be on balance evil to care too much about one's safety, so it can be evil to care too little about it or to risk it in foolhardy actions aimed at trivial goods. Quite apart from its effects, such foolhardiness involves an intrinsically vicious preference for lesser over greater values. A different vice of disproportion is pride, which involves excessive pleasure in certain aspects of one's own good. At the lowest level, one can take pleasure in one's knowledge or achievement; this becomes pride in the sense connoting vice when one is much more pleased by one's own knowledge or achievement than by similar or greater achievements of others. At a higher level, one can be pleased by one's virtue—by one's love of good and hatred of evil—and more so than by the similar virtue of others. This is specifically moral pride, or excessive love of one's own moral qualities, and is likewise a vice. Pride normally involves a specific kind of love, based on a belief that a state of oneself is admirable or good.

### **1.2.7 Critique of Contemporary Virtue Ethics**

A number of objections have been raised against virtue ethics; it is a fact that each philosopher is entitled to his or her own assertion. Benjamin Studebaker disagrees with virtue ethics because he thinks there is no such thing as a good person divorced from good actions, since what is important in virtue ethics is whether or not we are good people, not whether or not we do good things. He established the distinction between compatibility and moral goodness, which is missing in virtue ethics. He argues that:

There are morally good people who behave in socially helpful ways that I cannot stand and want nothing to do with. Their personalities or characters still repulse me. By the same token, there are morally bad people who harm others that I find entertaining, amusing, or who just so happen to be nice to me as an exception. Just because I do not like someone or agree with someone, does not mean that on balance that person acts harmfully, and just because I do like someone or tend to agree with that someone does not mean that on balance that person acts beneficially.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Benjamin Studebaker is an American whose interest is in political economy, moral philosophy, and international relation theory. He writes on variety of topics which he uploads on his blog, so I own this reference to him and his blog as the source. For elucidation and insight visit: *A Critique of Virtue Ethics* - benjaminstudebaker.com and for professional inquiries send him mail: bmstudebaker@gmail.com Accessed on 20/03/2020.

Studebaker then suggests that we have to evaluate people as potential friends separately from our evaluation of the moral impetus. This calls for the separation between character and deeds that virtue ethics mistakenly ignores, and does not identify principles that can be applied in any moral situation.

From the onset, the decline of the normative ethics as stated at the beginning of this work gave rise to the advent of virtue ethics revival. In the early days of the revival of virtue ethics the approach was associated with an “anti-codifiability” thesis about ethics, directed against the prevailing pretensions of the day of normative theory. At that time utilitarians and deontologists commonly (though not universally) held that the task of ethical theory was to come up with a code consisting of universal rules or principles (possibly only one, as in the case of act-utilitarianism) which would have two significant features. First, the rule(s) would amount to a decision procedure for determining what the right action was in any particular case. Second, the rule(s) would be stated in such terms that any non-virtuous person could understand and apply it (them) correctly. How possible is this claim?

In addition, the issues relating to natural law and the moral codes derived from it has also bothered contemporary virtue ethicists, who maintained, contrary to utilitarians and deontologists that it was quite unrealistic to imagine that there could be such a code.<sup>154</sup> The results of attempts to produce and employ such a code, in the heady days of the 1960s and 1970s, when medical and then bioethics boomed and the bloom tended to support the virtue ethicists’ claim. More and more utilitarians and deontologists found themselves agreeing on their general rules, but on opposite sides of the controversial moral issues in contemporary discussion. It came to be taken that moral sensitivity, perception, imagination, and judgment informed by experience—*phronesis* as in Aristotle, is needed to apply these rules or principles correctly. Hence some utilitarians and deontologists have explicitly abandoned the claim that rule(s) would be stated in such terms, that any non-virtuous person could understand and apply it /them correctly, with much less emphasis being placed on the claim that rule(s) would amount to a decision making process for determining what the right action was in any particular case.

It is a common complaint and criticism that virtue ethics does not produce codifiable principles, because it has failed to provide guiding principles on how someone ought to act in any particular situation, and therefore, rather than offering a normative alternative to utilitarian and deontological ethics it should claim to be no more than a valuable supplement to them. But the objection holds no water because it fails to take cognizance of Anscombe’s claim that a

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<sup>154</sup>John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason”, *Monist*, 1979, pp. 331–350.

great deal of specific action guidance could be found in rules employing the virtue and vice terms (“v-rules”) such as: “Do what is honest or charitable; do not do what is dishonest/uncharitable.”<sup>155</sup>(It is a noteworthy feature of our virtue and vice vocabulary that, although our list of generally recognized virtue terms is comparatively short, our list of vice terms is remarkably, and usefully, long, far exceeding anything that anyone who thinks in terms of standard deontological rules has ever come up with. Much invaluable action guidance comes from avoiding courses of action that would be irresponsible, inconsistent, lazy, inconsiderate, unproductive, harsh, intolerant, selfish, mercenary, indiscreet, tactless, arrogant, unsympathetic, cold, incautious, avarice, malicious, feeble, presumptuous, rude, hypocritical, self-indulgent, rude, short-sighted, vindictive, ungrateful, grudging, brutal, profligate, disloyal, etc.

A second objection questions whether virtue ethics can provide an adequate account of right action. This worry can take two forms. (i) One might think a virtue ethical account of right action is extensionally inadequate. It is possible to perform a right action without being virtuous, and a virtuous person can occasionally perform the wrong action without her virtue being called into question. If virtue is neither necessary nor sufficient for right action, one might wonder whether the relationship between rightness/wrongness and virtue/vice is close enough for the former to be identified in terms of the latter. (ii) Alternatively, even if one thought it possible to produce a virtue ethical account that picked out all (and only) right actions, one might still think that at least in some cases virtue is not what explains rightness.<sup>156</sup>

Some virtue ethicists’ respond to the inadequacy objection by rejecting the assumption that virtue ethics ought to be in the venture of providing an account of right action in the first place. Following in the footsteps of Anscombe (1958),<sup>157</sup> and MacIntyre (1985),<sup>158</sup> Talbot Brewer (2009)<sup>159</sup> argues that to work with the categories of rightness and wrongness is already to get off on the wrong foot. Contemporary conceptions of right and wrong action, built as they are around a notion of moral duty that presupposes a framework of divine (or moral) law or around a conception of obligation that is defined in contrast to self-interest, carry baggage the virtue ethicist is better off without. Virtue ethics can address the questions of how one should live, what kind of person one should become, and even what one should do without that

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<sup>155</sup> Rosaline Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 213.

<sup>156</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, *A theory of Virtue*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 6-8.

<sup>157</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy”, *Philosophy*, 33: 1958, pp. 1–19.

<sup>158</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, London: Duckworth, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1985, p. 56.

<sup>159</sup> Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 224-235. His contention is in the context of human selfhood and agency. This is an invigorating new approach to ethical theory.



committing it to providing an account of ‘right action’. An practical activity and not just a merely theoretical speculation, this practicality is traced to human agency, and particularly of the way in which practical thinking gives shape to activities, relationships and lives.<sup>160</sup> One might choose, instead, to work with aretaic concepts (defined in terms of virtues and vices) and axiological concepts (defined in terms of good and bad, better and worse) and leave out deontic notions (like right or wrong action, duty, and obligation) altogether.

In any case, a virtue ethical account need not attempt to reduce *all* other normative concepts to virtues and vices. What is required is simply (i) that virtue is *not* reduced to some other normative concept that is taken to be more fundamental and (ii) that some other normative concepts *are* explained in terms of virtue and vice. This takes the sting out of the inadequacy objection, which is most compelling against versions of virtue ethics, that attempt to define all of the senses of ‘right action’ in terms of virtues. Appealing to virtues *and* vices makes it much easier to achieve extensional adequacy. Making room for normative concepts that are not taken to be reducible to virtue and vice concepts makes it even easier to generate a theory that is both extensionally and explanatorily adequate. Whether one needs other concepts and, if so, how many, is still a matter of debate among virtue ethicists, as is the question of whether virtue ethics even ought to be offering an account of right action. Either way virtue ethicists have resources available to them to address the adequacy objection.

Insofar as the different versions of virtue ethics all retain an emphasis on the virtues, they are open to the familiar problem of the charge of cultural relativity. Is it not the case that different cultures embody different virtues, (MacIntyre 1985) and hence that the v-rules will pick out actions as right or wrong only relative to a particular culture? Different replies have been made to this charge. One—the *tu quoque*, or “partners in crime” response—exhibits a quite familiar pattern in virtue ethicists’ defensive strategy. They admit that, for them, cultural relativism *is* a challenge, but points out that it is just as much a problem for the other two approaches. The (putative) cultural variation in character traits regarded as virtues is no greater—indeed markedly less—than the cultural variation in rules of conduct, and different cultures have different ideas about what constitutes happiness or welfare. That cultural relativity should be a problem common to all three approaches is hardly surprising. It is related, after all, to the “justification problem” the quite general meta-ethical problem of justifying one’s moral beliefs to those who disagree, whether they be moral skeptics, pluralists or from another school of thought. A bolder strategy involves claiming that virtue ethics has less

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p. 2

difficulty with cultural relativity than the other two approaches. Much cultural disagreement arises, it may be claimed, from local understandings of the virtues, but the virtues themselves are not relative to culture.<sup>161</sup>

Another objection to which the *tu quoque* response is partially appropriate is “the conflict problem.” What does virtue ethics have to say about dilemmas—cases in which, apparently, the requirements of different virtues conflict because they point in opposed directions? Charity prompts me to kill the person who would be better off dead, but justice forbids it. Honesty points to telling the hurtful truth, kindness and compassion to remaining silent or even lying. What shall I do? Of course, the same sorts of dilemmas are generated by conflicts between deontological rules. Deontology and virtue ethics share the conflict problem (and are happy to take it on board rather than follow some of the utilitarians in their consequentialist resolutions of such dilemmas) and in fact their strategies for responding to it are parallel. Both aim to resolve a number of dilemmas by arguing that the conflict is merely apparent; a discriminating understanding of the virtues or rules in question, possessed only by those with practical wisdom, will perceive that, in this particular case, the virtues do not make opposing demands or that one rule outranks another, or has a certain exception clause built into it. Whether this is all there is to it depends on whether there are any irresolvable dilemmas. If there are, proponents of either normative approach may point out reasonably that it could only be a mistake to offer a resolution of what is, *ex hypothesi*, irresolvable.

Another critique that is seen among the three approaches is that of being self-effacing. An ethical theory is self-effacing if, roughly, whatever it claims justifies a particular action, or makes it right, had better not be the agent’s motive for doing it. For Michael Stocker, it is the problem of deontology and consequentialism, which he argued that the agent who, rightly, visits a friend in hospital will rather lessen the impact of his visit on her if he tells her either that he is doing it because it is his duty bound or because he thought it would maximize the general happiness.<sup>162</sup> But from the perspective of Simon Keller, the hospitalized won’t be any better pleased if he tells her that he is visiting her because it is what a virtuous agent would do, so virtue ethics would appear to have the problem too.<sup>163</sup> Notwithstanding, virtue ethics’

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<sup>161</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, “Aristotelian Social Democracy”, in R. Douglass, G. Mara, and H. Richardson (eds.), *Liberalism and the Good*, New York: Routledge, 1990, pp. 203–52.

<sup>162</sup> Michael Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories”, *Journal of Philosophy*, issue 14:1976, pp. 453–66.

<sup>163</sup> Simon Keller, “Virtue Ethics is Self-Effacing”, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 85 (2): 2007, pp.221–32.

defenders have argued that not all forms of virtue ethics are subject to this objection and those that are not seriously undermined by the problem.<sup>164</sup>

Another problem for virtue ethics, which is shared by both utilitarianism and deontology, is “the justification problem.” This is an important problem in the field of ethics, if a prescriptive way of life cannot be justified, then it will hold no weight for those who consider it. For deontology there is the question of how to justify its claims that certain moral rules are the correct ones, and for utilitarianism of how to justify its claim that all that really matters morally are consequences for happiness or well-being. For virtue ethics, the problem concerns the question of which character traits are the virtues. Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Mandeville expressed their view that all human act was ultimately driven by self-interest, and that their critics, both Francis Hutcheson and Joseph Butler, expressed the contrary view that benevolence was as fundamental a principle of human action and as self-interest.<sup>165</sup>

In the meta-ethical debate, there is widespread disagreement about the possibility of providing an external foundation for ethics—“external” in the sense of being external to ethical beliefs—and the same disagreement is found amongst deontologists and utilitarians. Some believe that their normative ethics can be placed on a secure basis, resistant to any form of skepticism, such as what anyone rationally desires, or would accept or agree on, regardless of their ethical outlook; others that it cannot.

Virtue ethicists have eschewed any attempt to ground virtue ethics in an external foundation while continuing to maintain that their claims can be validated. Some follow a form of Rawls’s coherentist approach<sup>166</sup>; neo-Aristotelians a form of ethical naturalism.

A misunderstanding of *eudaimonia* as an unmoralized concept leads some critics to suppose that the neo-Aristotelians are attempting to ground their claims in a scientific account of human nature and what counts, for a human being, as flourishing. Others assume that, if this is not what they are doing, they cannot be validating their claims that, for example, justice, charity, courage, and generosity are virtues. Either they are illegitimately helping themselves to Aristotle’s discredited natural teleology or producing mere rationalizations of their own personal or culturally inculcated values.

But McDowell, Foot, MacIntyre and Hursthouse have all outlined versions of a third way between these two extremes. *Eudaimonia* in virtue ethics, is indeed a moralized concept,

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<sup>164</sup> Joel Martinez, 2011, “Is Virtue Ethics Self-Effacing?” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 89 (2): 2011, pp. 277–88.

<sup>165</sup> Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy*, in *Three Books*, Volume II, London: Cambridge University Press; Reprint edition 2015, pp. 2-4.

<sup>166</sup> Slote 2001; Swanton 2003.

but it is not only that. Claims about what constitutes human flourishing no more float free from scientific facts about what human beings are, like the ethological claims about what constitutes flourishing for elephants. In both cases, the truth claims depends *in part* on what kind of animal they are and what capacities, desires and interests the humans or elephants have.

The best available science today (including evolutionary theory and psychology) supports rather than undermines the ancient Greek assumption that we are social animals, like elephants and wolves and unlike polar bears. No rationalizing explanation in terms of anything like a social contract is needed to explain why we choose to live together; subjugating our egoistic desires in order to secure the advantages of co-operation. Like other social animals, our natural impulses are not solely directed towards our own pleasures and preservation, but include altruistic and cooperative ones.

This basic fact about us should make more comprehensible the claim that the virtues are at least partially constitutive of human flourishing and also undercut the objection that virtue ethics is, in some sense, egoistic. Friedrich Nietzsche, in spite of essentially rejecting Kant's work, will continue full throttle along this path. What we find in Kant is an outline of inwardly-deceptive pseudo-virtuousness, of not even being able to *perceive* one's own true lack of virtuous motivation.<sup>167</sup>

Since self-deception looms large in human existence on the whole, sincerity is the only true virtue for Nietzsche – and this links him to Kant, who believed sincerity to be the main obligation man has to himself. Nietzsche says, men are completely mendacious and manipulative.<sup>168</sup> The egoism objection has a number of sources. One is a simple confusion. Once it is understood that the fully virtuous agent characteristically does what she should without inner conflict, it is triumphantly asserted that “she is only doing what she *wants* to do and hence is being selfish.” So when the generous person gives gladly, as the generous are wont to do, it turns out she is not generous and unselfish after all, or at least not as generous as the one who greedily wants to hang on to everything she has, but forces herself to give because she thinks she should!

A related version ascribes bizarre reasons to the virtuous agent, unjustifiably assuming that she acts as she does *because* she believes that acting thus on this occasion will help her to achieve *eudaimonia*. But “the virtuous agent” is just “the agent with the virtues” and it is part

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<sup>167</sup>Jochen Schmidt, “Critical Virtue Ethics”, in *Religious Inquiries*, Volume 3, Issue 5, Winter and Spring 2014, pp. 35-47. [http://ri.urd.ac.ir/article\\_12057\\_2069.html](http://ri.urd.ac.ir/article_12057_2069.html). accessed on 01/04/2020.

<sup>168</sup>Schmidt, 2014, p.52. Nietzsche's harsh diagnosis of the sanctimonious preachers of virtue, who preach altruism though they are in truth driven by bigoted egomania, is compelling, though his dichotomy of good and bad virtues seems excessive. On the one hand, he reviles the “flock-virtues” (Nietzsche-1885, 34[96]) and the breeder-virtue.

of our ordinary understanding of the term virtue, and that each virtue carries with it its own specific goal for action. The virtuous agent acts as she does because she believes that someone's suffering will be averted, or someone benefited, or the truth established, or a debt repaid, or ... thereby.

It is the exercise of the virtues during one's life that is held to be at least partially constitutive of *eudaimonia*, and this is consistent with recognising that bad luck may land the virtuous agent in circumstances that require her to give up her life. Given the sorts of considerations that courageous, honest, loyal, charitable people wholeheartedly recognize as reasons for action, they may find themselves compelled to face danger for a worthwhile end, to speak out in someone's defense, or refuse to reveal the names of their comrades, even when they know that this will inevitably lead to their execution, to share their last crust and face starvation. On the view that the exercise of the virtues is necessary but not sufficient for *eudaimonia*, such cases are described as those in which the virtuous agent sees that, as things have unfortunately turned out, *eudaimonia* is not possible for them.<sup>169</sup> On the Stoical view that it is both necessary and sufficient, a *eudaimon* life is a life that has been successfully lived (where "success" of course is not to be understood in a materialistic way) and such people die knowing not only that they have made a success of their lives but that they have also brought their lives to a markedly successful completion. Either way, such heroic acts can hardly be regarded as egoistic.

A lingering suggestion of egoism may be found in the misconceived distinction between so-called "self-regarding" and "other-regarding" virtues. Those who have been insulated from the ancient tradition tend to regard justice and benevolence as real virtues, which benefit others but not their possessor, and prudence, fortitude and providence (the virtue whose opposite is "improvidence" or being a spendthrift) as not real virtues at all because they benefit only their possessor. This is a mistake on two counts. Firstly, justice and benevolence do, in general, benefit their possessors, since without them *eudaimonia* is not possible. Secondly, given that we live together, as social animals, the "self-regarding" virtues do benefit others—those who lack them are a great drain on, and sometimes grief to, those who are close to them (as parents with improvident or imprudent adult offspring know only too well).

The most recent objection to virtue ethics or what is known as the second phase of the situationism debate, whose initial proposition has been widely, albeit somewhat inappropriately, named 'the situationist critique of virtue ethics', claims that work in

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<sup>169</sup> Foot, 2001, p. 95

“situationist” social psychology shows that there are no such things as character traits and thereby no such things as virtues. According to John Doris, traditionally-conceived virtue ethics is empirically inadequate. If empirically founded, its virtue attributions, such as courage, justice, honesty, and compassion, would accurately describe most of the population.<sup>170</sup> Harman and Doris argue that, genuinely applied, situationist findings vitiate traditional virtue ethics and also suggest a range of illuminating strategies for moral and social improvement. In reply, some virtue ethicists have argued that the social psychologists’ studies are irrelevant to the multi-track disposition that a virtue is supposed to be.<sup>171</sup> Kamtekar’s response to the situationist’s critiques is that Harman and Doris assume an oversimplified notion of virtue, she argues that:

the so called character traits that the situationist experiments test for are independently functioning dispositions to behave in stereotypical ways, dispositions that are isolated from how people reason... (but) the conception of character in virtue ethics is holistic and inclusive of how we reason.<sup>172</sup>

Mindful of just how multi-track it is, they agree that it would be reckless in the extreme to ascribe a demanding virtue such as charity to people of whom they know no more than that they have exhibited conventional decency; this would indeed be “a fundamental attribution error.”

Aristotelian account of virtue whose third criterion requires that a virtuous agent behave virtuously across a broad range of different types of situation, such that, Mrs. Kate always behave compassionately or kindly irrespective of the nature of the situation or other agents in the group. This is a middle road between “no character traits at all” and the exacting standard of the Aristotelian conception of virtue which, because of its emphasis on *phronesis*, requires a high level of character integration. On his conception, character traits may be “frail and fragmentary” but still virtues, and not uncommon.

But giving up the idea that practical wisdom is the heart of all the virtues, as Adams has to do, is a substantial sacrifice, as Russell<sup>173</sup> and Kamtekar<sup>174</sup> argue. Harman draws three contentious conclusions from situationist findings. First, he argues that the empirical foundation that would substantiate the existence of character traits in most human beings is manifestly absent: if we possessed character traits, our behavior would not comport so highly

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<sup>170</sup> John M. Doris, 1998, “Persons, Situations and Virtue Ethics”, *Noûs*, Volume 32 (4): pp. 504–530.

<sup>171</sup> Rachana Kamtekar, “Imperfect Virtue”, *Ancient Philosophy*, 18: 1998, pp. 315–339; Gopal Sreenivasan, Gopal, “Errors about Errors: Virtue Theory and Trait Attribution”, *Mind*, 111, 2002, pp. 47–68.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. “Situationism and Virtue Ethics on the Content of the Character”, *Chicago Journals*, Volume 114, April 2004, p. 460.

<sup>173</sup> Paul Russell, “Moral Sense and Virtue in *Hume’s Ethics*”, in Chappell, 2006, pp. 158–170.

<sup>174</sup> Rachana Kamtekar, 1998, p. 323.

with the situation. He went on to draw the respectively weaker and stronger conclusions that: “it may... be the case that there is no such thing as character, no ordinary character traits of the sort people there are”<sup>175</sup> and that: “there is no empirical basis for the existence of character traits”, hence, we must renounce all talk and thought of character.

Second, employing his weaker conclusion, Harman asserts that if there is no thing as character, then there is, correspondingly, no thoroughfares that even the most conscientious, adept, and persistent moral agent can tread in the attempt to develop virtuous character traits. Finally, Harman argues that, to cultivate an improved moral life, along with more morally sensitive and effective public and legal policies, the moral agent must strive not to develop her virtue but, instead, to implement situational changes in both the personal and public aspects of her life.

The responses to Harman’s and Doris’s situationist critiques of virtue ethics, while they differ in their tone, slant, and subtleties and varieties of argumentation, almost univocally converge upon one primary objection: the conception of virtue that Harman and Doris identify as the target of situationism is a simplistic, implausible strawman. Kupperman also claims that Harman’s arguments target “an excessively simple view of what character is” and make two false assumptions about the nature of character traits<sup>176</sup>. Kupperman concludes by saying that character is conceptually indispensable since we often know that certain people are reliably virtuous and since self-ascriptions of virtue are often resolutions as much as they are descriptions, and he argues that character is pragmatically indispensable since it can constrain our behavior and choices in a range of morally vexing situations. Even though the “situationist challenge” has left traditional virtue ethicists unmoved, it has generated a healthy engagement with empirical psychological literature, which has also been fueled by the growing literature on Foot’s *Natural Goodness* and, quite independently, an upsurge of interest in character education.

## Concluding remarks

Virtue ethics has been assessed and encouraged to be first cultivated and second practiced in all places irrespective of cultural diversity. Every culture or religion encourages

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<sup>175</sup> Gilbert Harman, “Moral Philosophy meets social psychology”: Virtue ethics and the fundamental attribution error. In *Proceedings of the Aristotelian society*: Volume 99, 1999, pp. 315-331. We have to note that in Harman’s argument, character is indispensable also as processes of control that impose reliability where it really matters.

<sup>176</sup> Joel J. Kupperman, *The Indispensability of Character*, Cambridge University Press. Volume 76, Issue 2, April 2001, pp. 239-250. <https://doi.org>. Accessed on 18/03/2020.

virtues in one way or the other. Contemporary virtue ethics, which is the renewal or revival of Greek virtue ethics after it was interrupted by secularism and enlightenment, is in accord with this view. Various theories on virtue ethics and practices developed by individuals and communities also support this dictum and their standing point is meaningful. Aristotelian virtue ethics could have a non-relative basis, either in reason or in other universal anthropological constants. Martha Nussbaum, for example, tries to show that there are indeed universal values on which local virtues are based, such as responding to human need and the flourishing of the human being. This is surely a strong point, and I agree that virtue ethics can be reconstructed along universal lines of argument, *but only to an extent* in view of minimal morality. I also think that if we restrict ourselves to reconstructing virtue ethics in a universal realm, we run the risk of cutting ourselves off from the fecundity of the imagery of particular traditions of virtue ethics. Therefore, approaches to virtue ethics ought to be introduced to and negotiated in intercultural settings.

Though as established above, this universal assessment of human conduct as it pertains to virtue which encourage attributing to something ultimate, meaningful, and liberating, is not welcomed by some critic such as the nihilist Friedrich Nietzsche, who objected the universality of virtues, for virtue should be man-made. Alasdair MacIntyre refuted Nietzsche's opinion in his book *After Virtue*. Human action originates change. As far as there is human action there is no stability, but ceaseless alteration. Mr. Abraham may be said to be virtuous by 10am that acted, only for the same Mr. Michael to be vicious at 12noon because of man's instability. It becomes a problem to determine the degree of one's virtue and the proper ascription of virtue to an individual. The historical process is a sequence of changes. It is beyond the power of man to stop it and to bring about an age of stability in which all history comes to a standstill. It is man's nature to strive after improvement, to beget new ideas, and to rearrange the conditions of his life according to these ideas. Murdoch and MacIntyre are interested in contemporary moral philosophy, but they both find that a sound way to understand its characteristics is to analyze the historical periods that have led to the present moment. At the beginning of *The Sovereignty of Good (SG)*, Murdoch writes:

I wish in this discussion to attempt a movement of return, a retracing of our steps to see how a certain position was reached. The position in question, in current moral philosophy, is one which seems to me unsatisfactory (...)<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 2.



Our task is that of identifying and describing the lost morality of the past and of evaluating its claims to objectivity and authority; this is a task partly historical and partly philosophical.<sup>178</sup> It will help us as well to judge its suitability for contemporary man or are there some to be dropped and new ones inculcated.

Moral philosophy is concerned with practical issues. Fundamentally it is about how we should act. Virtue ethics has criticized consequentialist and deontological theories for being too rigid and inflexible because they rely on one rule or principle. One reply to this is that these theories are action guiding. A virtuous person is a person who acts virtuously. A person acts virtuously if they "possess and live the virtues". A virtue is a moral characteristic that a person needs to live well. Lack of virtue in the world today has contributed to the high level of immorality and vices in our society. Virtue is universal and highly recognized by all cultures and traditions of the world. However, irrespective of the recognition of virtue by all the cultures of the world, vices, immorality and indecency still exist in our society today.<sup>179</sup>

In the present day modern society, virtues have slowly begun to lose their importance. The high level of indecency and immorality is indeed a major issue that needs to be addressed urgently. The question here is why is virtue important? Virtues are important because they are the basic qualities necessary for our well-being and happiness. By recognizing the importance of virtues, in our lives, it will lead to better communication, understanding and acceptance between us and our fellow man. Furthermore, the importance of virtue was further elaborated by Chinese philosopher Confucius through the formulation of the five constant virtues. One of the five constant virtues identified by Confucius is Li (prosperity, loyalty, filial piety, chastity, respect). Li is a form of virtue I have experienced and practiced while growing up in Nigeria.<sup>180</sup> In my culture, virtues are one of the characteristics that earn a servant the respect he or she deserves. It is a journey of self-discovery which enables one to discover his or her strength of character to enhance self-mastery in the formation of moral character.

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<sup>178</sup> Macintyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, p. 22.

<sup>179</sup> Lao Tzu. Translation by Byrne, P., M. *The Way of Virtue*. New York: Square One Publisher, 2002, p. 89.

<sup>180</sup> Zainab Alkali, *The Virtuous Woman*. Nigeria: Longman Press, 1987, pp. 4-7.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE'S ACTION THEORY AND VIRTUE ETHICS

#### 2.1 Elizabeth Anscombe's philosophical biography

The devout Catholic bomber secures by a “direction of intention” that any shedding of innocent blood that occurs is “accidental.” I know a Catholic boy who was puzzled at being told by his schoolmaster that it was an accident that the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were there to be killed; in fact, however absurd it seems, such thoughts are common among priests who know that they are forbidden by the divine law to justify the direct killing of the innocent.<sup>181</sup>

G.E.M. Anscombe was born in Limerick, Ireland, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 1919 to Allen Wells and Gertrude Elizabeth Anscombe. Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe was one of the most gifted philosophers of the twentieth century.<sup>182</sup> Her work continues to strongly influence philosophers working in action theory, moral philosophy and psychology. Like the work of her friend Ludwig Wittgenstein, Anscombe's work is marked by a keen analytic sensibility.<sup>183</sup>

On the subject of virtue ethics, Anscombe expressed her disappointment on the decline in Aristotelian concept of virtue by modern philosophers; which led them in a different direction, they went on to develop theories, not of virtue, but of rightness and obligation.<sup>184</sup> The theories that dominated philosophical thought brought about the question whether we

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<sup>181</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe “War and Murder,” in *Nuclear Weapons: a Catholic Response*, Walter Stein (ed.), London: Merlin, 1961, p. 59.

<sup>182</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe was among the contemporaries of Philippa Foot and Iris Murdoch. Her legacy is one of the broadest and deepest left by a 20th century philosopher. The books that made Anscombe's name and academic career, notably her edition and translation of Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* as *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953) and her monograph *Intention* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957, 2nd ed. 1963; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) remain fully accessible. The three volumes of *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G.E.M. Anscombe* she published in 1981 (Oxford: Blackwell; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) are scarce in bookshops though available from Blackwell on demand; four of the papers in vol. 3, *Ethics, Religion and Politics*, have been reprinted by Geach and Gormally, one in *HJAE* (the 2005 volume) and three in *FHG* (the 2008 volume). For Anscombe's other books and papers, see L. Gormally, C. Kietzmann, & J.M. Torralba, *Bibliography of Works by G.E.M. Anscombe*.

<sup>183</sup> *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe. First published Tue Jul 21, 2009; substantive revision Thu Feb 8, 2018, p.1.

<sup>184</sup> James Rachels: *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Seventh Edition, ed. by Stuart Rachels. McGraw-Hill, a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Americas, New York, 2012, p. 157.

should return to virtue ethics? Recently, however, a number of philosophers have advanced a radical idea. Moral philosophy, they say, is bankrupt, and we should return to Aristotle's way of thinking. This was suggested by Elizabeth Anscombe in her article "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958).

## 2.2 Anscombe's Three Theses

Anscombean "Modern Moral Philosophy" contains three theses which have been frequently, and often misleadingly read, or misinterpreted. Here are the three theses as she postulated them and which shall guide us as we synthesize her classical work on philosophy of action:

- (1) "It is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy; that should be laid aside at any rate until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology, in which we are conspicuously lacking";
- (2) "The concepts of obligation, and duty — *moral* obligation and *moral* duty, that is to say — and of what is *morally* right and wrong, and the *moral* sense of 'ought' ought to be jettisoned if this is psychologically possible, because they are survivals, or derivatives from survivals of an earlier conception of ethics which no longer generally survives, and are only harmful without it" and
- (3) "The differences between the well-known English writers on moral philosophy from Sidgwick to the present day are of little importance."<sup>185</sup>

These three theses have generated many problems among scholars and have allowed a good number of people with variable interest, being discussed in a great variety of ways. Anscombe's article "Modern Moral Philosophy" (MMP) stimulated the development of virtue ethics as an alternative to Utilitarianism, Kantian Ethics, and Social Contract theories. Her primary charge in the article is that, as secular approaches to moral theory, they are without foundation.<sup>186</sup> They use concepts such as 'morally ought,' 'morally obligated,' 'morally right,' and so forth that are legalistic and require a legislator as the source of moral authority. In the past God occupied that role, but systems that dispense with God as part of the theory are lacking the proper foundation for meaningful employment of those concepts. At first, we shall give an

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<sup>185</sup> Anscombe, G. E. M., "Modern Moral Philosophy," in *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe Volume III: Ethics, Religion and Politics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1981, P. 171.

<sup>186</sup> PEDRO FERRÃO DA COSTA, *Anscombe Under A Description*, Lisbon, University of Lisbon Library, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2016, p. 26. <https://www.repositorio.ul.pt>. Accessed on 03/04/2020.

analysis of these three theses beginning from the second, and the third for proper understanding of her request for philosophy of psychology in the first theses and then occupy ourselves as well with the two problems that arise from having in mind MMP together with other Anscombean matters: the fact that she continued to write, and with profusion, on so-called ‘first-order’ ethics and difficult topics we have to attribute to her Catholicism.

It is natural for one to find oneself quite at a loss as to what is the point of MMP. Anscombe begins by saying she has *three* theses to present, but, since what we have is *one* essay, it becomes immediately problematic to understand what sort of relation, what sort of nexus, if any, holds the three theses together. Does the essay have three points corresponding to the three claims above or does it have *a* point? If the latter, is it distinct from the three theses advanced, though resulting from them? Or is it the case that one of them takes pride of place? Roger Crisp takes this line and identifies the second thesis as the main one<sup>187</sup>, but he does not give his reasons for it. In fact, he contradicts himself, since very shortly after he asserts that “the conceptual claim”, as he calls it (2), “is meant to provide some support for the profitability claim”, as he calls it (1), thus making this last the main thesis.

Anscombe has a dual point to make: first, she wants to say that modern moral philosophy is inadequate; after that, to show how to put it on the right track. Modern moral philosophy is inadequate in two respects: first, in that it makes use of obsolete concepts, “the concepts of obligation, and duty — *moral* obligation and *moral* duty, that is to say — and of what is *morally* right and wrong, and of the *moral* sense of ‘ought’<sup>188</sup>, that being the case because such concepts are relics, as it were, from an understanding of morality as being a set of laws promulgated by a divine legislator; and secondly, in that it accepts the punishment of the innocent, which is why “the differences between the well-known English writers on moral philosophy” are indifferent. Though Anscombe argues extensively to prove the similarity between English philosophers after Butler, she does not seem do so in what regards the rejection of the thesis which unites them. This fact, especially if coupled with her famous remark that, did anyone try to discuss it with her, she would “not want to argue with him; he shows a corrupt mind”<sup>189</sup>, may lead to the hasty judgment that she has no arguments to propose in favor of her position. It is certainly true that Anscombe thought that the punishment of the innocent was forbidden, and thus that it could not be called into question without thereby be

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<sup>187</sup> Roger Crisp, “Does Modern Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?” in *Modern Moral Philosophy*, Anthony O’Hare (ed.): Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 75.

<sup>188</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p. 171.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191.

speaking corruption, but it is possible to show why it is a mark of corruption to call it into question, as she did when debunking consequentialism.<sup>190</sup>

We can now see how these two points can be said to provide support for the thesis that we cannot do moral philosophy until we have achieved some clarity on the psychological concepts it employs. We need to get rid of the wrong conclusions we are getting, that is, that the punishment of the innocent is justifiable. This conclusion has been drawn for two reasons: first, because consequentialism is the respectable view both among scholars and in society at large; second, because the concepts we are employing are useless, and have become harmful due to our insistence to use them: they will not only not bar that conclusion but have as a matter of fact lead to it. So, we must get rid of them. In getting rid of them our tools for the advancement of ethics, if there is such a science, are stolen from us. We need, therefore, new ones, which we will have when we have mastered those the philosophy of psychology or, more generally, the philosophy of mind, can give us. When the task of *learning* to use these tools, since we already have them, is finished, then ethics can begin. This is, actually, the standard reading of the essay.

But take the following problem: given that Anscombe went so far as to bluntly recommend that until we have a good grasp of psychological concepts we should be “*banishing ethics totally from our minds*”<sup>191</sup>, is it not a bit odd that she went on thinking and writing with relative profusion on ethical topics? This has indeed been a cause for distrust, as Duncan Richter shows when he remarks that perhaps Anscombe was “being purely ironical” in suggesting that we should brush ethics aside, because in the absence of ethics everything is permitted.<sup>192</sup> Further, how are we to make use of our knowledge that Anscombe was a Roman Catholic? This is not a characteristic to deal with lightly, let alone to ignore. To deal with it lightly means, e.g., to say that “many of her writings *reflected* her moral and religious stance”, a description which was also used by Richter, though, as a professional and respectable philosopher, he ought to have noticed that the verb ‘to reflect’ in such contexts is usually a black box. Serious consideration of Anscombe’s Catholicism, on the other hand, will reward us with the added difficulty that, *since* Anscombe *was* a theist, she must *surely* have wished to have God in the picture, following Dostoyevsky’s Ivan Karamazov, it is true, though, that if God does not exist then nothing is forbidden in the traditional sense of ‘forbidden’.<sup>193</sup> Having

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

<sup>191</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p. 188

<sup>192</sup> Duncan John Richter, *Ethics After Anscombe: Post Modern Moral Philosophy*, Springer Science and Business Media, Volume 5, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>193</sup> Richter, p. ix.

God in the picture, though, is to bring back to life that “earlier conception of ethics” of which she writes. But does not that make the point about the adequate understanding of psychological concepts irrelevant? Because in that case they won’t even be needed! What we need is not to jettison the concepts of moral-obligation, but rather to recover the framework in which their use makes sense.

What, then, is Anscombe’s point? Does she want to put all obligation concepts aside? If she does not, then what are we to do with her two first theses? They seem to be ridden with incoherence. We may not be getting it right, let us join Richter in accusing Anscombe of irony as a way out. The only reason to consider it would be the difficulty to get the point otherwise, and that is of course no reason. And it would be sheer childishness to hold it just for the sake of being original. I think Richter was putting us on. Besides, we do have good and trustful testimony that Anscombe meant what she said, for her husband, Peter Geach, said she “thought that a theory of ethics without a theory of mind was bound to be bogus”.<sup>194</sup> We are thus left in a state of confusion. Though, on the one hand, it looks right to think of (2) and (3) as steps towards (1), and so to think of (1) as all-important, on the other hand it also appears to be incoherent because Anscombe did write on ethics after having said that it should be banished; and also in that Anscombe, as a Catholic, was certainly a believer in divine law, and thus in the framework which makes appropriate the use of concepts of moral obligation, acceptance of which throws psychology overboard, and rejection of which breeds, again, incoherence. We are in a conundrum. We must, it seems, charge Anscombe twice with incoherence. To acquit her of the first charge we will have to look at her essays on morals, so let us first acquit her of the second.

**On the second theses**, Anscombe has called us, to use Bernard Williams’ distinction<sup>195</sup>, to drop thin concepts like ‘ought’ or ‘wrong’ in favour of thick concepts like ‘justice’ or ‘greed’. Her reason for this is that ‘ought’ ‘and ‘wrong’ are tied to a legalistic view of ethics, that is, a view according to which there are moral laws. This, if it is to make sense, entails the belief in someone with “superior power”<sup>196</sup>, a legislator with full responsibility for the promulgation of those laws. Since this conception has been largely abandoned, the concept of a moral law, and thus of moral obligations expressed by ought-sentences, is meaningless.

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, London and New York, Routledge, 1985, pp. 140-142, 150-152.

<sup>196</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p. 171.

The concepts of obligation, and duty-moral obligation and moral duty, that is to say- and of what is morally right and wrong, and of the moral sense of “ought”, ought to be if this is psychologically possible; because they are survivals, or derivatives from survivals, from an earlier conception of ethics which no longer generally survives, and are only harmful without it.<sup>197</sup>

Independently of the validity of Anscombe’s historical claims, it is important for my purposes that she believed this to have happened because “between Aristotle and us came Christianity, with its *law* conception of ethics”<sup>198</sup>. To have a law conception of ethics is “to hold that what is needed for conformity with the virtues failure in which is the mark of being bad *qua* man (...) is required by divine law”, and to believe this to be true is to “believe in God as a law-giver”<sup>199</sup>. One who does not satisfy this requirement and still wants to go on using ‘ought’ and its relatives can then be said to be, like Cratylus’ imagined interlocutor, merely making noises. We must, then, give up such concepts if we are to remain rational. The charge of incoherence comes precisely from the fact that Anscombe is someone who believes in God as a law-giver. She might believe in God while rejecting the characterization ‘as a law-giver’ but, being a Roman Catholic, she is required by the decree on justification of the Council of Trent to believe in Christ *qua* legislator. It follows that she meets the criterion for good use of the concept of moral obligation. But she says they must be jettisoned. How is this not incoherent?

One might try to solve the problem by saying that Anscombe is giving us two options: either you believe in divine law and embrace moral obligation concepts or you do not believe in divine law and you must reject them. Since it is easy to move from Anscombe’s defence of the necessity of recurring to the *philosophy* of psychology to the necessity of recurring to the *science* of psychology, it can be tempting to imagine a kind of compatibility to hold between a moral philosophy having that science as its foundation and a moral philosophy founded on divine law, such that these would be independent from each other but equally expedient. There might then be two kinds of people out there, those who describe, blame and praise actions by appeal to moral laws as promulgated by the Divine command; and those who do not believe in such laws but instead describe, blame and praise actions in terms of generic concepts, like ‘honesty’ or ‘cowardice’, tied down to an account of human nature and flourishing which is a matter of interest for psychology. The degree to which two members of each class could then agree would be a matter of contingency: they would agree, though for different reasons, in some matters, disagree in others, and on some occasions would perhaps be both right.

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

Discussion of moral problems would be possible only to a certain, circumstance-dependent, degree, that is, until conceptual schemes, as it were, are so different that conversation becomes impossible. This would be a wrong account, and for two reasons: first, because it would make a moral relativist of Anscombe, which is a blatant mistake; and second, because Anscombe did not think it possible that ethics could be independent from religious belief, as she remarks in the sixth of twenty opinions she lists as inimical to Christianity: “Ethics is ‘autonomous’ and is to be derived, if from anything, from rationality. Ethical considerations will be the same for any rational being.

At the outset it should be made clear that Anscombe does not want to get rid of words such as ‘ought’ or ‘should’ all together. Her objection is only to a certain use of these words, a use in what she calls “a special “moral” sense.”<sup>200</sup> In fact she says explicitly that the terms ‘should’, ‘needs’, ‘ought’ and ‘must’, in the ordinary sense, are “quite indispensable,” and it is no accident that Anscombe says: “the moral sense of ‘ought’ ought to be jettisoned,” thus making clear the fact that she has no opposition to the word or concept ‘ought’ itself in the ordinary sense.

What is the ordinary sense of such words as ‘ought’, ‘must’ and so on? They have to do with good and bad. The examples that Anscombe gives are of certain machinery needing oil in order to run well and of a flower needing a certain environment -light, water, good soil, and so on - in order to flourish. Of course, one might also, like Aristotle, have a conception of human flourishing and what is needed for that, although in this case what is needed is not so easy to specify. If, in saying that one ought (or is obliged, needs or has) to oil this tractor, water that plant or tend to that woman one means that without such action it will be bad for one or for the tractor, plant or injured woman, then Anscombe has no objection to such a way of speaking. What else might one mean? Perhaps that behaving in such a way is required by divine law. I will say more about this below. The objectionable “so-called “moral” sense”<sup>201</sup> is one in which a verdict is implied on the action in question without the support of a conceptual framework (involving a law, a judge, and so forth) to make the notion of such a verdict coherent. Anscombe offers an historical hypothesis which has been much developed by Alasdair MacIntyre, most notably in his book *After Virtue*,<sup>202</sup> to explain how such a use of moral modals came about, but this need not concern us immediately. The important point is that in cases where the word ‘ought’ is used to imply an absolute verdict it has become “a word

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<sup>200</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p.29.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. p.29.

<sup>202</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1984, p. 121.



of mere mesmeric force,”<sup>203</sup> “a word retaining the suggestion of force, and apt to have a strong psychological effect, but which no longer signifies a real concept at all.”

That is what Anscombe objects to, the implication in ethics or moral philosophy -- I will use the terms interchangeably -- of an absolute verdict in circumstances where the idea of such a verdict makes no sense. It would be helpful to look at what she does not object to. The idea of a verdict on an action or practice does make sense when there is a law, a law-giver, and so on. Anscombe does not accuse those with a law conception of ethics of incoherence in their moral judgments. It would be reasonable, though, to ask what is required in order to count as having such a conception. This is what Anscombe says:

To have a law conception is to hold that what is needed for conformity with the virtues failure in which is the mark of being bad qua man (and not merely, say, qua craftsman or logician) - that what is needed for this, is required by divine law. Naturally it is not possible to have such a conception unless you believe in God as a law-giver; like Jews, Stoics, and Christians.<sup>204</sup>

Anscombe clearly says that to have a law conception of ethics is not necessarily to believe in divine law. Indeed Anscombe talks later in her paper about “the possibility of retaining a law conception [of ethics] without a divine legislator.”<sup>205</sup> The search for such a conception has, she says, some interest in it. It would have no interest in it, clearly, if it were incoherent. One might wonder, though, what candidates there might be for moral legislator other than God or the Stoic logos. Could one, perhaps, impose a moral law on oneself? Anscombe rejects this idea as an absurdity. Where the citizen, legislator, judge, and jury are one there can be no genuinely binding legislation.

An obligation to oneself, like a debt to oneself, can only ever be figurative, not literal. However, the idea of taking social norms as providing moral laws is not, according to Anscombe, incoherent: it is merely something by which, she thinks, one cannot be impressed. Nor does she condemn as meaningless the idea of looking to the universe for legislation. One might believe in a non-divine, natural moral law. Unfortunately, like a moral law derived from social norms, a nature-based ethics is unlikely to lead to good results in the present day, Anscombe says. She is surely right about this. We are all too familiar with the social and natural evils of racism, disease, starvation, and so on to be likely to want to base our morality on either society or nature. It is worth noting, nevertheless, that Anscombe does accept the logical possibility of a law conception of ethics based on society or nature, rather than God.

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<sup>203</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p.32.

<sup>204</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p. 30.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

A divine, or other, law conception of ethics could, then, provide the necessary framework for a coherent use of ‘ought’, ‘should’, ‘wrong’ and ‘obligation’, according to Anscombe. Thus Alan Donagan is wrong to say that:

it was a mistake for Professor Anscombe to contend that morality can intelligibly be treated as a system of law only by presupposing a divine lawgiver. Her inference was also mistaken that, if those who deny the existence of a divine lawgiver choose to discuss ethical topics, they should follow Aristotle’s example, and do it by way of a theory of the virtues.<sup>206</sup>

Anscombe simply does not make the contention attributed to her. Nor does she make the inference about a theory of the virtues that Donagan refers to. It is possible, though, as Anscombe points out, to think about ethics without such terms as ‘ought’ and ‘obligation’, just as so-called virtue theorists do. Aristotle, for instance, had no term meaning wrong or illicit in any ‘absolute’ or ‘moral’ sense. The extension of this term (i.e. the range of its application) could be indicated in his terminology only by a quite lengthy sentence: that is ‘illicit’ which, whether it is a thought or a consented-to-passion or an action or an omission in thought or action, is something contrary to the virtues the lack of which shows a man to be bad qua man.<sup>207</sup>

This gap in Aristotle’s vocabulary did not set him back in any way. In fact Anscombe suggests that we would do well to become ‘Aristotelian’ in this sense. It would be a great improvement if, instead of ‘morally wrong’, one always named a genus such as ‘untruthful’, ‘unchaste’, ‘unjust’. We should no longer ask whether doing something was ‘wrong’, passing directly from some description of an action to this notion; we should ask whether, e.g. it was unjust; and the answer would sometimes be clear at once. That it is possible for us to do this implies that we sometimes mean ‘untruthful’, ‘unchaste’ or ‘unjust’ when we say ‘wrong’. If we mean something of this kind then we are not speaking in a meaningless way, we are simply being imprecise. This again brings out the fact that Anscombe is not condemning all uses of the words ‘wrong’ or ‘ought’.

It might be worth pointing out here that being Aristotelian in this sense is not incompatible with holding a law conception of ethics. Anscombe herself is an obvious example of someone who favors such a conjunction, and St. Thomas Aquinas provides a better-known combination of Christian divine law and straightforwardly Aristotelian ethics.

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<sup>206</sup> Donagan, Alan, *The Theory of Morality*: The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1977, p.3.

<sup>207</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p. 30

From another perspective, Sabina Lovibond's recommended approach to moral philosophy, as presented in her book *Realism and Imagination in Ethics*.<sup>208</sup> Lovibond wants to represent moral discourse as being "embedded" in the natural world, the real world, the world with which science deals.<sup>209</sup> Taking reality to be what we talk about, and what we talk about to be reality, Lovibond claims that all propositions (everything that is said, thought or written that is about something or other), no matter how evaluative, subjective or expressive they may be, are descriptive. She also says that all descriptive propositions (in other words all propositions) are expressive, although the expressive content of many propositions is at least very close to zero. Whereas Lovibond seems to believe that the making of a moral judgment depends simply on recognizing the facts, Renford Bambrough speaks of moral enquiry and recommends not just looking but thinking and debating, or, as he puts it, collaborative reflection.<sup>210</sup>

**On the third theses,** the English moral philosophers from Sidgwick onward are all the same at least to Anscombe, because they all deny or disregard a thesis central to the Judaeo-Christian ethics: the thesis of moral absolutes, the thesis that some action-types are forbidden as such. As it happened with the second thesis of MMP, the difficulties in understanding the first one bring us back to Anscombe's complaint against modern moral philosophy, the belief in the possibility of justifying the condemnation of the innocent, which is a natural outcome, that being the point of the essay. From her radio talk "Does Oxford Moral Philosophy Corrupt the Youth?" she offers an argument against the accusation that the moral philosophy dominant in Oxford in the 1950s "corrupts the youth."

In a characteristically polemical style, however, Anscombe's argument is not to be taken as a defense of her Oxford contemporaries. The talk is tightly packed with sarcasm, vitriol, and side-swipes against the current trends dominating moral philosophy in the English-speaking world, particularly philosophy closely connected with linguistic analysis.<sup>211</sup> Anscombe's central argument in this talk is that Oxford moral philosophy cannot corrupt the youth, because this philosophy is "perfectly in tune with the highest and best ideals of the country at large".<sup>212</sup> It is evident; however, that Anscombe does not think that this is a good thing. Philosophy should not aim to be "perfectly" in line with the status quo, it should

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<sup>208</sup> Sabina Lovibond, *Realism and Imagination in Ethics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1983, pp. 18-23.

<sup>209</sup> Lovibond, p.25

<sup>210</sup> Bambrough, Renford *Moral Scepticism and Moral Knowledge*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Henley 1979, P. 88.

<sup>211</sup> Anscombe 1957, p. 266.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. p. 267.

challenge and bring into question our existing ideals, prejudices, and conventions. Instead, Oxford philosophy is a philosophy fitted precisely to the “flattery” of the “spirit of the time”.<sup>213</sup>

For Anscombe, the problem is clearly that Oxford is not corrupting *enough*. This line of argument runs in contrast with Anscombe’s infamous reference to corruption in her essay “Modern Moral Philosophy.” Here she claims that if someone really thinks that it’s open to question whether we should execute the innocent, “they should be quite excluded from consideration” because “they show a corrupt mind”.<sup>214</sup> Take for example the species reasoning offered for the proponents of the decriminalization of the murder of preborn human life in abortion. Clearly the proponents of the condemnation of innocent human life is reflective of someone having a deformed conscience and a corrupt understanding of what constitutes human freedom and responsibility or good. Here, someone having a corrupt mind is clearly a bad thing, and is even a reason for excluding these persons from debate on moral issues and philosophical discussion and public service of the nation as Supreme Court judges, senators, president, etc. This was the case accepted norm with the Hippocratic Oath that doctors had to swear to before being permitted to practice medicine.

In her “Modern Moral Philosophy” Anscombe seems to say that when we are doing philosophy, philosophers who espouse certain beliefs or attitudes need to be simply “excluded from consideration” from the offset. Importantly, moreover, she is not just saying that certain *beliefs* should not be taken seriously; she is also saying that the *person* who espouses these views should be excluded from consideration. Her tone here is overtly moralistic — it is not just that certain opinions are too irrelevant or ridiculous to be given a real hearing, but rather that they are a sign that something is wrong with the person who sincerely voices them. On the face of it, this attitude seems problematic — flat out refusing to engage with certain persons because they believe something radically different to us can be a swift route to dogmatism. It also seems radically at odds with Anscombe’s approach to philosophy in general, since she frequently argues against thinkers whose ideas she takes to be corrupting and morally abhorrent.

What are essays like “Mr Truman’s Degree” and “Does Oxford Moral Philosophy Corrupt the Youth?” if not attempts to argue against views that Anscombe considers corrupt? And she is very clear that she considers the views discussed in these essays to be corrupt ones. Added to these are essays which, while not setting their sights directly against views which

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid. p. 271.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. 1958b, p. 14.

Anscombe explicitly calls corrupt, do spend considerable time dwelling on views which Anscombe elsewhere calls corruption. In “The Influence of Pacifism,” for example, she again attacks the wartime conduct of the Allies, the bombing of civilian targets and the policy of seeking “unconditional surrender.” Her special target is people who, admitting that war is an evil, argue that nevertheless once one is engaging in war one might as well try to win by any means possible, even up to the *dehousing* attacks, Dresden, and Hiroshima: “seeing no way of avoiding ‘wickedness’, they set no limits to it.”<sup>215</sup> Anscombe compares this to a merchant who defends his cheating with the argument that “If then one must ‘compromise with evil’ by owning property and engaging in trade, then the amount of swindling one does will depend on convenience.”<sup>216</sup> Similarly, in “Knowledge and Reverence for Human Life” she pauses to consider defenders of abortion who “invent reasons, which sound like ones belonging to a very special religious position, why someone objects to abortion,” for example that objectors “think there is a soul”.<sup>217</sup> In fact, says Anscombe, the objection is simply that “what was inside a pregnant woman was a small human being” just as “what was inside a pregnant mare was a little horse, or what was inside a pregnant cat was a little kitten”<sup>218</sup> and therefore it is a case of killing an innocent human being.

In these examples, it seems that people without virtue truth notion are precisely those that she wants to bring into the conversation, and look at with philosophical scrutiny. This gives us some reason to think that when Anscombe says we should exclude certain persons from consideration when we do moral philosophy, she does not mean that we should simply ignore them. However, Anscombe does not try seriously to set out and challenge such positions by argument. Her responses are more like attempts to expose or draw attention to a gap or contradiction in their reasoning.

In “The Influence of Pacifism”, the interlocutor’s pointing out that, whether you firebomb Dresden or not, you are still falling short of the real ideal of Christian peacefulness is not so much an argument for firebombing as a way of obscuring or glossing over the fact that, even in the context of war, it is possible to pursue better and worse policies — indeed, for Anscombe

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<sup>215</sup> Walter Stein, ed., *Nuclear Weapons: A Catholic Response*. London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968, p. 49. Pacifism and the respect for pacifism is not the only thing that has led to a universal forgetfulness of the law against killing the innocent; but it has had a share in it. Now pacifism teaches people to make no distinction between the shedding of innocent blood and the shedding of any human blood. And in this way pacifism has corrupted enormous numbers of people who will not act according to its tenets.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

<sup>217</sup> Mary Geach and Luke Gormally Luke, eds., *Human Life, Action and Ethics: Essays by G. E. M. Anscombe*. Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic, 2005, p. 65.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66.

the difference in a case like Dresden comes to one of being guilty or not guilty of a mass murder.

Likewise, in “Knowledge and Reverence for Human Life” the “*aparaczyk*” who brings up the argument about souls, which he does not believe in, as a way of dismissing objectors to abortion is not presenting a serious argument but deflecting from what Anscombe considers the real issue: that an unborn human is a human, whom, in another context, we have no difficulty in understanding why a nurse might “earnestly try to save”.<sup>219</sup>

This strategy of showing the reader what is missing or misfiring, rather than arguing systematically, is perhaps even clearer when we look to how Anscombe treats academic philosophers, particularly Hume. Anscombe describes Hume as a “mere — brilliant — sophist”,<sup>220</sup> and despite her evidently low opinion of him Anscombe frequently uses Hume to elucidate her own non-empiricist commitments.

In “On Brute Facts”, for example, she challenges Hume’s account of the fact/value distinction, but at no point does she attempt to give Hume a serious, charitable reading, or to answer any objections that a Humean might have to her line of argument. The paper runs only four pages.

Similarly in “Knowledge and Reverence for Human Life”, she attributes to Hume the claim that “all truth is ‘indifferent’” and attacks this without giving a serious presentation of *why* Hume thinks this in the first place.<sup>221</sup>

In these papers, Anscombe sketches out the problem which she thinks is highlighted by Hume’s “sophistical” argumentation, and offers alternative pictures which allow us to account for what she sees as the shortcomings of his empiricism. Anscombe is not interested in hearing Hume out and seeing if he’s right, but in exposing his ideas as sophistry. Neither of these papers would convince a reader committed to Hume’s position, and they’re clearly not intended to. So, it seems that Anscombe’s decision to “exclude from consideration” views which she considers corrupt should not be taken as an outright refusal to engage with such views. Still, this leaves open the question of why she does not choose to straightforwardly argue against Hume, or other *corrupt minds*. We can get some further insight into why Anscombe does this by turning to her understanding of truth.

Why do the modern moralists all, or so many of them, reject moral absolutes? Because they all are, in Anscombe’s sense of the term MMP, *consequentialists*: by which she means

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>220</sup> Anscombe 1958b, p. 3.

<sup>221</sup> Geach and Gormally 2005, p.59.

that they all follow Sidgwick in believing that there is “no distinction between foreseen and intended consequences, as far as responsibility is concerned”.<sup>222</sup> This view about the wide scope of responsibility is what *Anscombe* primarily means by “consequentialism”. The word has since standardly been given a rather different sense, to mean “someone who holds that any action is right if it produces the best consequences.” Anscombe rightly thinks, that *this* consequentialism follows very naturally from Anscombe-consequentialism. She perhaps also thinks, wrongly, that standard consequentialism is actually entailed by Anscombe-consequentialism, though the evidence on this question is equivocal: “once [someone] has started to look at the matter in this light [viz., the light of Sidgwick’s view about responsibility], the only reasonable thing for him to consider will be the consequences and not the intrinsic badness of this or that action”.

Well, certainly Anscombe is, I think, accurately tracking how the dialectic actually developed between Sidgwick and Moore; and certainly standard consequentialism is *one* reasonable direction for someone to go, starting from Anscombe-consequentialism, in developing a view about the moral assessment of possible actions. But there are others. In particular, here is one way to hold that there is “no distinction between foreseen and intended consequences, so far as responsibility is concerned” *without* assessing actions as the consequentialist does, only with respect to their consequences: you might think that both intended and merely foreseen consequences matter morally to the same degree, N, but that N is rather low, and that there is some other consideration that where present always trumps consequences of either kind. N might even be *zero* though the resulting view of the moral assessment of possible actions is a pretty crazy one. The trumping consideration might even be the intrinsic goodness or badness of the actions proposed and it is not obvious this time that the resulting view is crazy at all. So Anscombe-consequentialism does not entail standard consequentialism; though the move from one to the other is natural, and Anscombe is surely right that it was in fact made.

For Anscombe-consequentialists (says Anscombe), if someone is given a choice between doing something disgraceful and being imprisoned with the side-effect that it will then be impossible for him to look after his children, then since this latter consequence is just as much his responsibility as any other, he has to take it just as much into account as any other.

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<sup>222</sup> Perhaps Sidgwick is merely following a path already sketched out by John Stuart Mill. Certainly *Utilitarianism* espouses what we now call rule utilitarianism rather than act, but on the other hand the *System of Logic* (Bk.3, Ch.5) defends a universal view of causation that, at the very least, goes naturally with a universal view of responsibility. “[C]auses of all descriptions [prevent] the effects of other causes by virtue (for the most part) of the same laws according to which they produce their own. I owe credit of this note to Sophie Grace.

For her, there are some actions that do not require deliberation, it takes only a corrupt mind to engage in them. She thinks that it “shows a corrupt mind” ever to deliberate over certain action-types, such as treachery and murder and apostasy and “sodomy”; we think that someone would be “sick” if he always deliberated over certain action-types. It is because consequentialism has this sort of effect on our practical reasoning, and on our account of practical reasoning, that Anscombe thinks that it deserves polemical denunciation. Her assertion seems coherent.

### 2.3 Anscombe’s Philosophy of Psychology as a Foundation of Virtue Ethics

At present, philosophers are questioning the validity of “Moral Philosophy”. From the Anscombian perspective, it is not profitable for us at present do moral philosophy; that has to be laid aside at any rate until we have an adequate grasp of the philosophy of psychology, which we are greatly in need of.<sup>223</sup> What is she getting at? She clearly wants to call attention to the reasons why there was a movement away from the virtue ethics theory of Aristotle, it is because contemporary man lacks a proper knowledge of human psychological. We can contend that Anscombe’s idea of a ‘the philosophy of psychology’, (which is to be understood as a philosophy of the inner workings of the human mind) cannot be simply identified with that of ‘moral psychology’ with which we are now familiar; that her main claim, namely that actions are analogous to language is convincing; that among the implications there is not only a criticism to consequentialism but also acknowledgement of a central role for judgment, and accordingly not just a total refusal, but instead an unaware rediscovery of Kantian ethics; that her rediscovery of the idea of virtue is promising enough, albeit misunderstood by Anscombe herself when she presents it in terms of coming. She advanced Wittgenstein’s demand for the annihilation of ethics but not without a logical conclusion for a better moral principle, we can understand it better from Wittgenstein’s answer to Russell:

On [one] occasion, when Russell was on his way to give a speech at a congress dedicated to humanitarian goals and Wittgenstein showed his disapproval, Russell asked if he would prefer an organization for war and slavery. Where upon Wittgenstein answered, “By far, by far!”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy* (1958), in G. E. M. Anscombe, *Human Life, Action and Ethics*, edited by M. Geach – L. Gormally, Exeter, Imprint Academic, 2005, pp. 169-194: 169.

<sup>224</sup> Schulte, Joachim. Wittgenstein, translated by William H. Brenner and John F. Holley, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York 1992.p. 5.



Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy leads to the conclusion that ethics, in the sense of moral philosophy, is impossible. However, ethics in the sense of morality, having certain values and facing moral problems, seems to be unavoidable. There is no reason to suppose that Wittgenstein would have encouraged an unthinking response to such problems. Instead, there is good reason to believe that he would have advocated the same kind of response to them that he did to every other problem.

The demand of the first theses is that moral philosophy “should be laid aside at any rate until we have an adequate philosophy of Psychology”.<sup>225</sup> What is far from clear at first sight in the formulation is, first, what is meant specifically for philosophy of psychology and, second, what precisely is meant by the expression “at any rate until”. As for the notion of ‘philosophy of psychology’, it is an expression that Wittgenstein used in a handwritten notebook as the title of a series of notes that were among those that provided a basis for the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>226</sup> What the phrase ‘philosophy of psychology’ could evoke in the reader’s mind in 1958 is not so clear yet, and Anscombe does not seem to give herself much trouble in trying to explain its meaning. What she does explain, at least, is that it amounts to clarifying such concepts as action, intention, pleasure, and will. A proper understanding of the philosophy of psychology leads to the proper understanding of the subject’s answer to the question “why” it should be the starting point and the possibility of moral philosophy. She asserts as well that:

Is it not clear that there are several concepts that need investigating simply as part of the philosophy of psychology and, as I should recommend—banishing *ethics totally* from our minds? Namely—to begin with: "action," "intention," "pleasure," "wanting." More will probably turn up if we start with these. Eventually it might be possible to advance to considering the concept "virtue"; with which, I suppose, we should be beginning some sort of a study of ethics.<sup>227</sup>

The second term Anscombe makes use of in order to indicate the subject or discipline is however “philosophical psychology”<sup>228</sup>, an expression which sounds more neo-Scholastic than Wittgensteinian. Anscombe wants to illustrate the way in which it is impossible to work in moral philosophy or employ notions such as ‘duty’ and ‘ought’, by arguing that if we looked for a basis for ‘rules’ in characteristics of human nature, we could think that, as man has a given number of teeth which is not an average number, but instead a number of teeth for the human

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<sup>225</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p. 169.

<sup>226</sup> These notes were collected in a volume entitled *Remarks on the philosophy of psychology*, edited by Anscombe herself and George von Wright and published in 1980, p. IV.

<sup>227</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p. 188.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid. Intention 1957*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 78.

species, so that the human species has a given set of virtues, and a man fully endowed with this set of virtues is the 'norm'. The drawback in this solution is that "in *this* sense 'norm' has ceased to be roughly equivalent to 'law'"<sup>229</sup>. But an evaluative study of human action, the study of "different concepts that need to be investigated simply as part of the philosophy of psychology", might lead us to consider the concept of 'virtue' and this concept could make normative ethics possible. We might start with the concepts of 'action'; 'intention', 'pleasure', 'will', and more concepts may be turn up if we start with these. Consequently, it might be possible to advance to considering the concept 'virtue'; with which ... we should be beginning some sort of a study of ethics"<sup>230</sup>.

Anscombe goes on to say that the proof that an unjust man is an evil man would require a positive account of justice as a virtue, and we would need to know "what *type of characteristic* a virtue is ... and how it relates to the actions in which it is instanced"<sup>231</sup>, a matter which Aristotle did not succeed in really making clear as he did not succeed in giving us a report at least of what a human action is at all, and how its explication has shown and is affected by its motive and by the intention or intentions in it. The reader might wonder why we need such a proof and the answer he may find is just that in present-day philosophy a vivid explanation is required. What does Anscombe mean? I would say that what she apparently has in mind is that the course of history went from a religious view of morality in terms of law to a secularized view of morality as law; that the former was the view of Christianity, in turn deriving from the Biblical idea of *Tora!*, which was later secularized and thus left without a justification; that Hume deserved praise for bringing to the surface the fact that in modern philosophy moral duty was an unjustified relic.

## 2.4 Anscombe's Intentionality and Practical Knowledge

Moral intent is the desire to act ethically when facing a decision and overcome the rationalization to be unethical in the given instance. Even if a person sees the ethical aspects of a decision and has the philosophical tools to make the right choice, he or she still needs to want to do the right thing. The term 'intentional' relates to a form of description of events in men/animals. Many descriptions of events effected by humans are formally descriptions of executed intentions. What comes here is the elucidation of the notion of practical knowledge

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid. *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p. 188.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid. p. 174.

and an account of 'voluntary' and involuntary actions and the return to expression of intention for the future. Think of something that one of your friends, family or acquaintances did recently that you view as wrong. What rationalizations did they give for their actions? What has been said about intention in present action also applies to future intention. A prediction is an expression of intention when our question 'Why?' applies to it. Consideration of 'I just want to, that's all' in regard to an expression of intention for the future. 'I am not going to-' as an expression of intention, and 'I am going to-' as an expression of belief.<sup>232</sup>

*Intention*, (1957), gave detailed account of the action theory lying behind her reconstruction of what Truman had actually done by signing a sheet of paper.<sup>233</sup> This action theory started with a few of Wittgenstein's ideas and developed them in the direction of a destruction of the traditional Cartesian account of the mind-body relationship and a construction of a model of human action as something quite different from a chain of events in the physical world being in a causal relationship with inner events of the mental world. Intentional actors, or actions performed for reasons, require a sequence of steps or actions and, therefore, a sequence of reasons that explain each action-step. If one writes a letter and has a reason to do it (e.g., greet a friend), she writes it by taking a sheet of paper and a pen and by tracing signs with the pen on the paper. Writing the letter is her reason to trace lines on the sheet and scribbling on the sheet is her reason for taking the sheet from the drawer. This being the case, the question arises, then, of how we can know when the explanation is complete and the agent can stop. Anscombe argues that the justification stops when the agent describes the endpoint of the action with regard to what is desirable or good for itself. The endpoint of the action is, then, a state of affairs, a fact, an object, or an event that the agent appears to consider desirable or good. The state of affairs, fact, object, or event is considered by the agent to be a good sort of thing.<sup>234</sup>

Anscombe's views on agency and acting intentionally may be said that when we want to get a grasp of what action is, we contrast action with mere events, that which befalls us, which is not in any way up to us. The subject of intentionality is viewed from three dimensions:

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid. *Intention*, 1957, p.45-52.

<sup>233</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe, *Mr. Truman's Degree* (1956), in G. E. M. Anscombe, *The Philosophical Papers of G.E.M. Anscombe. III: Ethics, Religion and Politics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1981, pp. 62-71: 66; cf. R. Teichmann, *The Philosophy of Elizabeth Anscombe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 4-5. Her work *Intention* was written against the background of her controversial opposition to the University of Oxford's awarding of an honorary degree to Harry S. Truman, Elizabeth Anscombe's *Intention* laid the groundwork she thought necessary for a proper ethical evaluation of actions like the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

<sup>234</sup> Rodriguez-Blanco, V. Is Practical Knowledge Prior to Theoretical Knowledge in Action? Reflecting on Anscombe's Institutional Transparency.2018, *J Value Inquiry*, Volume 52, pp. 257–267.

expression of intention for the future, intentional action, and intention in acting. But where is it that we find “space” for the bringing about, the being-up-to-us-ness of action? What is it that marks it off from the purposeless happenings in a physical world? Is it consciousness? Let us think of humans and their bodily movements. Let us say we are a film director coming from outer space and landing in the middle of Lisbon. We film humans. There is walking, clashing, shaking, bending, lifting, carrying, jumping, leaping, skipping, pushing — what are those bodies doing? What distinguishes them from robots which lack self-consciousness, although they would go through the very same movements? Maybe we want to say that only consciousness could help us tell them apart from such robots, in the sense that only consciousness gives body movements of humans their meaningfulness. But what exactly do we mean if we say that? Let us consider some important ideas of Anscombe’s on this. First, the very well-known example of Intention:

Let us ask: is there any description which is the description of an intentional action, given that an intentional action occurs? And let us consider a concrete situation. A man is pumping water into the cistern which supplies the drinking water of a house. Someone has found a way of systematically contaminating the source with a deadly cumulative poison whose effects are unnoticeable until they can no longer be cured. The house is regularly inhabited by a small group of party chiefs, with their immediate families, who are in control of a great state; they are engaged in exterminating the Jews and perhaps plan a world war..., the man who contaminated the source has calculated that if these people are destroyed some good men will get into power who will govern well. Now we ask: What is this man doing? What is the description of his action? ... e.g. he is earning wages, he is supporting a family, he is wearing away his shoe-soles, he is making a disturbance of the air. If in fact good government comes about ... because the party chiefs die, then he will have been helping to produce this state of affairs.<sup>235</sup>

In this scenario we have the body movements of a human. Many descriptions of what is happening are possible here. If many descriptions of what is happening are possible here then there is no such thing as the movements of a human body being intentional tout court, i.e. doing something *per se*; there is only being intentional under a particular description. This is precisely what Anscombe wants to say: according to her, for something to be done intentionally, for there to be intentional acting, the agent himself or herself has to be aware of his/her own bodily movements under that description. Imagine that I wash a cloth full of red stains which turns out to be the blood of a murder victim; the cloth would have been precious

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<sup>235</sup> Anscombe: *Intention*, p. 37.

evidence for the police had I not washed it. Did I wash it away intentionally? For there to be intentional acting (acting intentionally) there has to be awareness of body movements under a particular description, and such a description might have been unavailable to me. Also for there to be intentional acting an agent has to be aware, not through observation but as it were from within a body in the world, of the agent's body proper and its doings (I cannot just fall back into my senses and find out that I am washing a cloth full of red stains).

The fact that 'For no particular reason' is a possible answer to the question 'Why?' about an action does not show that this answer always makes sense. But when we speak of it as not making sense, we mean that we cannot understand the man who says it, rather than that 'a form of words is excluded from the language'. The question 'Why?' identified as one expecting an answer in the range we have described, which range we use to define the class of intentional actions.<sup>236</sup>

Only under such circumstances is the agent in the position to answer the Anscombian question, the question 'why?' and thus to give reasons for his/her action (the question 'why?' is the question Anscombe concentrates on in *Intention*). Such inhabiting from within and the power to other reasons are Anscombe's criteria of intentional action.

What is important for us here is that according to Anscombe my own position of practical knowledge regarding myself (my knowing what it is that I am doing when I am doing it, something which in a more cognitive context we would call sense of agency) is continuous with the knowledge without observation I have of my body proper (going back to Evans' example, I know that my legs are crossed without having to look and see — this is the status of what in cognitive terms is proprioception). Yet they are not the same. Such practical knowledge is, from an epistemological viewpoint, different from theoretical knowledge — theoretical knowledge is third person knowledge about me, knowledge others may have of what I am doing by observing me. Yet it is still knowledge of the same object in the world. In fact, we may sometimes happen to find ourselves in the observer's position regarding ourselves (as, in Anscombe's own example, when I suddenly notice my hand tapping out Rule Britannia on the table: it often happens that one arrives as it were too late at one's own behavior). Yet such an observer's stance is not our default stance towards ourselves. Our default stance towards ourselves is not that of an observer. We inhabit our body proper from within, we are it, and usually we do not arrive too late at what we are doing. The asymmetry between practical and

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<sup>236</sup> Anscombe: *Intention*, p. 26.

theoretical knowledge which I am trying to get at, and which is a very important topic of Intention, lies behind another famous section of Intention:

Let us consider a man going around a town with a shopping list in his hand. If the list and what the man actually buys do not agree ... than the mistake is not in the list but in the man's performance (if his wife were to say: 'Look! It says butter and you have bought margarine!' he would hardly reply: What a mistake! We must put that right! And alter the word on the list to 'margarine'.<sup>237</sup>

In practical knowledge of myself, if there is a mistake, if I go wrong, such an error is an error of performance (notice that if there could be no mistake there could be no knowledge — this is a very Wittgensteinian point of Anscombe). That is what makes the situation above funny, or absurd. If, however, a detective is following the man going around town and making a list of what he buys, and if he wrote butter instead of margarine, then that would mark an observation error. That is something completely different from an epistemological point of view. That we have practical knowledge of what we do as we do it means that there is no need to observe ourselves as we act in order to know what we are doing. Still, what takes place as we act takes place in the world; it is not solipsistic fabrication. In particular, what we are doing, what we bring about is observable by others and we may very well be wrong about what we ourselves are doing as we do it. Being accessible without observation and by observation characterizes action (compare this with being named 'I' and 'EA'). As I said, there is place for knowledge here according to Anscombe. There is place for practical knowledge and for self-knowledge. In this picture (in contrast to pictures of self-knowledge where self-knowledge is, say, knowledge of what I am thinking now) self-knowledge is knowledge of the object that one is, of the human animal that one is in the world. In such circumstances, introspection is, as Anscombe puts it, "but one contributory method for self-knowledge"<sup>238</sup>

Anscombe suggests the following thought experiment: Think of e.g. my knowledge of where I was born. I know that I was born in Cedofeita, in Porto, in Portugal I could not have acquired such knowledge by introspection. Yet for Anscombe this counts as a perfectly good piece of self-knowledge, in that it is knowledge of the object in the world that I am. Again, for her the prototypical example of self-knowledge is not knowledge that I am thinking, or that I am seeing red (this would be, to use her term, a "Cartesianly preferred example" of self-knowledge). That I move, or that I was born in Cedofeita, are equally good examples. Anyway back to practical knowledge: I know what I am doing. It is knowledge because there can be

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<sup>237</sup> Anscombe: *Intention*, p. 32.

<sup>238</sup> Anscombe 1975, 34.

mistakes. Yet in the best case, I do what happens. The point is that acting intentionally is not something purely internal, purely mental, it happens in the world, and because of that it is not transparent to me and may very well undergo vicissitudes in execution.

### 2.4.1 Intention and the Good

In *Intention* Anscombe also adds another remark that will provide the basis for her subsequent work in ethics, that of the ‘naturalist’ claim, which asserts that the end of moral action is not in turn an end in itself, or that morality is a tool for producing some ‘human goods’. She writes that: «when a man aims at health or pleasure, then the enquiry ‘What is the good of it?’ is not a sensible one. As for reasons against a man making one of them his principal aim; and whether there are orders of human goods, e.g. whether some are greater than others, and whether if this is so a man need ever prefer the greater to the less, and on pain of what; this question would belong to Ethics, if there is such a science.<sup>239</sup>

In other words, ethics is characterized by terms such as ‘ought’ used with a special meaning, but it “is to be characterized by its subject matter: roughly, human flourishing, or various aspects of human flourishing.”<sup>240</sup> Anscombe’s rescue of the notion of virtue was meant to provide the missing link between meta-ethics and normative ethics, grounding normativity precisely on the idea of ‘norm’, as distinct from the idea of a statistical average, conceived as what is appropriate for mankind. More specifically, there are only two sources of normativity in a strict sense: the legislator’s authority and social custom and how do they intend to produce human good? Since intention is a mental state which the object of doing *A* results in doing it intentionally, or with the further intention of doing the opposite. That of course would unify the modes of intention with which we began. It would, categorically, tell us little about intending itself. This then follows these questions: Does this state involve desire? Belief about what one is doing or what one is going to do? Would there be an evaluative judgment? “Similar questions arise for those who deny that intention is a mental state and explain it as being on the way to intentional action. Must I want to perform an action I am thus embarked upon?”<sup>241</sup> Believe that I am engaged in it? Hold it to be in some way good? To determine good in intention requires moral judgment. And for one to make moral judgments, he must back them up with valid reasons. Although some people rely on feelings and emotions as basis on moral judgment,

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid. *Intention*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>240</sup> Teichmann, *The Philosophy of Elizabeth Anscombe*, p. 103.

<sup>241</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Intention*, First published Mon Aug 31, 2009; substantive revision Mon Aug 13, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/intention>. Accessed on 04/04/2020.

such is not acceptable, because emotions or feelings are usually biased, irrational or are just products of one's prejudice, and social and cultural conditioning. If one wants to discover the truth, he must try to let his feelings and emotions be guided by reason. It is this search for moral wisdom that has led moral philosophers to investigate and study different topics and issues on morality.<sup>242</sup>

For a better understanding, I shall first say a word to avoid possible misunderstandings. It may be objected that such a term as "practical judgment" is misleading; that the term "practical judgment" is a misnomer, and a dangerous one, since all judgments by their very nature are intellectual or theoretical. Consequently, there is a danger that the term will lead us to treat as judgment and knowledge something which is not really knowledge at all and thus start us on the road which ends in mysticism or obscurantism. All this is admitted.<sup>243</sup>

Intending is thus a 'pro-attitude' of some kind - assuming, for simplicity, that intention is a mental state. In his later work, Davidson specified this pro-attitude as 'an all-out, unconditional judgment that the action is desirable'.<sup>244</sup> He made two further refinements. First, when one is doing *A* intentionally, 'at least when the action is of a brief duration, nothing seems to stand in the way of an Aristotelian identification of the action with [all-out evaluative judgment]'.<sup>245</sup> Second, one counts as intending an action only if one's beliefs are consistent with his performing it; one cannot intend to do what one believes to be impossible.<sup>246</sup>

In an influential critique, Bratman, objects that choice is possible even when one knows that neither option is more desirable than the other. He says that one can decide between options that are equivalent or on a par. If an unconditional judgment presents its object as more desirable than any alternative, Davidson's theory wrongly prohibits such choice. If the judgment is merely that a given action is no less desirable than others, it permits me to intend *A* and *B*, even if I know that they are incompatible. Against this, Bratman, claims that it is irrational to intend *A* and *B* if one cannot rationally intend *A-and-B*, as when doing both is inconsistent with one's beliefs.

A related objection is that we can fail to act, or intend, in accordance with our evaluations. In a typical case of *akrasia*<sup>247</sup>. I conclude that I ought to quit, but decide to continue

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<sup>242</sup> Jove Jim S. Agnes: Karol Wojtyla, On the Psychosomatic Integrity of the Human Person, Conference on Culture and Philosophy: University of Athens, August 1-3, 2013.

<sup>243</sup> Hickman, Larry A., and Thomas M. Alexander, editors. "The Logic of Judgments of Practice: (1915)." *The Essential Dewey: Ethics, Logic, Psychology*, Indiana University Press, 1998, pp. 236–271.

<sup>244</sup> Donald Davidson, 1978, 'Intending,' reprinted in *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 99.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Davidson 1978, pp. 100–1.

<sup>247</sup> *Akresia* means weakness of the will, especially a failure to act according to a sense of moral obligation.



smoking instead. According to Davidson in his reply, began by distinguishing ‘all things considered’ from ‘unconditional’ evaluative judgment. In ‘conditional’ or ‘prima facie’ supposing one takes some body of considerations, *r*, to support *A* over *B*. All things considered reckoning is the special case of this in which *r* includes all the considerations one holds relevant. There is no inconsistency in judging that the sum of these particular considerations favors *A* over *B*, while judging that *B* is better than *A*, perhaps in light of other considerations one has not specifically considered. Since it is the latter judgment that constitutes intention, one can act intentionally against the former. This is how Davidson makes sense of my continuing to smoke.

Sergio Cremaschi makes an analysis of someone playing chess, making the same kind of move with the tower as with the knight which is not allowed, and the reason is that the rules of chess do not allow that, and no further justification is required; while making promises with the intention of not keeping them is not allowed, and the reason is that the promising game does not allow for that.<sup>248</sup> In a sense, no further justification is required just because making a promise means joining a game with constitutive rules. In another sense a further question is legitimate of the duty to keep promises that is not required, or better, is more easily answered, for chess, and the answer to this question depends on the circumstance that the institution of promises is essential for the production of important human goods such as mutual trust and the possibility of co-operation.<sup>249</sup> If we hope to defend an evaluative theory of intention, despite this possibility, we will have to equate intending with judgment of some other evaluative proposition, not entailed by claims about the balance of reasons, distinguish kinds of judgment or ways of representing an action as to be done, one of which constitutes intending, the other of which we act against in *akrasia* or otherwise weaken the relationship between intention and the good. Whichever way we go, we will need to motivate the evaluative theory. What is it about the role of intention in intentional action, or in practical reasoning, that requires it to take an evaluative shape? What is missing from theories of intention?

Historically, psychologists have dealt with this diversity by focusing on the unifying aspects of morality, studying commonalities in moral judgment across individual and cultural lines. Many moral judgments are influenced by different demographic factors, such as gender, age, ethnicity, and religion. For example, intent plays a consistent role in the moral judgment

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<sup>248</sup> Sergio Cremaschi, “Anscombe on the Philosophy of Psychology: As Propedeutic to Moral Philosophy”, in *La mente morale: Persone, ragioni, virtù: a cura di Matteo Galletti*, Roma, Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, 2004, pp. 48-49.

<sup>249</sup> Teichmann, *The Philosophy of Elizabeth Anscombe*, pp. 110-112.

of people of all ages (e.g., intending to harm someone is worse than accidentally harming someone). Also, in the trolley dilemma (a popular philosophical scenario), an overwhelming majority of participants judge turning a runaway trolley away from a track with five people on it to a track with one person on it to be permissible, but pushing a man off a bridge onto the tracks to stop the trolley to be impermissible.

While these approaches have rendered understanding moral judgment a tractable problem, many complexities in moral judgment are left unresolved. No comprehensive model or taxonomy of moral judgment thus far has accounted for its full diversity. Some models call for a division of the moral space based on the content or kind of moral violation. We judge those who harm others, those who cheat and steal, those who betray their family, friends, and country, those who are disrespectful and disobey authorities, and even those whose actions do not necessarily affect others but instead render themselves “impure,” such as consuming taboo foods. Each of these acts may represent a distinct area of moral judgment. Other models carve up morality in terms of the nature or structure of the relationships affected by the violation. For example, how one should act toward another depends on whether the target is a friend, a stranger, an equal, a subordinate, or an authority. How should we divide up the moral space? Settling on a good taxonomy represents a crucial step toward understanding moral psychology, allowing us to determine through experimentation how different kinds of moral judgment are influenced by psychological, emotional, social, and cultural factors.

Anscombe believes that this is why not just Utilitarianism but also Kantian theories are bankrupt, for, in so far as we have no way of determining under which descriptions we should judge action, we cannot judge acts for their intrinsic character – which we cannot know. So we must end up judging acts by their extrinsic features, such as their (expected) consequences, and all modern moral philosophy tends to lapse readily into some form of consequentialism.<sup>250</sup>

## **2.4.2 Reasons for Action**

Man from the generic point of view is a mystery. The philosophy of man has not explained the nature of man in its totality; his action, relationship, his essence and desires. Man as a rational animal has Reason as part of him. As a mystery we would rather, live, act and relate with the human person, appreciate his existence than define his essence. But since our concern is to investigate the action of man, then we are bound to pose a definition. For one the

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<sup>250</sup> O’Neill, O.: *Modern Moral Philosophy and the Problem of Relevant Descriptions*. In O’Hear 2004, 314.

requirement of a sound philosophy is the articulation of meaning and therefore any philosophy of the human person must be able to come up with a definition of the person, albeit imperfect. There are habitual behaviors guided by goals and intentions, and under what conditions does such guidance allow us to say that our habitual responses are done for reasons?<sup>251</sup> The idea that we can understand reasons by understanding the mind is exciting.<sup>252</sup> This comes down to the question: can habitual behaviors be actions and the voluntariness and involuntariness in action.

According to the Anscombean view, it is voluntariness, and not an appeal to special mental causes, which distinguishes between intentional action and mere natural acts. This Anscombean account of practical knowledge and intentional action requires much further development. This is so because it is so central to the Anscombean approach that an intentional action is *understood* by the agent herself, and therefore makes sense to her as contributing to her goals, it provides a fruitful way of thinking about precisely the cases of habitual or automatic responses that we have been considering. For example in a cases such as that of our agent who habitually reaches for her running shoes, the reason why we intuitively want to classify this as an intentional action (and not a completely mindless happening) is precisely that doing what she does *makes sense* to the agent.<sup>253</sup> And from the perspective of our discourse, that may be all that is needed for the behavior in question to be intentional: the agent has practical knowledge that she is reaching for her shoes *in order to* go running.

Moreover, Anscombe suggests that practical reasoning is knowing the relation between means and ends in this way. This comes out in the fact that the chain of “Why?” questions and answers in the *A-D* series above can equally be traversed in the opposite direction: rather than beginning by asking the agent “Why are you doing *A*?” we can begin with asking “How are you doing *D*?” to which she can reply “*by doing C*”—and so on.<sup>254</sup> In knowing that she is doing *A* because she is doing *B*, the agent simultaneously knows that *B* is her means to doing *A*. Practical reasoning and practical knowledge are thus, as it were, two sides of the same coin. In other words, to give reasons why an agent performs an action amounts to a description of how the means by which an action is performed is related to the ends for which such an action is desired. On this view, practical reasoning is thus not an occurring process which takes place

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<sup>251</sup> The term ‘action’ refers to behaviours that are intentional under some description, and that can be explained in terms of reasons (Anscombe: *Intention*, 1957; Davidson D. (ed) (1973) *Freedom to act*. In: *Essays on actions and events*, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1963, pp. 215-68. We leave aside the complex question whether everything we do intentionally is done for reasons.

<sup>252</sup> Eric Wiland, *Reasons*, New York, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012, p. 14.

<sup>253</sup> PT. Makowski: *Automaticity and the Economization of Actions*. In Tadeusz Kotarbiński’s action theory. Springer, Berlin. 2017, pp. 153–184.

<sup>254</sup> Anscombe: *Intention*, p. 42-43.

before the action begins. Rather, practical reasoning is an awareness of what constitutes means to one's ends that, as we have seen, is *constitutive* of the action in question. As such, it is an awareness that is manifested *in*, and thus lasts throughout, the agent's performance of the action.

But does not the Anscombean view overestimate the extent to which agents *are* able to give true explanations of their intentional actions? The existing literature seems to abound with examples which seem to suggest that an agent's answer to the question "Why?" is often just a post hoc rationalization, or a confabulation.<sup>255</sup> This may especially seem to be so in the case of habitual behavior,<sup>256</sup> for instance, which suggests that empirical evidence supports this view with regard to at least highly skilled actions in sports (basketball, in the case at issue):

Confabulation is common when skilled agents are asked to report the techniques they use "on the field." For instance [...] players who successfully catch objects falling at an accelerating rate report that those objects are falling at a constant speed. These individuals are confabulating reasons - based in naïve physics - when they are asked why they are moving to the spot where the accelerating object is.<sup>257</sup>

Notice, however, that the kind of explanation Brownstein takes to be the player's answer to the "Anscombean question" - namely, "the ball is falling at constant speed" - is not actually the kind of consideration that the Anscombean claims to fall under the scope of the agent's practical knowledge. For it is obviously not the kind of thing that an agent could know without observation: it is not even a candidate for a reason for action, on the Anscombean view. So the fact that agents speculate or confabulate about the physical properties of the ball does not show that the behavior is not intentional according to the Anscombean's criteria behavior. For that to be the case, it would have to be shown that the agent was not aware of the following fact: that she was *moving to spot X on the pitch* in order to *catch the ball*. Nothing in Brownstein's example suggests that this is the case, and indeed, it seems obvious that the basketball player *does* know this as she is moving down the pitch. If we are thus attentive to what Anscombe is claiming to be the object of an agent's practical knowledge—namely, the means-ends structure of her *ongoing* action—it will seem far less convincing that agents' account of this structure

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<sup>255</sup>In psychology, confabulation is a memory error defined as the production of fabricated, distorted, or misinterpreted memories about oneself or the world. People who confabulate present incorrect memories ranging from "subtle alterations to bizarre fabrications. Confabulated memories of all types most often occur in autobiographical memory and are indicative of a complicated and intricate process that can be led astray at any point during encoding, storage, or recall of a memory. This type of confabulation is commonly seen in Korsakoff's syndrome.

<sup>256</sup> Michael Brownstein, *Rationalizing flow: agency in skilled unreflective action*. Philosophical Study, Volume 168 (2), 2014, pp.545–568. <https://www.jstor.org>. accessed on 13/03/2020.

<sup>257</sup> Brownstein 2014, p. 560.

could be, in general, mere confabulation. After all, on the Anscombean account, what an agent can truly be said to be doing *intentionally* depends on what she *takes* herself to be doing. Instead, what the confabulation literature shows is that agents provide many causal explanations of their actions that turn out to be faulty. So whereas Anscombe's view leaves room for a lot of self-deception and failing self-insight in human agents—it does *not* leave room for agents being mistaken about the means-end structure of their own actions. This is because, on the Anscombean picture, action is *defined* in terms of this kind of practical knowledge.

### 2.4.3 The Problem of Self-Awareness

*The First Person* was written in a Wittgensteinian way, Anscombe argued that some metaphysical theses are the result of our being misled by grammar. Her work on the first person singular is a good example of this way of dealing with philosophical problems. Anscombe's work has often been, in the last years, when teaching philosophy of mind or philosophy of action, a way of spelling out what the orientation of a Wittgensteinian position regarding topics such as consciousness or agency could be. Where Wittgenstein often says gnomic things or asks seemingly mysterious questions (e.g. "An inner process stands in need of outward criteria"<sup>258</sup> or "What is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm raises from the fact that I raise my arm?"<sup>259</sup>) Anscombe provides us with good and explicit analyses. What follows is an exercise in that spirit, centered on Anscombe's 1975 article "The First Person."<sup>260</sup>

In "The First Person," as she moves between thought experiments, such as the sensorial deprivation tank, and deep metaphysics, Anscombe goes after the uses of 'I', the strange little word we (all) use to speak about ourselves. What she says there should thus, I believe, be understood against the background of particular discussions of the uses of 'I' going on around that date. I start with a quick review of some landmarks of such discussions. This will help me in putting Anscombe's proposals in context. In *The Blue and Brown Books*<sup>261</sup>. Wittgenstein had famously contrasted uses of 'I' as subject with uses of 'I' as object. If I experience a toothache and say "I have a toothache," it would be nonsensical to say "Someone has a

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<sup>258</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigation*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953, p.580.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid. p. 621.

<sup>260</sup> Anscombe, G.E.M. (1981 [1975]). "The First Person." In *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G.E.M. Anscombe*, Vol. 2, *Metaphysics and Philosophy of Mind*, 1981, Oxford, Blackwell, pp. 21-36.

<sup>261</sup> The Blue Brown Books are two sets of notes taken during lectures conducted by Ludwig Wittgenstein from 1933 to 1935. They were mimeographed as two separated books, and a few copies were on circulation in a restricted circle during Wittgenstein's life, but was originally published in 1958 by Basil Blackwell.

toothache – is it me?” and that is a conscious experience. On the other hand, when I look in the mirror, see a sunburned arm and say “I have a sunburn”<sup>262</sup> it is possible that I am looking at someone else’s arm and mistaking it for my own. In that sense I am misidentifying myself — it is possible that I do that. In uses of ‘I’ as an object it is possible that I am wrong about who or what I am, that I do not know that something is, or is not, me. Our customary use of ‘I’ simply spans the gap between the mental and the physical and is no more intimately connected with one aspect of our self-conception than with the other.<sup>263</sup>

These are some important aspects of the state of the discussion of the first person, or the uses of ‘I’, sometime before and after the publication of Anscombe’s article in 1975. But we have to note that Wittgenstein himself does say the following in *The Blue and Brown Books*, and so in the same context in which he introduced the contrast between subjective and objective uses of ‘I’, we feel then that in the cases in which ‘I’ is used as subject, we don’t use it because we recognize a particular person by his bodily characteristics; and this creates the illusion that we use this word to refer to something bodiless, which, however, has its seat in our body. In fact this seems to be the real ego, the one of which it was said, “Cogito, ergo sum.”<sup>264</sup> In other words, he acknowledges a particular kind of illusion, an illusion that using ‘I’ we use it to refer to something bodiless. This will be clarified through Anscombe’s 1975 article. All the ideas above, anyway, matter, we may assert, for weighing the importance of Anscombe’s discussions in her article.

Moreover, the uses of ‘I’ in “The First-Person” (1975) is officially about the uses of ‘I’, the word each one of us uses to speak about themselves, and also about reference. So one usually takes it to be concerned with a particular question in the philosophy of language, the question of the indexical ‘I’ (the “essential indexical,” as John Perry called it) and how it refers. Anscombe’s commentators usually suppose her to claim that, since there is no Cartesian Ego to be the referent of ‘I’, ‘I’ does not refer. This move of Anscombe is typically dismissed as absurd. This is one thing Evans is doing in the *Varieties of Reference*, around the passages I quoted before. He mentions Anscombe’s “extraordinary conclusion” and dismisses it.<sup>265</sup> His point is that ‘I’ does refer, and that it does so successfully and without any problems: I use ‘I’ to speak of myself in saying “I am sola” or “I am writing this text”; you use ‘I’ to say “I am reading this text.” Anscombe herself speaks of what she is doing in “The First Person” as

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<sup>262</sup> Sunburn is a type of skin burn resulting from too much exposure to sunlight or sunlamps, oftentimes results to skin cancer.

<sup>263</sup> Gareth Evans; *Varieties of Reference*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982, p. 256.

<sup>264</sup> Wittgenstein, 1972, p. 69-70

<sup>265</sup> Evans 1982, pp. 214-15.

putting forward an alternative to the Cartesian conception of consciousness. She introduces the expression “the Cartesian conception of consciousness” which is not, she says, just Descartes’ conception, but also that of Augustine and Saul Kripke.

According to the Cartesian conception of consciousness the mind knows its own substance. And so the specific target in “The First Person,” at least as Anscombe herself sets the stage for the discussions, is what she calls the analytic view of the cogito, which she sees as an instance of the Cartesian conception of consciousness. Saul Kripke is the person she has in mind. Kripke, she says: has tried to reinstate Descartes’ argument for his dualism. But he neglects its essentially first-person character, making it an argument about the non-identity of Descartes with his own body.<sup>266</sup> A number of people have noticed that Anscombe’s rejection of the main assumption of the Cartesian conception of consciousness, the idea that the mind knows its own substance, closely resembles Jean-Paul Sartre’s views expressed in his 1936 opuscle “La Transcendance de l’Ego”. What is common to Anscombe and Sartre is the denial of the idea that self-awareness amounts to self-knowledge, i.e. to knowledge of what or who one is.

According to Sartre, being self-aware need not involve any explicit identification of oneself as oneself. One famous example of Sartre in the “Transcendance de l’Ego” is an example of someone — going for something. In running to catch up with a friend I am involved and engaged in what I am doing; there is no ‘I’ explicitly present in my mind in that situation, as I run to meet up, my mind is focused on what I’m after. I am not thinking about myself; there is only my awareness of the situation.<sup>267</sup>

According to the most common interpretation at the heart of her article lies the following line of argument:

1. Let us assume that ‘I’ is a referring expression.
2. Then I-reference must be immune to error through misidentification.
3. Then ‘I’ should refer nothing short of a Cartesian Ego.
4. Yet there are no Cartesian Egos, only human beings.
5. So there is no referent for ‘I’.
6. Therefore ‘I’ is not a referring expression.

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<sup>266</sup> Anscombe 1975, P. 21

<sup>267</sup> Jean-Philippe Narboux *Is Self-consciousness Consciousness of One’s Self?*, in Wittgenstein and Phenomenology, Oskari Kuusela, Mihai Ometita, Timur Uçan(Eds.), London, Routledge. 2018, p. 224-25.

For Vincent Descombes in his “*Le Marteau, le Maillet et le Clou*,” he called this interpretation, the interpretation of “The First Person” that gets transmitted if we never stop to read the article ourselves (plus, he remarks, it is an interpretation based on three of the twenty something pages of the article). Anscombe is supposed to be defending a paradoxical thesis, a thesis which goes against our common sense view of the normal workings of ‘I’ in our linguistic practices. To that counter-intuitiveness one should add the fact that the claim that ‘I’ does not refer is not even a new claim — it is supposed to take up Hume, Lichtenberg and Wittgenstein’s idea according to which ‘I’ is some kind of illusion, maybe a linguistic illusion. That Anscombe is defending such a thesis is taken to be explained by the fact that she wants to put aside any dualism regarding our nature: if ‘I’ referred, then it would necessarily refer a Cartesian Ego; since there are no Cartesian Egos, ‘I’ does not refer. Yet there are, as I said, other possible readings.

According to Descombes’ reading, Anscombe is doing something completely different. Granted, she is interested in uses of ‘I’ (although she never speaks of ‘I’ as an indexical).<sup>268</sup> Granted, she asks whether ‘I’ is a proper name, and goes on to ask “if it is a proper name what is it that it names?” But when we look at the actual text what she is in fact doing when she asks such questions is asking what the relation is between ‘I’ (i.e. what I call myself) and ‘Sofia’, i.e. my name, what others call me. Her focus is on the relation between ‘I’ and ‘EA’ (‘Elizabeth Anscombe’) as they get used, and, as we will see, on the relation between ‘I’ and ‘René Descartes’. Such is the purpose of the following scenario: Imagine a society where everyone is labelled with two names. One appears in their backs and at the top of their chests and these names, which their bearers cannot see, are various: ‘B’ to ‘Z’, let us say. The other, ‘A’, is stamped on the inside of their wrists, and is the same for everyone. In making reports on peoples’ actions everyone uses the names on their chests or backs, if he can see the names or is used to seeing them. Everyone also learns to respond to utterance of the name on his own chest or back in the sort of way and circumstances in which we tend to respond to utterance of our names. Reports on one’s own actions are made using the name on the wrist.<sup>269</sup>

What is going on here? I, you, him, we all speak of ourselves using the word ‘I’. Yet I do not say “Hi, I am I,” neither do I introduce you to a third person by saying “This is I.” Nor do I call a third person by shouting “Hey I, come here!” What Anscombe is ultimately asking

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<sup>268</sup> Anscombe, 1975, p. 24.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.



in the passage above then, or wants to ask, is what the relation is between 'I' (or A) and the name others use to name us (to call us, to speak of us).<sup>270</sup>

Also, Anscombe wants to ask: do these people, the people who use 'A' to speak about themselves, the A-users, let us call them, have self-consciousness? She goes on to say that speaking of selves as something one has, or one is, is complete nonsense. It amounts to being misled by language, which, at least in English makes me speak of myself when I speak of myself. But the point is that, although speaking of self-consciousness as consciousness of a self, a thing, some kind of object which is a self, is nonsense, it is not nonsense to speak of self-consciousness. We are indeed self-aware, aware of ourselves.

Another question about the A-users is: are they like us or not? She thinks not. Use of 'A' for oneself by the A-users is not like use of 'I' by one of us. Why not? Something goes along with our use of 'I' — we will see what — that does not go with the use of 'A' by the A-users. Anyway, as I said, Anscombe moves on to say that even if speaking of selves, ourselves, as something one has, or one is, is complete nonsense, this is not the same as saying that self-consciousness is nonsense, or that we, who use 'I' to speak of ourselves, are, or are not, self-aware. Remember she asked whether these people who use 'A' to speak of themselves are self-aware. Ultimately she will claim that I am aware of myself when I speak about myself in a different way than users of 'A'. But what does she mean?

Meanwhile, in the article, Anscombe proceeds with her analysis of the uses of 'I'. She does ask whether 'I' is a proper name. We certainly may think that 'I' is a proper name in the following sense. If someone (let us say EA) makes an utterance which has 'I' as subject (such a person, says, say, "I went to the library this morning"), and that is true of her, then such an utterance will be true of EA (when e.g. another person says "EA went to the library this morning"). This is a sense in which we might take 'I', in my mouth, to be just another name for EA, she says. Though Descartes entered into methodic doubt so as to understand, he truly understood that is he concluded by saying: "I think therefore I exist", for no one thinks out of his own existence and consciousness. It could be noted here that while Anscombe intended to circumspect the Cartesian dualism, she ended up with a linguistic turn that failed to reach the objectiveness of the 'I' and so dismissed the sense in which we commonly speak of self-knowledge.

From the grammatical point of view, we use the 'I' as a pronoun, hence a 'stand-in' for a proper name – a *pro nomen*. A philosophy of language which tries to analyze the 'I' has

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

to take into consideration this grammatical sense in which the 'I' stands-in for the objective reality of the person, of which it represents. It is the whole person that is known in self-knowledge, linguistically expressed by the term 'I'. From the perspective of the experience of self-awareness, this is felt as a subject who experiences, hence there is a certain reflexivity of the very subject of consciousness (the 'I') with the content of consciousness (the 'self'). We will come to realize that this marks a key difference between Anscombe's route for the identification of the 'I' as a referent-term and Wojtyła's route for the identification of the 'I' as a reality mirrored in our conscious experience of the self. This difference will become clearer in the chapter 3 where I discuss the experience of consciousness in Wojtyła's philosophy of person.

#### 2.4.4 Human Dignity as the Basis of Moral Equality

Anscombe in accordance with philosophical tradition considers a term "dignity" to be the crucial category of ethical reasoning and says the following about human dignity: "There is just one impregnable equality of all human beings. It lies in the value and dignity of being a human being."<sup>271</sup> Anscombe's point here is simply that the human being - *an end in itself* - is the sole source of the basic respect that is owed to the human being. Anscombe does not *define* the value involved or the respect it entails but gives us a sense of what is involved by the example. She contrasts the thought of killing out of revenge with the thought of with killing for convenience. She writes:

To regard someone as deserving death is very definitely regarding him, not just as a human being but as endowed with a dignity belonging to human beings, as having free will and as answerable for his actions. I am not defending the murderer I am imagining. He has not the right to kill his victim. But I am *contrasting* him with the murderer who is willing to kill someone for gain or other advantage...*He* is not respecting in his victim the dignity of a human being at all. Similarly with 'active euthanasia' which is non-voluntary on the part of the victim. He is to be killed because of the 'disvalue' of his life; his living is of negative value and so things are better with him dead.<sup>272</sup>

Every human being has dignity due in fact to the moral equality of the human good as person. As a person, man is endowed with reason and as such morality springs from man's rational capacities. Therefore, because of what the human person is, his nature, it follows as

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> G.E.M Anscombe, "The Dignity of the Human Being" in Anscombe, *Human Life, Action and Ethics*, 67.

strictly necessary that he be treated with absolute respect according to his inestimable value, his dignity. This is why we say that human dignity is inviolable and inalienable – it cannot be destroyed, and cannot be removed. Consequently, the term person applies to all human beings who have existence, whether we consider those who do not think or will—including the human embryo, no matter how small—or those who perhaps never could or never will think and will—including the severely handicapped, the disabled elderly or an individual in a “persistent” or “permanent vegetative state”. According to St. Thomas, the “person,” refers to that which is most perfect in the whole of nature, namely, to that which subsists in rational nature. Now since God has all perfection and we attribute all perfection to him, then it is just proper to use the word person when we speak of him. However, we can also use the term person to other rational substances in a lower sense.<sup>273</sup>

Human dignity is rooted in man’s personhood, the dignity of man is based on his spiritual essence. As we have already mentioned, the immateriality or spirituality of man signifies man’s actuality. This in turn, signifies existence and perfection. Hence, the spirituality of the human soul signifies its actuality, and with it, its existence and perfection.<sup>274</sup> The human dignity is, therefore, founded on the spirituality of the human essence as the principle of its actuality.

From the history of European philosophy, human dignity in today’s sense has its roots in Stoicism and was then revived in Renaissance. Kurt Bayertz suggested that the nature of redefining human dignity in the European tradition resides in the Enlightenment rejection of conventional understanding of human nature which had been associated with social and religious values: Stoicism dissociated dignity from the privilege of higher social classes in ancient Greece, and Renaissance dissociated it from the medieval Christian belief that human dignity comes from his likeness to God.<sup>275</sup> (This is a very interesting point of departure for understanding the significance of the change that occurred in ethics and anthropology following the Enlightenment).

Therefore, dignity after the Renaissance consists in the possession of universal human abilities such as rationality, non-fixedness, self-fulfillment (in Rousseau’s word), and autonomy (in Kant’s).<sup>276</sup> Bioethics seems to have inherited this tradition of dissociating dignity

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<sup>273</sup> Summa Theologia, I, q. 29, a. 3, c. quoted in Aguas, “The Notions Human Person and Human Dignity, p. 55.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Bayertz K., ‘Die Idee der Menschenwürde, Probleme und Paradoxien’, Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie 81 (4), 1995, pp. 465–481.

<sup>276</sup> In the quest for human dignity Kant presents autonomy of the individual person as he says that nothing can have a worth other than that which the law determines for it. But the lawgiving itself, which determines all worth, must for that very reason have a dignity, that is, an unconditional incomparable worth; and the word respect alone

from concrete values. In the context of modern biomedicine, bioethicists found dignity too ambiguously and controversially in connection with concrete values – not only socio-religious values, but also human abilities. For human experimentation, death and dying, and doctor–patient relationship, ethical dilemmas have typically been viewed as conflicts between the patient’s right to self-determination and the physician’s paternalism.

## 2.5 On the Principle of Double Effect and the Side Effect Principle

Anscombe in her effort inaugurated the contemporary study of moral psychology with her famous article in 1957 titled: *Intention*, and her 1958 article titled: *Modern Moral Philosophy (MMP)*.<sup>277</sup> In these two articles she focused attention on the intrinsic logic of double-effect reasoning (DER), and its intended distinction which aligns with the exclusive purview of Catholic moral theologians. She defended a version of the doctrine of double effect, and her commitment to this doctrine provided a principle which reveals her understanding of the structure of human action. For an illustration, she presented what was corrupt about Truman’s action in dropping the Atom Bomb on Hiroshima-Nagasaki, Japan. The main idea is that there is a morally relevant distinction between intended versus merely foreseen outcomes.<sup>278</sup> Notable is that there is a psychological ingredient with regard to what is being intended which is not so much evident in the foreseen outcomes. Due to the power of the human mind to create an intentional object, the moral agent may subjectively intend a morally relevant effect that is not really (objectively) foreseen in which case, the debate between moral voluntarism and moral intellectualism is rekindled. For Anscombe, to intend harm is worse than to merely foresee harm as a result of one’s action. This can sometimes be combined with a kind of absolutism to hold that intended harms are forbidden, whereas the merely foreseen may not be so. Here she says in: *Modern Moral Philosophy*:

the denial of any distinction between foreseen and intended consequences, as far as responsibility is concerned, was not made by Sidgwick in developing any one ‘method of ethics’; he made this important move on behalf of everybody and just on its own account; and I think it plausible to suggest that this move on the part of Sidgwick explains the difference between old-fashioned

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provides a becoming expression for the estimate of it that a rational being must give. Autonomy is therefore the ground of the dignity of human and of every rational nature (Kant, 1785, p. 85).

<sup>277</sup> Anscombe, *Human Life, Action and Ethics: Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*, eds. Mary Geach and Luke Gormally Exeter: St. Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs; Imprint Academic, 2005, pp. 169-94.

<sup>278</sup> Driver, Julia, "Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/anscombe/>>. Accessed on 23/03/2020.

utilitarianism and that consequentialism, as I name it, which marks him and every English academic philosopher since him. By it, the kind of consideration which formerly would have been regarded as a temptation, the kind of considerations urged upon men by wives and flattering friends, was given a status by moral philosophers in their theories.<sup>279</sup>

In Modern Moral Philosophy, Anscombe holds that absent acknowledgment of the Intention distinction's ethical relevance, one ineluctably descends into that brand of ethics whose now-standard name she coins in the above passage, Consequentialism. She goes on to say, "it is a necessary feature of consequentialism that it is a shallow philosophy." (I will later argue that consequentialism is shallow, indeed. For, due in part to its denial of the intention distinction, its act-evaluations remain entirely on the surface of ethics.)

In "*War and Murder*," Anscombe notes that the moral permissibility of coercive authority requires a principle that can be used to differentiate the just imposition of harms from the unjust.<sup>280</sup> The Doctrine of Double Effect is one such principle. At the root of the principle is the distinction between intended and foreseen consequences of an action.<sup>281</sup> While there is some debate on the correct specification of the Doctrine, the basic idea is that it is worse to intend harm than to merely foresee it. In Anscombe's opinion, some actions are absolutely forbidden, because they involve intentions to harm whereas if the harm in question was merely foreseen the action would not be forbidden. Anscombe defends disputed aspects of double effect.<sup>282</sup> While solely responsible for the attention given to DER outside of Catholic circles, Anscombe herself proposes in its stead (or, perhaps more accurately, instead of the prominent corruptions of double effect familiar to her) what she refers to as the, "principle of side effects." In what follows, I will present: first, the salient abuses of double effect that incline Anscombe to offer her, "principle of side effects"; second, her principle; third, a sound account of double effect (taking Aquinas' original treatment as a model); fourth and finally, a response to the concern that leads Anscombe to employ her principle in lieu of double effect.

Anscombe's "*Christians and Nuclear Weapons Designed for the Destruction of Cities*" begins with an enviably exact and economical exposition of friendship, concluding that

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<sup>279</sup> Anscombe, *Modern Moral Philosophy*, p. 12.

<sup>280</sup> To think that society's coercive authority is evil is akin to thinking the flesh evil and family life evil. These things belong to the present constitution of mankind; and if the exercise of coercive power is a manifestation of evil, and not the just means of restraining it, then human nature is totally depraved in a manner never taught by Christianity. For society is essential to human good; and society without coercive power is generally impossible

<sup>281</sup> Driver, Julia, "Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/anscombe/>>. Accessed on 23/03/2020.

<sup>282</sup> Jonathan Bennett, "Whatever the Consequences," *Analysis* 26 (1966): pp. 83-112.

friendship between states is only friendship of advantage, and very easily changed, because “upon the whole, people are not good...” More pointedly, however, she spoke from time to time of the evils of *this* age, the horror, the madness of its murderous or idolatrous practices. More specifically, she was conscious of people’s blindness to dangers that should have been obvious to all. Among the most significant of these is the blindness to the dangers - she mentions euthanasia of the old - that will arise from the combination of willingness to kill the innocent (as in abortion) with declining population (want of young people to support the aged).<sup>283</sup>

But she was also concerned that the Doctrine of Double Effect was often abused. In her advocacy of double effect, Anscombe herself always retains a healthy skepticism concerning accounts of double effect. Indeed, she regards it as a source of corrupt moral thinking:

Now, to make an epigram, the corruption of non-Catholic moral thought has consisted in the denial of this doctrine, and the corruption of Catholic thought in the abuse of it. [Here] we are touching on the principle of “double effect”. The denial of this has been the corruption of non-Catholic thought, and its abuse the corruption of Catholic thought.<sup>284</sup>

Some have held the view that one can direct one’s intentions in such a certain way as to be able to achieve one’s desired end with moral impunity. If, for example, one tells oneself that one is only intending *A* by doing *B*, then one is off the hook even if *B* is immoral—and this strikes Anscombe as quite absurd, since encouraging the performance of immoral acts will not lead to a genuine renewal of virtue ethics. Her example is that of a servant who holds the ladder for his master who is a thief and justifies it by telling himself that his intention is simply to avoid getting fired. Holding the ladder is his means of avoiding the loss of his job. It is still immoral, because the means/end constraint on Double Effect, i.e., holding the ladder, is not justified. And it was this misunderstanding of Double Effect which was at the basis of Anscombe’s problem with the wartime bombing and the flagrant abuse of the Double Effect theory to justify it.

Anscombe regards the denial of the Intention distinction as at the heart of Consequentialism. Hence, she links the denial of double effect to the specific decline of moral reasoning or lack thereof. As for the abuse of double effect, she has at least two culprits in

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<sup>283</sup> Finnis, John M., *Anscombe's Essays* (2009). National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly, Vol. 9, pp. 199-207, 2009; Notre Dame Legal Studies Paper No. 09-10. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1392217>. Accessed on 29/03/2020.

<sup>284</sup> Anscombe, “War and Murder,” in *Ethics, Religion and Politics, The Collected Philosophical Papers*, Vol. III, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981. p. 54.

mind, an old one (Cartesianism) and a new one (Proportionalism, the dominant account of Catholic moral theology regnant from the late 1960's up to the papal encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* of St. Pope John Paul II, issued in 1993, which condemns the both Proportionalism and Consequentialism).

There's no doubt that it can be extremely difficult to parse out the double effect. It is often presented in the following way. There is an action that the agent performs which has two effects, one good, one bad. The action may still be permissible given that the intended effect that is desired by the agent is good, and given that the bad effect is merely foreseen, and not intended. It appears that the agent voluntarily chooses both effects, but is only fully accountable for one. And this strikes me as something odd, since it just seems obvious that foreseen consequences have to be weighed—it would be irresponsible not to weigh them. So surely they count too? So according the logic of proportionalism and consequentialism the ends justify the means.

The conception of the acting subject as being uniquely authoritative, concerning the intent of his action, leads to one the apparent chronic abuse of double effect.<sup>285</sup> Three centuries before Anscombe, Pascal lampoons it as the, “*grande méthode de diriger l'intention.*”<sup>286</sup> Anscombe calls this abuse, “absurd,” and, “ludicrous.” One finds her most famous reference to this error in *Intention*:

it would appear that we can choose to have a certain intention and not another, just by e.g. saying within ourselves: ‘What I *mean* to be doing is earning my living, and *not* poisoning the household’; or ‘what I *mean* to be doing is helping those good men into power; I withdraw my intention from the act of poisoning the household, which I prefer to think goes on without my intention being in it’. The idea that one can determine one’s intentions by making such a little speech to oneself is obvious bosh.<sup>287</sup>

The Cartesian emphasis upon the special authority of the acting subject (conceived of as entirely mental and “inside” – yet utterly distinct from – the body) seems to give rise to the grand method. Why would this be so? Perhaps the unquestioned or privileged authority of the agent leads to the idea that the agent needs only to express, as it were, an alternative intention and, *voilà* that would be his intent. This account conceives of intent as if it were simply a sentence, or something the agent saying to himself as he acts instead of the embodied form practical thinking (including intending) takes, namely, doing something, acting. One’s doings

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<sup>285</sup> John Finnis, Germain Grisez, and Joseph Boyle, “‘Direct’ and ‘Indirect’: A Reply to Critics of Our Action Theory,” *The Thomist* Volume 65 2001: p. 24.

<sup>286</sup> Pascal, *Les Provinciales, Septième Lettre*, in *OEvres Complètes*, Paris: Lang, 1963, p. 397.

<sup>287</sup> Anscombe, *Intention*, section 25, p. 42.

are typically accurately described by those, as Anscombe says, “grown to the age of reason in the same world.”<sup>288</sup>

Proportionalism side of the abuse, the much more novel (and, correspondingly, both less chronic and much easier to counter) corruption of double effect arises out of (ironically) a Consequentialist reading of Aquinas’ original account of double effect. Anscombe refers to this as the, “package Doctrine of Double Effect.”<sup>289</sup> The, “package Doctrine of Double Effect,” or Proportionalism amounts to a consequentialist corruption of the correct moral insight found in the intention distinction. Anscombe understandably rejects such a confused account.<sup>290</sup>

In 1982 on the occasion of her receipt of the Aquinas Medal, Anscombe delivered a paper entitled, “Medalist’s Address: Action, Intention and ‘Double Effect’”. In it she proposes her, “principle of side-effects”:

I will call it the ‘principle of side-effects’ that the prohibition on murder does not cover *all* bringing about of deaths which are not intended. Not that such deaths aren’t often murder. But the quite clear and certain prohibition on intentional killing (with the relevant ‘public’ exceptions) does not catch you when your action brings about an unintended death.<sup>291</sup>

By “murder”, Anscombe means wrongful killing of the innocent, intentional or otherwise:

There can be borderline cases arising because murder is not committed only where there was an intention to kill. The arsonist who burns down a house, not caring that there are people there, is as much a murderer if they are burned to death by his action, as if he had aimed to kill them. This action falls squarely within a penumbra surrounding the hard-core part of the concept of murder, which contains only intentional killing. The penumbra is fuzzy at the outer edges – that is,

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid. section 4, p. 8.

<sup>289</sup> Anscombe, “Medalist’s Address,” p. 24.

<sup>290</sup> T. A. Cavanaugh, “Aquinas and the Historical Roots of Proportionalism,” *Aquinas Review* I, no. 2 (1995):pp. 31-44. For accounts of the history of proportionalism, see Bernard Hoose, *Proportionalism: The American Debate and its European Roots* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1987, pp. 12-17.

<sup>291</sup> Anscombe, “Medalist’s Address,” p. 21; also found in *Human Life*, p. 220. The Scripture affirms this Anscombean notion: “if a thief breaking or digging into a house is found and, being wounded, dies, the one who dwelt the blows would not be guilty of his blood.” But it is much more licit to defend one’s own life than one’s own home. Therefore, also, if someone kills another in order to defend his own life, he will not be guilty of wrongful homicide. Cf, Exodus 22:2. Self defense is never a moral evil. When a private man struggles with an enemy he has no right to aim to kill him, unless in the circumstances of the attack on him he can be considered as endowed with the authority of the law and the struggle comes to that point. By a “private” man, I mean a man in a society; I am not speaking of men on their own, without government, in remote places; for such men are neither public servants nor ‘private’. The plea of self-defence (or the defence of someone else) made by a private man who has killed someone else must in conscience - even if not in law - be a plea that the death of the other was not intended, but was a side effect of the measures taken to ward off the attack. To shoot to kill, to set lethal man-traps, or, say, to lay poison for someone from whom one's life is in danger, are forbidden. The deliberate choice of inflicting death in a struggle is the right only of ruling authorities and their subordinates,



there are borderline cases. But that fact does not mean that an absolute prohibition on murder makes no sense.<sup>292</sup>

But murder is not done only where the killing is quite intentional. The victim may be attacked in order to hurt him badly, or to expose him to serious danger. Or the target may have been someone else. Or the killer may not be focusing on any victim—for example, he blows up a plane or burns down a house to get insurance money, not caring whether or even that there are people inside. Such killing maybe more callous and heinous than some that is intentional.<sup>293</sup>

So, the principle of side effects defines the set of cases that are not necessarily wrong (as intentional killings of the innocent). As she notes, “the principle is modest: it says ‘where you must not aim at someone’s death, causing it does not *necessarily* incur guilt’”.<sup>294</sup> In her rejection of the, “package Doctrine of Double Effect,” (or, Proportionalism), Anscombe says:

The Principle of Side Effects says no more than that moving the rock is not excluded by the prohibition on intentional killing. For, as I have explained it, that principle is not a package deal and it does not say what circumstances or needs excuse unintended causing of death. Some principle or principles are needed, and if we adopt that one principle, of the balance of good over evil in the expected upshot, then it becomes obscure why we could not do this where the causation of death was perfectly intentional. And that seems to be the principal ground on which some thinkers throw the whole package out of the window, and talk about a deliberate killing, for example, as *so far* a ‘pre-moral’ evil’. ... The nerve of the rejection of former doctrine is here.<sup>295</sup>

In order to determine permissibility in a case where one foresees death as a concomitant of one’s act, with what does one complement the Intention distinction? Anscombe suggests that complementing the Intention distinction with quasi-consequentialist considerations (the balance of good over evil) makes it difficult to argue that one could not have recourse to the balance of good over evil in a case involving an outright intent to kill. As we have observed, abuse of the *Principle of Double Effect* resulted to the *Principle of Side Effect* (PSE) and the borderline is on the volition of human action. The voluntary constitutes the subject matter of ethics. As Anscombe (following Aquinas following Aristotle) notes, one need add no further characteristic to a human action (other than its voluntariness by which it is a human action) in virtue of which it becomes subject to moral evaluation.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid., *Human Life*, p. 219.

<sup>293</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, *Human Life, Action and Ethics*, Edited by Mary Geach and Luke Gormally, United Kingdom, Imprint Academic, 2005, p. 265.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., *Human Life*, p. 224.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., *Medalist’s Address*, pp. 13-20.

On the whole, Anscombe's principle of side effects reveal a much more attenuating factors for moral guilt that the principle of double effects which it tends to replace. By and large, both principles reveal the structure of human action as multi-faceted. With her distinction between intention and consequences, one is able to weigh the balance of virtue on the psychological side of intention. As Anscombe argues for the psychological basis for moral acts, it is the considered value of intentional effects rather than the eventual consequences of a human action which holds the ground for moral guilt and it is on its account that a more suitable theory of virtue ethics can be formulated.

## **2.6 Anscombe and the teleological route for virtue ethics.**

Anscombe's Aristotelian sympathies are clear throughout "*Modern Moral Philosophy*," but it would be a mistake to conclude that an alternative to a divine law conception of ethics is the same thing as an Aristotelian conception of ethics. There are several alternatives that she explicitly considers and rejects, not as incoherent, but as morally undesirable, including following the norms of society, using one's conscience as a guide, and looking for moral laws of nature. Some of her critics have presented her as offering a stark choice: accept a fundamentally religious vocabulary for moral discourse or else return to the ethics of Aristotle. Perhaps some of her admirers read her this way too.

If we are to adopt some form of Aristotelian virtue ethics, according to Anscombe, then we need an explanation of what makes an unjust act a bad act, or an unjust person a bad person, and the explanation of one's intention. This kind of explanation would need to involve an account of justice as a virtue, and this in turn would require an account of what type of characteristic a virtue is and how it relates to the actions that are instances of it. Furthermore, this it would have to involve is an account of what a human action is, and how its proper description is affected by its motive. All this conceptual analysis is needed for understanding virtues, and it belongs, Anscombe says, to the philosophy of psychology rather than to ethics.

Virtue ethicists should thus take little comfort in Anscombe's paper. A lot of work has been done in the philosophy of psychology since "*Modern Moral Philosophy*" first appeared, but nobody claims that the specific questions Anscombe raises have been answered. Alternative theories are no better off in this regard either. Deontological theories are clearly a major target of Anscombe's attack on the concept of moral obligation. She attacks consequentialism also, as we have seen. In the conclusion to *Mr. Truman's degree*, Anscombe alleged that Oxford

philosophy was suffering from the vice of describing human actions in such a way as to miss moral responsibility, missing the existence of "intention" in actions. The notion of the human *telos* that we need for ethics is not a notion drawn from science, but from what Wittgenstein calls "the shared customary behavior of mankind" and that is the emphasis of Anscombe.

## 2.7 Objections and Criticism

Rosalind Hursthouse discussed the nine criticisms of virtue theory which she categorized into three for a better understanding. Firstly, this consists of criticisms that Hursthouse disposes of well. The second consists of criticisms that might apply equally to the kind of approach to ethics that we will consider instead of virtue theory. These criticisms, as treated by Hursthouse, are two strands of the single criticism that, "Virtue theory can't get us anywhere in real moral issues because it is bound to be all assertion and no argument."<sup>297</sup> A problem with Anscombe's account is this. Clearly, people sometimes act intentionally without having reasons for what they do. A person can move a coffee mug for no particular reason, or just because it suits them that way. Yet we don't conclude that the action is unintentional for lack of a reason.

In response to Hursthouse, Anscombe goes to lengths to show that such actions are an exception to the rule, arguing that the form of description which goes with intentional action would be useless if all or most actions were like this. She suggests that it is better to class such exceptional actions as voluntary rather than intentional. But none of this addresses the problem. Intentional actions are not just the ones people have reasons for. So, Anscombe doesn't define intentional actions as the ones that happen for reasons. Instead she says that they can be described in a special way that depends on asking for reasons. This fails to distinguish intentional from unintentional actions. Furthermore, even if we do describe intentional actions using a certain kind of language, there remains an unanswered question: Why can some things but not others be described in this way? Howsoever this further distinction goes, the best Anscombe did in response to Hursthouse is to distinguish between voluntary and intentional actions, whereby the former need not have justificatory reasons whereas the latter will certainly be expected to have some morally justified grounds. In this way, the principle of side effects within which context an intentional ground for human action is preserved, serves a more explicit purpose for the construction of a virtue ethics for intentional moral actions.

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<sup>297</sup> Anscombe, G. E. M., "Modern Moral Philosophy," in *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe Volume III: Ethics, Religion and Politics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1981, P. 230.

Next objection is that of Paul Bowel who critiques the Anscombean intelligibility thesis by arguing that a proper understanding of intelligibility defuses an objection from Kieran Setiya.<sup>298</sup> Setiya argues that we do not act intentionally 'under the guise of the good.' This makes it hard to explain why akrasia is distinctively irrational, but this is no objection since it is just as hard to explain on the opposing view. Ends with a problem of akrasia for ethical rationalists.<sup>299</sup>

Bowel notes that both supporters and critics of the intelligibility motivation have, at times, targeted other notions of intelligibility than the one. Certainly, notwithstanding that the notion of intelligibility thesis owes a great deal to Anscombe, it owes yet more to Warren Quinn. Anscombe holds that statements or agents under a certain description are intelligible or not absolutely, and the notion of intelligibility she has in mind seems to be analogous to that according to which "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously" is not intelligible.<sup>300</sup> Bowel argues that the more compelling version of the intelligibility motivation relies on intuitions not about what is interpretable as an agent, as Anscombe's does, but about our relationship to our own actions. But the affinity between constructivism and the seeing-good-to-intelligibility direction of explanation is more apparent than real. It is one thing to explain *the good* in terms of the possibility of finding an action an intelligible object of choice, and another to explain *seeing* something *as good* in terms of its being made an intelligible object of choice. At any rate, whatever the GG theorist's account of the relation between rationality and the good, it seems to me that she faces considerable pressure to understand the intelligibility of action in terms of seeing good in the action according to Anscombean view.

### **Concluding remarks**

What contemporary virtue ethics *can* usefully take as its agenda with the help of Anscombean suggestion of psychology of morals for future research is the phenomenology of our ordinary life, and in particular of the place in that life of our ideas of well-being and excellence of human conducts. Despite Anscombe's recognition of the problems it faces, we

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<sup>298</sup> Paul Boswell: Intelligibility and the Guise of the Good. *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* Vol. 13, No. 1, March 2018, p. 8.

<sup>299</sup> Kieran Setiya: Akrasia and the Constitution of Agency, *Practical Knowledge: Selected Essays* Oxford University Press, 2016. **Kieran Setiya** is Professor of Philosophy at MIT. He works in action theory, ethics, and epistemology, and is the author of *Reasons without Rationalism* (2007) and *Knowing Right From Wrong* (OUP 2012). His essays range from the nature of rational agency to the place of love in moral philosophy and the resolution of the midlife crisis.

<sup>300</sup> Anscombe, *Intention*, 14, 19, and 26; cf. MacIntyre, "The Intelligibility of Action," 64. Vogler *Reasonably Vicious*, 49, p. 51.

might try to save her argument that the only possible, coherent virtue theory by doing the work in the philosophy of psychology that she says is necessary. This would no doubt be difficult, but not necessarily impossible. Following Anscombe's thread, it is possible to build a theory of virtue on the basis of the psychological motivation for human action and morality. This submission does not however preclude from other alternative routes neither does it deny other reasons for wanting to avoid virtue theory, in the way Anscombe intends. It suffices however to recognize the possibility of constructing a theory of virtue on a purely Anscombean psychological foundations. This alone is what I have tried to prove in this section.

## CHAPTER THREE

### KAROL WOJTYŁA'S CONCEPTION OF MORAL ACTION AND VIRTUE ETHICS

#### 3.1 Karol Wojtyła as Catholic moralist who encounters Phenomenology

Karol Wojtyła was born in the town of Wadowice, 50 Kilometers Southwest of Krakow on May 18, 1920.<sup>301</sup> Karol Joseph Wojtyła is correctly pronounced as “Karol Joseph Voy-tee-wah”. He is the son of Karol Wojtyła, Sr., a military officer in the First World War, and Emilia Kaczorowska. Karol Wojtyła made his first communion at the age of nine and was confirmed at the age of 18. As a high school student at Wadowice, Karol Wojtyła was interested in literature, particularly drama. Mieczyslaw Kotlarczyk was his Polish language teacher, who introduced to him in the literature<sup>302</sup>. His college days were not pleasant like every other student of his days due to the brutality of the Nazis German occupation of Poland. Notwithstanding, Wojtyła made it to the Catholic priesthood in 1946 in Krakow. His adolescent experience led him to discover the dignity and rights of the human person, especially the right to life and from this perspective he responded to the injustices of his day. Cardinal Karol Wojtyła later became Pope John Paul II, the Vicar of Christ, and the Supreme Pontiff to the Roman Catholic Church. This chapter aims to make an analysis of the thought of Wojtyła on the human person, his ethics and ethical theory, and his own unique contribution of moral philosophy and anthropology.

Wojtyła's ethical theory is based on the critique of the phenomenological Schelerian and Kantian ethics and an appropriation of Thomistic ethics. He analyzes the ethical positions of Scheler and Kant and offers his own way of doing the philosophy of ethics along the lines of St. Thomas Aquinas. The bedrock of his ethics is the act of the will which is grounded on the experience of efficacy. But the object of the will is the *good* which must be perceived as a value by the person. In the course of this discussion, experience, which should be the starting point of ethics, will be correlated with the good, which is the object of the will, and the truth, which is the object of reason and must be a quality of the good that is desired by the will. Wojtyła's moral philosophy is based on his notion of the human act, an act which manifests

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<sup>301</sup> Longford Lord, *Pope John Paul II: An Authorized Biography* (Papal visit Ltd., 1982), p.31.

<sup>302</sup> Hans Cochler, *Karol Wojtyła's Notions of the Irreducible in Man and in the quest of the Just World of Order*, Saint Joseph College West Hartford, Connecticut, USA (22 March 2006), p. 3.

efficacy, transcendence, self-determination and self-fulfillment. The morality of the act must be based on goodness and truthfulness. Human actions are affected by one's conscience and determined by freedom and carries with it responsibility. Wojtyła's dissertation in philosophy is a critical exposition of the ethics of Scheler. Although he rejects the ethics of Scheler, he looks at Scheler as a possible guide for searching for answers about ethics and values; answers to questions like "Why be good?" The work of Scheler opens up a new world, a world of values, and a fresh view of mankind. With a solid background in Thomism, Wojtyła is open to engage modern philosophy on its own terms and the outcome would be, what Wojtyła would regard years later, as a way of doing philosophy that synthesized the approaches of metaphysical realism of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and sensitivity to human experience of Max Scheler's phenomenology. It is Scheler's personalism which rescues moral philosophy from the dry abstractions of Kantian ethics and restores the pathos, ecstasy, and ethos to human life, that Wojtyła finds most attractive.

Scheler's phenomenology is important in the development of the thought of Wojtyła, especially because of the fact that Wojtyła wants to insist on making revealed ethics constitutive of perennial ethics. Although in the end Wojtyła rejects Scheler's system of ethics, in effect, Scheler introduces Wojtyła into the phenomenological method of grasping the circumstances of the ethically positive or negative as they are lived through in experience. Wojtyła did not succumb to Scheler's notion, rather as a Catholic theologian, he upheld Christian ethics as the ideal to be emulated.

Interestingly, Wojtyła's concept of human action presents to us how he conceives of the human person as a being which is revealed through action. He understands human experience as the starting point of knowledge for the person. He then elaborates how consciousness and efficacy, emphasizing that the fundamental function of consciousness consists in a mirroring of the objects that are already known to the subject through his knowledge and self-knowledge. For him, the reflexive function brings into prominence the subjectiveness of the human subject in his experience. His notion on the transcendence and integration of the person in action and his theory of participation forms the core of his treatment of the person's efficient causality.

Central to the *Acting Person* of Wojtyła is the thesis that the human being is not just a bundle of emotions and sensory perceptions, but is rather an intelligent and free being, whose existence is constituted by the essential characteristic of freedom and responsibility. The essentially rational character of the human being specifies that human freedom is the primary characteristic which sets man apart from other existing beings in the material world, and thus

constitutes him as the efficient cause of his actions and the corresponding subject of rights and responsibilities. It is precisely because man is a subject of rights and responsibilities that he must be respected and cherished. Wojtyła considers human experience as the starting point of the person's knowledge. Wojtyła employs a more sophisticated phenomenological method which vows to describe indiscriminately the whole content of the individual human person's experience. Wojtyła tries to reconstruct an original human experience and to build an adequate theory of human action person by going beyond the limits of phenomenological method set by Scheler's paradigms.

Marian Jaworski, a philosopher of religion from Cracow, wrote that the philosophical anthropology of Wojtyła aims to reveal through the explication of human experience the categories that are proper to the human being.<sup>303</sup> Wojtyła's concept of philosophy is a continuation of the tradition of Aristotle, Aquinas and Etienne Gilson. For Aristotle and Aquinas, a philosophical reflection where the sensory cognition of a being is involved does not directly build a metaphysics but rather a philosophy of nature (*scientia naturalis*).<sup>304</sup> For example, it is *scientia naturalis* that analyses the soul as the form of the body. Jaworski quotes Gilson: "one cannot deduce anthropology from metaphysics. Like other creatures, man is an essence made alive by an act of existence, but his nature cannot be recognized apart from this act."<sup>305</sup> So for Jaworski, Wojtyła is right when he begins his anthropology by retrieving from human experience, the fundamental elements that constitute the human being. Also, Wojtyła's anthropology does not reject a metaphysical interpretation, even though he does not pursue it in a systematic way.

Tadeusz Styczen, another philosopher and Wojtyła's assistant also argues in favour of Wojtyła's method. For him, Wojtyła describes different human dynamisms in order to reveal the character of their source, the human agent. This pointing to the source of all human activities does not provide mere hypotheses but rather a discovery of some necessary principles or causes whose negation would lead to a negation of some basic facts found in human experience.<sup>306</sup> Styczen emphasized that the negation of the transcendence of the human person would only lead to a negation of all the human acts.

The one most debated and criticized area of Wojtyła's philosophy is his methodology. Most neo-Thomists would point out that Wojtyła's theory does not have a philosophical

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid, p. 77

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, p. 78.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.



character. According to Mieczyslaw A. Krapiec, the rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, at the time Wojtyła was professor of ethics at CUL, defined philosophical anthropology as a “theory of man that makes the human being non-contradictory in the context of its fundamental operations.”<sup>307</sup> Therefore, Krapiec argued that since Wojtyła does not present an analysis of man in all the essential aspects of his life, he does not create a philosophical anthropology but rather an “aspect anthropology” that presents the person only as a subject of morality.<sup>308</sup>

Some other philosophers have held negative views to the methodology of Wojtyła. One of these philosophers is Stanislaw Kaminski, a professor of logic and methodology. He held that Wojtyła’s method leads only to an analytical description of the subject.<sup>309</sup> This description can serve as a hypothesis, but it cannot replace a philosophical explanation which for Kaminski, consists of logical reasoning that links the presented hypothesis with other theoretical and observational statements. Jerzy Kalinowski also criticized Wojtyła stating that “since only metaphysics is able to provide an ultimate explanation of the facts observed by Wojtyła. *Osoba i czyn (The Person and the Act)* does not have a philosophical character, because it lacks a sufficient metaphysical analysis.”<sup>310</sup>

In the light of Kalinowski’s critique, it can be admitted that Wojtyła’s work would reveal to some extent that his thesis is incomplete. This is because Wojtyła attempted to bring together two disparate modes of thinking – namely, traditional metaphysics and phenomenology. From a Thomistic perspective, Wojtyła’s philosophy is frustrating because he does not demonstrate his assertions using traditional logical methods. From a phenomenological perspective, his philosophy is frustrating because it sets limits to and supplements phenomenology by incorporating metaphysical realities inaccessible to subjective experience. Another drawback is the difficulty in understanding Wojtyła’s use of both the traditional terms (suppositum, nature, rational nature, participation) and the modern usage of the terms (praise, alienation, self-determination, solidarity) in new ways, as well as his creation of new categories especially that of “lived experience”, to explicate the unique reality of the acting person.

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<sup>307</sup> Jaroslaw Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2001, p. 77.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

### 3.2 Wojtyła's Virtue Ethics in *Love and Responsibility*

It is notable that Wojtyła pursues virtue ethics in the light of the traditional teaching of the Church, which highlights love as the most excellent virtue. This is different from the Greek philosophical tradition wherein the virtue of justice is considered to be the most excellent. In his book, *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyła declares as follows: “The love of a man and a woman is a reciprocal relation of persons and possess a personal character. This is linked most profoundly to its ethical meaning....Its object will then be love as a virtue, and the greatest virtue at that, which in a sense encompasses all other virtues and elevates them all to its own level, while impressing on them its own profile”.<sup>311</sup>

In a certain sense, to say that love encompasses all other virtues as Wojtyła indicates, places it at par with the cardinal virtue of prudence and this is so to the extent that the virtue of love consists in the balance of subjective and objective values of the personal good of both lover and beloved. This balance is mostly characterized by the associated virtue of chastity which accounts for the proper measure of love in the Christian tradition within which Wojtyła analyzes the ethical significance of the virtue of love. For the sake of clarifying the distinction between his ethical analysis of the virtue of love and the relation this analysis bears with the Gospel commandment to love in which context the virtue of chastity plays a central role, Wojtyła notes as follows: “...on the basis of the Christian ethics born of the Gospel, a problem exists, which can be described as an ‘introduction of love into love’. In the first instance, the word ‘love’ signifies the content of the greatest commandment, whereas in the second instance all that is formed on the basis of the sexual drive between a man and a woman. Proceeding in the opposite direction, one can say that a problem exists of reducing the latter love to the former one, i.e., to the love of which the Gospel speaks. This is an open problem. The manuals of ethics and of moral theology grasp these two loves somewhat separately: they speak of the former in the treatise on the theological virtues, because love is the greatest of these virtues, whereas they speak of the latter chiefly within the treatise on the cardinal virtue of temperance, since sexual chastity is linked to it. ...Both believers and non-believers read the Gospel. The former discover in the commandment to love the main bond of the whole supernatural order, but both believers and nonbelievers are able to discover in this commandment an affirmation of some great human good, in which persons can and should share.”<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p.58.

<sup>312</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, xxiii.

From the above it is clear that the moral good which the virtue of love seeks is nothing other than the good of the person. Love is thus a virtue which consists primarily in the affirmation of the person as the good it seeks. Wojtyła's virtue ethics therefore consists in the consideration of the value of the good of person which is given as the objective moral norm, otherwise dubbed the 'personalistic norm'. In the light of the influence from phenomenology of Max Scheler and the analytico-critical tradition of Immanuel Kant, Wojtyła points out the relation between the metaphysical evaluation or assessing the person as a good (i.e. value of the person) and normalization of the ethical worth of person (personalistic norm) as follows: "It is clear that normalizing (*normowanie*) differs from assessing (*ocenianie*) or valuating (*wartosciowanie*). Nonetheless, both include the fundamental moment – the moment of the truth about the good. And in this sense assessing or valuating is so to speak already normalizing, although not in the full sense of the word. What we call normalizing in the full sense of the word is not solely to determining the truth about the good of a human act, but to direct that act in accordance with that truth."<sup>313</sup>

It is however notable that through phenomenological analysis of lived-experience of the dynamics of moral virtue, Wojtyła was able to meet the contemporary rediscovery of virtue ethics as postulated by Elizabeth Anscombe's psychological considerations. Thus, he moved from a metaphysical analysis through a psychological analysis to eventually arrive at an ethical analysis of the dynamism of moral virtue in the human person. Hence, he was able to show the distinction between the psychological and ethical analysis when he took up the problem of the relation between psychology and ethics.<sup>314</sup> He went on to show that psychology and ethics meet at the point of origin, which in this case is the fact of the interior experience of human efficacy. Notably, this grasp of the fact of efficacy by contemporary psychology displays the validity of Thomas Aquinas' analyses in this area, as well as a certain shortcoming in the analyses by Immanuel Kant and Max Scheler. Psychology and ethics as it were, grasp efficacy as an essential element of the lived-experience of the will, and see the will as the core of experiencing efficacy. It is however at this point that the paths of these two disciplines part. Consequently, by experimental inductive method, psychology strives for discovering particular mechanisms of the will's action, for grasping concrete motives that provide a beginning for the realization of a chosen end. On the other hand, ethical analyses strive for a full explanation of the lived

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<sup>313</sup> Cf. Wojtyła, "O metafizycznej i fenomenologicznej podstawie normy moralnej. Na podstawie koncepcji św. Tomasza z Akwinu i Maxa Schelera" [On the metaphysical and phenomenological basis of the moral norm. Based on the conception of St. Thomas Aquinas and Max Scheler].

<sup>314</sup> See Wojtyła, "Zagadnienie woli w analizie aktu etycznego" [The Problem of the Will in the Analysis of the Ethical Act], *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 5, fasc. 1 (1955-57), pp. 111-135.

experience of efficacy through grasping and characterizing an end- a moral value. Efficacy here is understood as a source of the ethical value, i.e., through which man becomes good or evil in the moral sense, which can be comprehended *sensu lato* (good or evil interiorly as man), or in a way that is personalistically qualified (true in attitudes and conduct to the value that is the person).<sup>315</sup>

The above noted principles which informed Wojtyła's virtue ethics were most vividly applied in his work *Love and Responsibility*, where he attempts to present a clear analysis of Catholic sexual morality, based on the truth about the human person. The background to this work is very significant and it might be insightful to tell a bit of its story. In 1957 on a vacation with philosophy, psychology, and medical students in the Mazurian Lakes region of Poland, he discussed the draft of a book he was writing on sexual and marital ethics. The students' input was crucial to the development of an approach to sexual ethics which confronted the real problems of ordinary people. The material was further developed in a series of lectures entitled "Love and Responsibility" which he delivered from 1957 to 1959, and then published as book under the same title in 1960.<sup>316</sup> The specific virtue discussed in this book, as we have already indicated is love. The command to love is the kingdom of the supernatural order for believers, but even non-believers can discover there the affirmation of a great human good, which must be the portion of every person. Problems of sex are more than merely problems of the "body," and hence physiology and medicine do not have an exclusive right to speak on these matters. Psychology is important. These sciences cannot generate ethical norms unaided. In his introduction to the first edition, Wojtyła explains his purpose:

...although it is easy to draw up a set of rules for Catholics in the sector of 'sexual' morality the need to validate these rules makes itself felt at every step. For the rules often run up against greater difficulties in practice than in theory, and the spiritual adviser, who is concerned above all the practical, must seek ways of justifying them. For his task is not only to command or forbid but to justify, to interpret, to explain. The present book was born principally of the need to put the norms of Catholic sexual morality on a firm basis, a basis as definitive as possible, relying on the most elementary and incontrovertible moral truths and the most fundamental values or goods. Such a good is the person and the moral truth most closely bound up with the world of persons is 'the commandment to love' -- for love is a good peculiar to the world of person.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>315</sup>Cf. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>316</sup> George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*. New York: Cliff Street Books, 1999, p.139.

<sup>317</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux. Translated by H. T. Willets, 1994, page 16.

*Love and Responsibility* puts the problem of sex and sexual morality within the domain of the person. Therefore, there is first a need to understand what the person is.<sup>318</sup> The personal order is the only proper plane for debate on sexual morality. Physiology and medicine can only supplement, because they do not provide a complete foundation for the understanding of love and responsibility, which matters most. Wojtyła begins *Love and Responsibility* with an analysis of the verb "to use" and a critique of utilitarianism. According to him, "Utilitarians regard the principle of maximization of pleasure accompanied by the minimization of pain as the primary rule of human morality"<sup>319</sup> and regard pleasure as an end in itself. While this may seem attractive, by making pleasure in itself the sole or greatest good, other values including the value of the person are subordinated. Persons are inevitably reduced to objects to be used to maximize the pleasure of others. Utilitarianism does offer a "semblance of altruism," but Wojtyła explains how this fiction inevitable devalues the human person: "If, while regarding pleasure as the only good, I also try to obtain the maximum pleasure for some else - and not just for myself, which would be blatant egoism - then I put a value on the pleasure of this other person only in so far as it gives pleasure to me: it gives me pleasure, that someone else is experiencing pleasure. If however, I cease to experience pleasure, or it does not tally with my 'calculus of happiness' - (a term often used by utilitarian) then the pleasure of the other person ceases to be my obligation, a good for me and may even become something bad. I shall then - - true to the principles of utilitarianism -- seek to eliminate the other person's pleasure because no pleasure for me is any longer bound up with it -- or at any rate the other person's pleasure will become a matter of indifference to me and I shall not concern myself with it.

'Love' in this utilitarian conception is a union of egoism, which can hold together only on condition that they confront each other with nothing unpleasant, nothing to conflict with their mutual pleasure. Therefore love so understood is self-evidently merely a pretence which has to be carefully cultivated to keep the underlying reality hidden: the reality of egoism and the greediest kind of egoism at that, exploiting another person to obtain for itself its own 'maximum pleasure'. In such circumstances the other person is and remains only a means to an end..."<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> In relationship, there is the need for patience, understanding, sacrifice, and sometimes compromise. For example, if a wife has a workload, husbands are better off embracing the reality of their wives' situation. Becoming angry or frustrated only makes you dwell on your disappointment. If you are empathetic, you might be able to manage your expectations better, and that frees you up to work toward solutions that meet both of your needs. Sex is something that can be negotiated between husband and wife; it requires an air of fairness.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., , p. 38-39.

A person who treats the other as merely a means to an end does violence to the other's essence. The utilitarian ethic, sharply contrasts with the Christian norm: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself", which contains the corollary: "You may not use persons as objects". Wojtyła formulates this principle in philosophical terms as: "Whenever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you may not treat that person only as a means to an end, as an instrument, but must allow for the fact that he or she, too, has, or at least should have, distinct person ends."<sup>321</sup>This norm provides a universally applicable basis for ethical thinking. According to Wojtyła while he follows Kantian personalist turn of the categorical imperative, "... we must never treat a person as the means to an end. This principle has universal validity. Nobody can use a person as a means toward an end, no human being, nor yet God the Creator,"<sup>322</sup> (God does not use us). It also provides a foundation for the defense of human rights for: "Anyone who treats a person as a means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right."<sup>323</sup>

Once this fundamental principle is understood and accepted, then the "rules" of sexual morality fall into place, not as arbitrary "don'ts" but as the logical demands of an ethic founded on respect for the human person. Wojtyła does not disparage sexual pleasure, the value of sexuality, the value of the body, erotic feelings, or the emotions associated with love. Rather he points out how these can be dangerous if not governed by a true love which puts the person first: 'Sinful love' is often very emotional, saturated with emotion, which leaves no room for anything else. Its sinfulness is not of course due to the fact that it is saturated with emotion, nor to the emotion itself, but to the fact that they puts emotion before the person, allowing it to annul all the objective laws and principles which must govern the unification of two person, a man and a woman.<sup>324</sup> The particular danger of "sinful love" consists in a fiction; immediately, and before reflection, it is not felt to be 'sinful', but it is, above all, felt to be love." "Sin is a violation of the true good. For the true good in the love of man and woman is first of all the person, and not emotions for its own sake, still less pleasure as such. These are secondary goods, and love - which is a durable union of persons - cannot be built of them alone."<sup>325</sup>The Utilitarian Sexual Contract Sexual Revolution is founded on a Utilitarian Sexual Contract which, while rarely explicitly spelled out, can be summarized as follows: I can use you as a sex

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid. p. 165.

object. Its error is in thinking that pleasure is the sole or greatest good, either for myself (blatant egoism) or for another (whose pleasure becomes my pleasure).<sup>326</sup> Pleasure is essentially incidental, contingent, something that may occur in the course of action. It cannot be the only factor affecting my decision to act or not to act. For Aquinas, conjugal friendship which means love and responsibility in Wojtyła, obviously has utility inasmuch as it furnishes a sufficiency for family life. Likewise, it provides pleasure in the generative act, as is the case with other animals. But when the husband and wife are virtuous, their friendship can be based on virtue. In fact there is a virtue proper to both husband and wife that renders their friendship delightful to each other.<sup>327</sup>

Doing the moral good often involves some measure of pain or renunciation of some pleasure I may at some point want to share housing with you or even enter into a marriage and decide to conceive a child, but our relationship will always be contingent on your remaining useful to me by supplying me with sexual and other pleasures. If the discomfort I feel is greater than the pleasure I gain from this relationship, I am free to terminate the relationship unilaterally. I will let you use me as a sex object, provided you gain my explicit consent before each encounter. We will negotiate the safe-sex practices to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. I understand that you are under no obligation to continue the relationship should your discomfort be greater than your pleasure. The acceptance of utilitarian sexual ethics is so pervasive that many young men and women do not recognize its fundamental immorality. Date rape trials and sexual harassment law suits hinge not on whether or not one person has been used as a sexual object -- it is assumed he or she has -- but on whether consent was obtained and the use was terminated on demand. Modern women and men consider themselves liberated from the need to conceal their motives. No one feels is supposed to feel guilty for using another person.

On the other hand, under the utilitarian sexual ethic, those who expect commitment or fail to allow the other person to exit the relationship without recrimination may find themselves condemned. If they protest, they are told to "get over it." It is not surprising that, in the vernacular, men who engage in a series of short-term sexual relationships are referred to as "users" or that women frequently complain about being "used." When the value of the person is subordinated to the value of the sexual pleasure gained by using the person and the person's

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<sup>326</sup> It is quite clear that pleasure is a purely subjective good. It is not trans-subjective or even inter-subjective. At most we can want another's pleasure "besides" and always "on condition of" our own pleasure.

<sup>327</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, 2 vols., trans. C. I. Litzinger (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964) 2:768 (8.1721), <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/Ethics8.htm#12>. Accessed on 22/03/2020.

body, the person feels "used." Although the persons involved may use the word "love" and may try to convince themselves that they are "in love" so long as "using" is at the heart of the relationship, true love as virtue is impossible. As long as the relationship continues one or both of the parties involved may convince themselves that they are being loved for themselves, but the moment the relationship is terminated, they are faced with the truth that they were being used for pleasure, not loved for themselves. This revelation has a nasty way of reaching back and corrupting the memory of the pleasure and reaching forward, instilling fear of being used in the future. If the Sexual Revolution is inextricably linked to the utilitarian ethical theory, then it is not simply a question of whether specific acts are sinful or not.<sup>328</sup>

Wojtyła argues, that the utilitarian premise is the root cause of the problem, and it is this premise which must be attacked head-on. If using a person as an object and allowing oneself to be used are contrary to human dignity and are an abuse of freedom, then opposition to the Sexual Revolution and its utilitarian view of the person is not a sectarian belief, but is rather an idea which is based on fundamental principles, which can be defended in the secular marketplace. The path to true love in Catholic sexual ethic is too often characterized by a series of prohibitions. In *Love and Responsibility* one finds an entirely different approach. Sexual attraction, sexual pleasures, the value of the body, desire are all treated as things which are good, but only in their proper place. This story of true love begins with love as attraction, perhaps initially as attraction to the characteristics the person possesses, but eventually attraction toward the person himself or herself. This is followed by love as desire. Desire is "felt as a longing for some good for its own sake: 'I want you because you are a good for me.'<sup>329</sup>

And so love becomes a longing for the person. This is followed by love as "goodwill", because: "It is not enough to long for a person as a good for oneself, one must also, and above all, long for that person's good."<sup>330</sup> In this sense authentic love can only be reciprocal. "Reciprocity assumes the characteristics of durability and reliability" and allows for trust.<sup>331</sup> "It is impossible to put your trust in another human being knowing or feeling that his or her sole aim is utility or pleasure. It is equally impossible to put your trust in a person if you yourself have the same thing as you main object." Persons on the path to love feel "sympathy" for one another - they experience the feelings of the other. They also need to become friends, who want what is good for the other. And finally all this lead to a free decision to enter into betrothed

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>329</sup> *Love and Responsibility*, p.81. Complete security against carnal concupiscence is something we find only in the profound realism of virtue, and specifically the virtue of chastity. Let the desire never be carnal.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid. p. 83.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., p. 86-87.



love - "the giving of one's own person (to another)." Because the gift of self is reciprocal it is based on the unification of persons, a unification based on attraction, desire, goodwill, sympathy, and friendship, and because they give themselves freely to each other, the two are able to become one without either of them becoming an object of possession or use by the other. Once they have become one in all these aspects, and one by a decision of their wills, only then do they have a right to become one flesh, only then are they ready to accept together the joint and permanent responsibility for a new human life, the fruit of their union, and to commit to the care of each other not just when it is pleasurable, but in sickness and in health, for richer, for poor, till death. "The unification of the two persons must first be achieved by way of love, and sexual relations between them can only be the expression of a unification already complete."<sup>332</sup>

Psychology, the science of the soul, confirms that the most significant characteristics of man's inner life are the sense of truth and the sense of freedom. Man's ability to discover the truth gives him the possibility of self-determination, of deciding for himself the character and direction of his own actions. This is what freedom means. And many have been influenced by Wojtyła and his truly Catholic approach to sexuality. By reanalyzing the problem of sexual morality, he has produced a defense of Christian sexual ethics that is as different from previous approaches as an unhatched egg is from brand new chick.<sup>333</sup> Absolutely faithful to what he received, he has subtracted nothing. Everything he says was there from the beginning -- through perhaps hidden, not fully understood. He has opened up Catholic sexual morality and marvelously revealed that what appeared hard and impenetrable is soft, living, lovely. Wojtyła has challenged the world by presenting the truth about the human person as the foundation for all social policy and personal morality and by insisting that human freedom cannot be separated from truth, and that freedom must be directed toward love: Freedom exists for the sake of love. Going beyond a mere psychological analysis, Wojtyła was able to show the fundamental significance of ethical analysis of freedom and love in his virtue ethics. In result his study of the person in action brings more solid and clear anthropological foundation to virtue ethics. Morality is an outcome of self-determination, man becomes an object to himself and shapes his "moral face". This explains how morality is constituted.

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>333</sup> Catholic magisterial tradition on marriage and sexuality tended to follow both Augustine and Aquinas, but emphasized the three goods or ends of marriage, with procreation first and primary. The concept of marital friendship, the fundamental frame in which both Augustine and the mature Aquinas understood marriage, and specifically thinking of how marriage could be a "school of virtue" for spouses, is what Wojtyła developed.

### 3.3 Wojtyła's Philosophy of Person as a Foundation for Virtue Ethics

What is fundamental to Karol Wojtyła's philosophical anthropology is the dynamic cohesion between person and action.<sup>334</sup> Wojtyła claims that a person manifests himself through action, that action reveals the person. Primarily, this rule develops essentially from the Scholastic principle: *operari sequitur esse*. Taken metaphysically, this principle refers to the unilateral relation between *operari* and *esse*, that is, the logical priority of *esse* over *operari*.

Karol Wojtyła, on the other hand, reverses that relation and approaches it from its epistemological sense. If *operari* follows *esse*, he says, then taking *operari* as the principal object of inquiry can also be a proper avenue to the knowledge of *esse* (of a person).<sup>335</sup> By *operari*, Karol Wojtyła is referring to the whole structures of our dynamism, namely, our action and the actualization of the intrinsic potentials of the human being as a composite subject composed of soul and body: the actualization of the sense appetites of the body and the rational appetites of the soul, of intellect and will. But although both dynamisms provide us a complete picture of our being human, Wojtyła stipulates that it is "mainly in and through" the dynamism of action that reveals fully our being a person.<sup>336</sup> Karol Wojtyła says:

A person differs from a thing in structure and in the degree of perfection. To the structure of the person belongs an "inner" in which we find the elements of spiritual life and it is this that compels us to acknowledge the spiritual nature of the human soul and the peculiar perfectibility of the human person.<sup>337</sup>

In his 1976 article, "The Person: Subject and Community," he explicitly indicates it when he says "that the form of the human nature that has the most basic and essential significance for grasping the subjectivity of the human being is action: conscious human activity, in which the freedom proper to the human person is simultaneously expressed and concretized."<sup>338</sup> Wojtyła believes that "action gives us the best insight into the inherent essence of the person and allows us to understand the person most fully."<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, Trans. Andrzej Potocki, Ed. Anna- Theresatymieniecka (Boston: D. Rediel Publishing Company, 1979, p. 11. (Henceforth *AP*. The literal Translation of the *Acting Person* in its original Polish title, *Osoba i czyn, is person And Act or the Person and the Act*).

<sup>335</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. by Theresa Sandok, OSM New York: Peter Lang, 1993, 224.

<sup>336</sup> Wojtyła, *PSC*, 223-25.

<sup>337</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. by H.T. Willets (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), p. 121.

<sup>338</sup> Wojtyła, *PSC*, 224.

<sup>339</sup> Wojtyła, *AP*, 11

In contemporary philosophy especially in existentialism, we always refer to the human person as a concrete subject and a fellow man, stressing the fact that the human person is not just an abstract and logically defined object, but more significantly a concretely existing subject who co-exist with his fellow human persons and ordained for interpersonal relationship coupled with civic responsibilities. Man's ability with the aid of reason to identify his place in the cosmos helps him to determine right and wrong.

Central to Wojtyła's considerations on the philosophy of person in view of virtue ethics is his keenness on the role of experience in the analysis of the ethical behavior. Lived experience as it were became one of the basic notions of Wojtyła, a notion which we can describe as fundamental in his analysis of the moral experience of the human person. The person does not only live through his own experience; in experience, he encounters reality and reality comes to dwell with him; this reality is composed not only of things but is made also and above all of other people. Wojtyła, leaning on the phenomenological method, approached the problem of man's subjectivity from what he calls the "experience of man," that is man's experience of himself. He wrote:

This experience, which man has of himself, is the richest and apparently the most complex of all experiences accessible to him. Man's experience of anything outside of himself is always associated with the experience of himself, and he never experiences anything external without having at the same time the experience of himself.<sup>340</sup>

From his experience man encounters himself both the experiencing subject and the object that is experienced. He is therefore given as the subject of his own existence and action. Although at the level of consciousness this stops from time to time, as when one sleeps, it is continuous because the relation is renewed once it is reestablished. And since man is always in his own company, it is in a way continuing. He clarified further that although every experience is a unique and unrepeatable moment, but because the object of such an experience is man who emerges from all these moments, then we can rightly call it the experience of man. Human experience is profoundly unitary because the different acts of experience converge in man and they nourish the knowledge of man. The external experience enlightens the internal experience and is enlightened by it. So also the experience which I have of the other man clarifies that which I have of myself and is also illuminated by it.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Wojtyła, AP, p. 3.

<sup>341</sup> Buttiglione, p. 124.

Now, the object of experience is not limited only to one's ego or self, other men aside from one's ego can also be the object of one's experience. Wojtyła stressed that the experience of man is composed of his experience of himself and of all other men whose position in relation to the subject is that of the object of experience, that is to say, those who are in a direct cognitive relation to the subject.<sup>342</sup>In other words, I do not only experience myself, I also experience other people especially those who are close to me, my family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances. The experience of man then, has two possible objects, the ego or the self and other men or fellowmen; and there is definitely a distinction between the experience of one's ego or self and the experience of another ego or self. One difference is in terms of directness and immediacy, I experience myself directly and immediately but I do not have the same directness and immediacy of the experience of consciousness of another human being. Nevertheless, every human person has an experience of humanity as it is manifested in his own "I" and an experience of himself which derives from the reflection on his own being and acting among other men. Each one, then, also has his own unique *experience of the other man*. The experience of the other man is differentiated further into the experiences of one's own interior reaction communicated through language and experiences of those external actions which we are able to notice directly. There exists, therefore, in oneself and in others, a sphere of internal experience and a sphere of external experience; and there also exists through language a relative communicability of the experience of the other. The experience of the other can be an object of one's cognitive act or emotional act, without which one can never properly live the experience of the other man.<sup>343</sup>

Wojtyła clarified the relation and distinction between other men as objects of experience and myself as the object of my experience. In one of them we would have the experience only of man as the *other* and in the other only of the ego, man then as an object of experience, can be an ego or another human being. It is however impossible to deny that in both cases we are dealing with a human being, the two experiences differ but are not separable.<sup>344</sup>Further he wrote:

The disparity occurs because I am given to myself as my own ego, and thus more directly and differently than any other man who is not myself. Even when we assume the closest possible relation to another human being the difference will always remain." Sometimes we may be very close to another person we may actually find it easier

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<sup>342</sup> Wojtyła, AP, p. 4.

<sup>343</sup> Buttiglione, p. 124.

<sup>344</sup> Wojtyła, AP, p. 5.

to know and comprehend what is there in him or what he actually is, but this cannot be equivalent to “having an experience.”<sup>345</sup>

This subject brings us to the rational and existential aspects of the experience of man. According to Wojtyła the inner experience is exclusive to the ego or self and this is possible only in the relation of man to himself, all other men are excluded from this experience. The experience of the self with other men or egos is called outer experience. Experientially the ego is the “inner man” and it differs from the “outer man” who is always other than the self. It is always the conscious personal subject which is the experiencing subject in the experience of conscious personal self-awareness of existing as an individual human being, the experience that “I” exist, that I am existing. Others at one point may have access or know one’s interior or inner self, but they can never have an experience of someone’s self.

### **3.4 Wojtyła’s Notion of ‘Transcendence’, ‘Integration’, and ‘Self-fulfillment’**

#### **3.4.1 Transcendence**

According to Wojtyła transcendence can be described as “another name for the person” as it is closely related to the fulfillment of man as a personal being. Wojtyła speaks of two different kinds of transcendence. The first is called “Horizontal Transcendence”, and the second is called “Vertical Transcendence”. Horizontal transcendence for him relates to the intentional direction towards the good actualized in human actions. It highlights the subject-object relation and this can be seen in such acts as human cognition given that the cognizing subject gets to know something other than himself. However, the more significant dimension is the vertical transcendence, because it is here that Wojtyła explains more specifically the ontology of virtue. In the classical Aristotelian tradition within which the Polish philosopher discourses virtue ethics, it is noted that virtue not only makes the moral act good but also makes the person, the subject of the moral action, a good person. Vertical transcendence entails the personalization of the human agent, hence it raises the moral value of the person, thanks to his or her virtuous acts. This aspect is so central to Wojtyła’s description of transcendence that for him it is another name for the person. It is through moral transcendence that man is fulfilled as a personal being. This is why for Wojtyła transcendence is such an essential element of his personalism, that he describes it with no hesitation as “another name for the person”.<sup>346</sup> It is closely related to the fulfillment of man as a personal being.

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<sup>345</sup> Jove Jim S., Karol Wojtyła: On Person and Subjectivity *Ad Veritatem* Vol. 8, No. 2 (March 2009), p. 432.

<sup>346</sup> Karol Wojtyła, 1993, p. 230. Wojtyła presented his concept of the transcendence of the person through action in his work entitled *Osoba i czyn* (later translated into English and entitled *Person in Action*) and thus made it the central category in his philosophical

Man, insofar as he wishes to find fulfillment as a personal being, must perform his own self transcendence. Wojtyła proved that it could be achieved through action in which the person not only transcends himself towards the good, but also turns inwards towards his own self. This inward orientation is possible owing to the objectification of the function of self-determination. Transcendence in action is possible only through such human acts where the personalistic value of the action is actualized. This pre-ethical value manifests itself through the fact that man, being the subject of an action in its full sense, fulfils himself as the very subject-person who actualizes himself, creates himself as a self-governing being. The personalistic value of an action is succeeded by its moral value. Due to it, self-determination contains the inward movement, owing to which a human being choosing values in an act at the same time self-determines himself as “good” “bad”, a special kind of an act, which actualizes man as the person is participation.

The above analyses emphasize the particularly important role of a community on the way to the full transcendence of a human person. In his study Wojtyła managed to reconcile two, seemingly contradictory, movements – the one towards self-actualization and the other towards one’s neighbor. The personalism of the Polish thinker allows no room for hesitation that the transcendence of the human person leads through relations with other people, and the self-actualization of a man as a person is possible in its fullest form through participation in the humanity of another. The ultimate aim of human transcendence is however God who invites a person to participate in His Trinitarian Communion between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit<sup>347</sup>. Participation in this communion is also the highest form of transcendence and the only one which can satisfy a hidden human desire to transgress one’s own self towards someone else.

According to the entirety of the analyses conducted above, it can be stated that the issue of the transcendence has a significant position in the work of Karol Wojtyła. He elucidates them from numerous points of view which reciprocally complement each other showing a person as a being who fulfils himself through the transcendence on many dimensions of his existence. The manifestation of the complementarity of understanding the transcendence in the subjective dimension – as the action performed by personal “I” – with the transcendence of the person which is understood as the participation when the action is being performed “together with others”, constitutes an indisputable achievement of the Polish thinker.

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thought. The meaning of transcendence is strictly connected with the Polish philosopher’s understanding of the consciousness of the personal “I” and the concept of self-knowledge.

<sup>347</sup> Karol Wojtyła, 2005, 24-37.

### 3.4.2 Self-determination

The role of human freedom is the decisive factor in the determination of the human being as either a morally good or morally evil person, for the moral character of the person is the necessary result of the moral character of his or her intelligent and free action. And it is the whole person who acts in an “act of man”, for it flows from an intelligent and informed decision. It is in this sense that we can say that the person determines himself or herself according to the moral character of his essentially human acts, acts that flow from sufficient knowledge, deliberation, and full consent of the will. For Wojtyła, the existence of human freedom points to one of the essential potentialities of the essentially rational nature of the human person as an intelligent and free being. The Latin term (*potentia*) in the philosophical tradition is called “the will.”<sup>348</sup> It is for this reason that Wojtyła defines self-determination as the relation between the agent and his will.<sup>349</sup> He asserts that: “Every action confirms and at the same time makes more concrete the relation, in which the will manifests himself as a reality with regard to his dynamism that is properly constituted by the will. It is this relation that we call ‘self-determination’.”<sup>350</sup>

Self-determination points to the two other main aspects of a human action: self-possession and self-governance. “Because ‘I will’ is an act of self-determination at a particular moment, it presupposes structural self-possession. For only the things that are man’s actual possession can be determined by him; they can be determined only by the one who actually possesses them. Being in the possession of himself, man can determine himself.”<sup>351</sup> Both self-possession and self-governance reveal two fundamental dimensions of the person: the objective dimension and the subjective dimension.<sup>352</sup> Wojtyła pointed out two essential elements of human volition: (1) intentionality, which consists in the will’s directing itself upon its objects and, (2) a non-intentional self-determination which objectivizes the human subject.<sup>353</sup> When both self-determination and intentionality are present in an act of the will, such an act reveals most completely human causal efficacy and human transcendence. It is in the act of self-determination that Wojtyła finds the personal being as an agent not only of what is done in the external world but also in the fashioning and developing of a unique personal

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<sup>348</sup> Jaroslaw Kupczak, op cit., p. 113.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, op cit., p. 105.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid, p. 106.

<sup>352</sup> Jaroslaw Kupczak, op cit., p. 115.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid, p. 117.

being.<sup>354</sup> Therefore, self-determination is not equal with a choice, there are two objects: 1) a choice of good which is striven for and 2) the person as the primary object of decision (auto-teleology): morality arises because of the second object: the human person constitutes his or her own moral character and this is also constitutes the essentially rational structure of virtue.

It has to be underscored that self-determination is not restricted to the dynamics of choice of the object of a moral act, rather it is connected with the decision to commit oneself towards a specific moral dynamism through which the full value of the personal subject of his or her act is realized. In other words, self-determination arises on the background of self-possession, and self-governance. Only the person who possesses himself or herself can be said to self-possessed or self-governed, (or whatever else we would like to call self-control), for it is only to the extent one governs oneself can one freely and intelligently direct himself or herself towards a certain moral action, precisely as the conscious efficacious subject of the said moral action. In his work, *The Acting Person*, Wojtyła discourse self-determination in such a way that it approximates the concept of autonomy.

However, the notion of autonomy and self-determination has to be understood properly, because it is possible to very easily misinterpret it independently from the essential unity of the human being as a composite subject composed of soul and body, which specifies what constitutes the essential ends and purpose of the intrinsic potentials of the human person per se as either a male or female human being. In this sense the notion of self-determination may be misunderstood in ways which contradict the intrinsic goodness, dignity, and authentic fulfillment of the person.

In a recent essay, Alisa Carse alludes to this prominent view when she describes that in severe illness “we become the diseased body, the victimized person, or ‘survivor,’ the ‘walking wounded,’ as illness, assault, injury, or grief fix our and others’ attention.”<sup>355</sup> She points out that suffering and pain, by undermining bodily integrity and function, can compromise a person’s sense of self-determination and control. However, this is true only if self-determination is the same thing as willing. Now, if actual loss of one’s bodily integrity is proportionate to their loss of self-determination, then we are left with a very vulnerable and poverty-stricken notion of the will. But Wojtyła immediately repudiates this interpretation of self-determination resting in the will alone:

A complete description of the will cannot refer simply to the moment of ‘willing’ alone, neither to the exercise nor the experience of ‘I

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<sup>354</sup> Mary .T. Clark, *Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, K. Wojtyla on Person and Ego*, <https://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/PPer/PPerClar.html>, retrieved on 05/03/2020.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-39.



will,'...Every action confirms and at the same time makes more concrete this relation, in which the will manifests itself as a feature of the person and the person manifests himself as a reality with regard to this dynamism that is properly constituted by the will. It is this relation that we call 'self-determination.'<sup>356</sup>

It is critical to note Wojtyła's use of the word "relation" to describe self-determination: it is a relation between the self and the will, not a "one way street" of the self-willing. For Wojtyła, self-determination rests in the suppositum, the essence of an existing person; the person is revealed through the will, because the will properly understood, is a property of the person.<sup>357</sup>The significance of this philosophical claim cannot be overstated. Wojtyła is not merely claiming that through action we gain a deeper insight into the (moral) behavior of man, as if the personalist project was nothing more than glorified sociology or social anthropology. Rather, through an act of free will, a person communicates his very self to another. One cannot act as another. He can only act as himself, recognizing his action as originating from within, and literally revealing his being in the process. Human action is truly "an act of existence."<sup>358</sup>It is through self-determination that other antecedent properties of true autonomy—self-possession and self-governance—are revealed.<sup>359</sup>Self-possession demonstrates to the person mastery over himself. Such mastery need not apply to the virtuous man alone; even the man who acts badly knows he is the author of the action. He, as Joseph Seifert claims, "possesses himself and is possessed by himself."<sup>360</sup> However, self-possession should not be taken to be the modern notion of absolute mastery, without reference to truth. Wojtyła claims that self-possession is the subject's consciousness of the origination of his action in him, rather than the auto-normativity of whatever he cognizes. In addition, persons may lose varying degrees of self-possession and consequently they lose self-governance according to the degree of loss of self-possession. It is in this situation that we speak of lack of self-control. Accordingly, we cannot speak of self-determination in such a situation given that the actions performed under this condition are not likely to result into the good of the person.

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<sup>356</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, p. 105.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>358</sup> Woznicki, Andrew N, *A Christian Humanism: Karol Wojtyła's Existential Personalism*, New Britain, CT: Mariel Publications, 1980: pp. 8-10.

<sup>359</sup> AP, 106-107. Self-possession is the property of the act that allows the person to recognize and understand himself to be "the seat" of his own actions, where authority and control rest with him.

<sup>360</sup> Joseph Seifert, "Truth, Freedom, and Love in Karol Wojtyła's Philosophical Anthropology and Ethics," *Philosophy and Culture: Proceedings of the XVII World Congress of Philosophy 1983*, Montreal: University of Montreal Press, 1988: p. 537.

### 3.4.3 Self-fulfilment

Karol Wojtyła's analysis of the person-action-morality structure reaches its climax in his discussion of self-fulfilment as the actualization of the person in moral action. He considers self-fulfilment to be in parallel structure with self-determination only that its dynamism is in opposite intentional direction. Wojtyła was quick to note that every action contains within it an intentionality which is simultaneous directed outwards and inwards. Outwards with respect to a concrete objective end and inwards towards the personal subject, who is the moral agent. He tries to explain this with the terms 'transitiveness' and 'intransitiveness' of a moral action. Self-fulfilment is attained with respect to the person, who is the performer of the action. An action thus reaches and penetrates the subject, the ego, who is in this sense, the primary object of the moral action, the value of which fulfils the personal subject as a moral agent. In this respect, Wojtyła goes on to assert that "It is in the modality of morality that this objectification becomes clearly apparent, when through an action that is either morally good or morally bad, man, as the person, himself becomes either morally good or morally evil"<sup>361</sup>.

It occurs to me that Wojtyła's consideration of self-fulfillment reveals the very essence of his discussion on self-possession, self-governance and self-determination. Whereas self-determination is intentionally directed towards the objectively realized moral action, self-fulfillment arises as a consequence of self-determination, which reveals the co-penetration of the moral value of man's action into the very core of the subject. It is in this way that an analysis of the action-morality structure in Wojtyła reveals the nature of virtue and vice on the practical sphere. Interestingly, on account of Wojtyła's considerations of self-fulfilment, we can construct a theory of virtue ethics which takes the transcendence of the personal subject in action very serious. Such a theory of virtue ethics finds its key sources in the parallel dynamism of self-determination and self-fulfilment, which Wojtyła weaves into the context of a morally valuable human action. This explanation is more eloquently echoed by Wojtyła as follows:

Human actions once performed do not vanish without trace: they leave their moral value, which constitutes an objective reality intrinsically cohesive with the person, and thus a reality also profoundly subjective. Being a person man is "somebody" and being somebody he may be either *good* or *bad*. Morality as the modality of conduct is to a certain extent extricable from the interwoven existential whole that it forms together with the person. In a way this distinction becomes unavoidable because the whole is

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<sup>361</sup> Wojtyła, K., *Acting Person*, p.175.

too intricate to admit of an evenly balanced interpretation simultaneously of the person-action structure and of morality, not to mention the whole normative sphere that includes the problems belonging to ethics. ”.<sup>362</sup>

It is important to notice from the above the masterful way through which Wojtyła's weaves into a coherent whole the various parts of his considerations of the person-action-morality structure, the dynamisms of transitiveness and intransitiveness of the intentionality of moral actions, as well as the subjective-objective structure of person in the context of performance of moral actions. In addition to these is the phenomenological consideration of the role of consciousness in his analysis of the action-morality structure. To this specific consideration, I shall turn in the paragraphs that follow.

### **3.5 Wojtyła's Notion of Action and Consciousness**

Consciousness is a vital part in the totality of the human being. For Wojtyła, “consciousness is absolutely essential for the understanding and experiencing of the ego and its actions and for our comprehension of the essential dynamic dimension of the acting person.”<sup>363</sup>Wojtyła writes:

...the self is not reducible to the consciousness alone, although it is constituted through consciousness. Consciousness, and especially self-consciousness, is an indispensable condition for the constitution of the human self.<sup>364</sup>

According to Wojtyła, the feeling of one's body is a necessary condition for experiencing the integral subjectivity of man; in this experience, the body and consciousness are bound together by feeling. However, the sensory reflection or feeling of one's body in the psyche differs essentially from the reflexive function of consciousness, whose fundamental significance is in having the personal experience of a concrete human ego. Wojtyła points out that the interconnection in this experience of feeling with consciousness brings into prominence the general relation that exists in the domain of human cognition between senses and mind. The relation is bilateral because the feeling one has of his own body allows him to establish an

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<sup>362</sup> Wojtyła, K, *ibidem*.

<sup>363</sup> Joseph Pappin III, “Karol Wojtyła and Jean-Paul Sartre on the Intentionality of Consciousness”, in *Practical Reasoning*, Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association (1984), Vol. 58, p. 133.

<sup>364</sup> Karol Wojtyła, “The Person: Subject and Community,” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. by Theresa Sandok (New York: Lang, 1993), p.231.

objective contact with it and at the same time reveals the psychical subjectivity integrated with the somatic body-subject.<sup>365</sup>

Here one can see that feeling is an important bridge between the body and consciousness and between the mind and the senses. According to Wojtyła, consciousness has precedence over feeling; because of our feeling, our subjectivity is revealed to consciousness. But one cannot assert the opposite, one cannot have a "feeling of consciousness," or that he feels his consciousness. It is in this sense that there is a precedence of consciousness over feeling. This precedence brings with it a certain order and "subordination" of the feelings, in particular the feeling of one's own body to the condition of self-determination, and also of self-governance and self-possession. Feelings reveal the psychosomatic subjectivity of man. Wojtyła further explains:

The feeling of one's own body also reveals the psychosomatic subjectivity of man. Since this occurs in relation to consciousness, which performs both the reflective and reflexive function, the awareness of that subjectivity brings with it the "subjectification" and interiorization of the ego in consciousness which also extends to and contains the body as something belonging only to myself and different from all other bodies.<sup>366</sup>

The human being is not equivalent to the dimension of consciousness. For Wojtyła, he strictly maintains that consciousness is only an aspect of the personal subject.<sup>367</sup> It is only a "subjective content of the being and acting [who is conscious]."<sup>368</sup> Therefore, any action that proceeds from the subject does not originate from the consciousness *per se*, but from the person himself, who possesses this consciousness. According to Wojtyła, "consciousness is, so to speak, the understanding of what has been constituted and comprehended."<sup>369</sup> Kenneth Schmitz in citing Wojtyła says that the truth is "that consciousness is considered from the point of view of the person and his existential efficacy."<sup>370</sup>

### 3.5.1 Consciousness and the Human Act

For Wojtyła, human action is the human dynamism that enables us to know the human person most fully; it serves as a source of knowledge of the person. Hence "the fullest and most

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid., *Acting Person*, p. 230.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>367</sup> Peter .E. A. Mara, *Karol Wojtyla's Theory of Consciousness*. P. 280.

<sup>368</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community," *op cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>369</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, *op cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>370</sup> Kenneth Schmitz, *At the Centre of Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1993), p. 31.

comprehensive interpretation of that dynamism is the only way of bringing into view the whole reality of the person.”<sup>371</sup> Wojtyła clarified that it is only man’s “deliberate acting” that we can call an “act” or “action.” He wrote: “It is only man’s *deliberate acting* that we call an “act” or “action.” Nothing else in his acting, nothing that is not intended and deliberate deserves to be so termed.”<sup>372</sup> Human action as a human dynamism is a conscious activity, hence we should note the significance of consciousness.

According to Wojtyła, the human act in the traditional sense put more emphasis on deliberateness or voluntariness. From this, we can see that in the Aristotelian tradition human action is primarily an “ethical” category and the emphasis is on voluntariness and culpability of the human agent and the ethical character of the action. For Wojtyła human action means conscious action, human action then, must also be regarded as a conscious act. “When we say “conscious acting,” we implicitly refer to the kind of acting that is related to and characteristic of the will.”<sup>373</sup> Wojtyła remains very Thomistic in his view, but he goes further: the human acts are conscious because the subject of agency is conscious. He reduces metaphysical action to its ontic root – *operari sequitur esse*. His constant objective is to find the ontological foundation of action and morality. The moral values come into existence via human action. In this way the phrase “conscious acting”, to some extent, corresponds to the *actus voluntarius* of the Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy, because any action pertaining to the human will must also be conscious. Wojtyła pointed out that the traditional interpretation of action as human act, a voluntary or willed act, implies consciousness, and so, consciousness is merged with the dynamism of the human will. In other words a conscious act is understood as a willed or deliberate act.

However, in his analysis, Wojtyła wanted to expose the fact that consciousness constitutes a specific and unique aspect of human action. His task is “to go farther and to exhibit consciousness as an *intrinsic and constitutive aspect of the dynamic structure*, that is, *of the acting person*.”<sup>374</sup> Wojtyła approached the notion of human action phenomenologically and used it as an “anthropological” category revealing the very nature of the human agent. Human action expresses and manifests human responsibility of the person, for it is the person which is the self-conscious cause of his action. It is through the act that the concrete “I”, the person, is revealed and manifested.

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<sup>371</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, p. 27.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.* p. 25.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31.

This path of subjectivism can lead to idealism, and for this reason, the path taken by the mirroring and reflexive function of consciousness should rather focus on the subjectivation of the ego (I) in consciousness, in view of its relation to the object of moral action. It is in this event that the personal subjectivity becomes the object of one's consciousness – in what can be defined as the objectification of the subject. In a sense, the human being becomes both the subject and object in conscious activity. This process of subjectivation of the ego is described as what eventually precipitates into self-knowledge, by way of the additional reflexive function of consciousness. Through this reflecting function we have an inner view of the self and its acts, but through the reflexive function, the acts that are reflected or mirrored about the self are experienced as one's own acts. The functions of the *reflexive trait* or *reflexiveness* of consciousness according to Wojtyła, denotes that consciousness, so to speak, turns back naturally upon the subject or the self, so that the subjectiveness of the subject is brought into prominence in experience.<sup>375</sup> It makes the subject of the reflected acts aware that it is the subject and that the reflected acts are his own. In other words, I become at once aware that this subject is me and that the acts performed are my own acts. We have explained that man is the subject of his own being and action, however, the notion of subjectivity does not describe how a man experiences himself as a subject. In this sense reflection and reflectiveness are insufficient when it comes to constituting this experience. This necessitates a special turning back upon the subject, and it is to this turn that we owe, along with experience, the subjectiveness of the experiencing ego. It is this particular mode of the constitutive function, that of turning back towards the subject which is proper to consciousness that we define as “reflexive,” by this we mean that consciousness directs everything back upon the subject.<sup>376</sup>

Wojtyła also considers the mirroring function of consciousness. According to him, consciousness is a reflection of all that man does and of all that happens to man. It is the mirror of all human actions including cognitive acts, in the sense of a ‘container’ of the whole man and of all the external world accessible to him. This mirroring function of consciousness actually follows upon cognitive and as well as constitutive dynamism of the whole man. Wojtyła explains that “Consciousness is, so to speak, the understanding of what has been constituted and comprehended. The purport of the preceding remarks is that the *intrinsic cognitive dynamism*, the *very operation of cognition*, does not belong to consciousness. If acts of cognition consist in constituting in a specific way the meanings referring to cognitive

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<sup>375</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, p. 38

<sup>376</sup> Wojtyła, *Person, Subject and Community*, p. 231.

objects, then it is not consciousness that constitutes them, even if they are indubitably constituted also in consciousness”.<sup>377</sup>

Consciousness in intimate union with the subject and the action of the concrete person does not absorb in itself or overshadow this subject and its dynamic reality, rather, it discloses it “inwardly” and thereby reveals it in its specific distinctness and unique concreteness. This disclosing is precisely what the reflexive function of consciousness consists in. We may even say that owing to the reflexive function of consciousness, man’s being is directed, as it were, “inward,” but still maintains the full dimensions of his rational essence. Being directed “inward” is accompanied by experiencing, and is, to some extent, identical with experience.<sup>378</sup>

This reflexiveness of consciousness has to be distinguished from reflection proper to the human mind in its cognitive acts. Reflection presupposes the intentionality of these acts, their cognitive direction upon the object, reflexiveness on the other hand, since it is a function of consciousness it cannot have an intentional character. The function of consciousness, as reflexive consciousness in which it turns back upon the subject, differs from the mirroring. On the one hand the reflexivity of consciousness is consciousness objectivizing itself as a subject which yields the self-knowledge of man, as the subject and the ego, is present as the object. And on the other hand, the mirroring of consciousness is consciousness reflecting its own contents, its cognitive and constitutive contents. The consequence of the reflexive turn of consciousness is that this object — just because it is from the ontological point of view, the subject — while having the experience of his own ego, also has the experience of himself as the subject. Wojtyła summarized this analysis in this way:

We then discern clearly that it is one thing to be the subject, another to be cognized (that is, objectivized) as the subject, and a still different thing to experience one’s self as the subject of one’s own acts and experiences.<sup>379</sup>

Every human being is both a self and a subject, and from the previous discussions, we have seen that every human being is given in a total or simple experience as an autonomous, individual real being, as existing and acting subject. But every man is also given to himself as the concrete ego, and this is achieved by means of both self-consciousness and self-knowledge.”<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, *ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>378</sup> Wojtyła, *Person, Subject and Community*, p. 231.

<sup>379</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, p. 44.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid. Acting Person*, p. 44

Self-knowledge ascertains that the being, who objectively is *I*, subjectively constitutes my ego. Because of the reflexive function of consciousness, the human subject experiences not only himself and his action, but also the moral values of his own action in relation to himself. Wojtyła stressed: “Objectively, both action and moral values belong to a real subject, that is, to man as their agent, from a point of view equally formal as existential; simply, they exhibit in their being the derivative type of reality that is in a specific manner related to and dependent on the subject. Simultaneously, both the action and its corresponding moral value – goodness or badness – function, if we may say so, in a thoroughly subjective manner in experience - which consciousness conditions by its reflexive function rather than only mirroring it because of self-knowledge, for this would still give but an objectified awareness of the action and its moral value”.<sup>381</sup>

### **3.5.2 Consciousness, Subjectivity, and Self-knowledge**

The notion of consciousness is, indeed, the strong concept in Wojtyła’s study of the existence of the human person. Consciousness is one aspect of the human person through which we can look deeper into his innermost element, it is a sort of a gateway into the interiority of the human being. In his own analysis, Wojtyła offered a new way of interpreting. For Wojtyła, there are two function of consciousness, and a new way of interpreting human consciousness, which is different from the Thomistic, post Cartesian, and phenomenological descriptions. Wojtyła conceded the fact that Aquinas did not concentrate on the analysis of consciousness, however, consciousness is implicitly present in the Thomistic concept of *actus humanus*, especially in its analysis of the rational nature of man, and the rationality of the will. It is now the task of a contemporary Christian philosopher to supplement the traditional concept of *persona humana* with a theory of consciousness. In the Husserlian tradition we are introduced to the concept of “pure consciousness,” a concept that led to the subjectivistic interpretation of man. In his analysis of subjectivity, Wojtyła has consistently avoided the error of subjectivism, that of conceiving consciousness as a separate and independent subject.

Subjectivism which is a mental attitude that tends to separate experience from action and absolutize consciousness is a fatal error of transcendental phenomenology. Subjectivism, “seems to consist first, in a complete separation of experience from action and second, in reducing

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<sup>381</sup>Ibid. *Acting Person*, p. 48-48.



to the mere status of consciousness and moral values that germinate in this action as well as in the person.” However, according to Wojtyła, when consciousness is absolutized, it at once ceases to account for the subjectivity of man, it becomes a substitute for the subject. Hence, subjectivism conceives consciousness as a “total and exclusive subject – the subject of experiences and values.”<sup>382</sup> Now, when we begin to accept ‘pure consciousnesses’ or the ‘pure subject,’ we no longer are interpreting the real subjectivity of man.

With this approach, experiences and values lose their status in reality, they cease to be real, and consciousness ultimately ceases to be objective. This path of subjectivism leads to idealism, the path taken by transcendental philosophy which attempts to investigate the acts of cognition as intentional acts of consciousness as acts directed toward the extra subjective contents or phenomena. Wojtyła all throughout his analysis has consistently avoided and criticized this position, he maintained that we cannot make consciousness an “autonomous subject” or a separate and self-contained reality. He clarified that while it may be granted that person and action are constituted in consciousness to the extent that consciousness always reflects the existence (*esse*) and activity (*operari*) of that self, still the experience of the human being reveals that consciousness is always subjectified on the self and hence its basis is always the human subject or human supposit. Wojtyła asserted:<sup>383</sup>

Looking at consciousness, however, we see it not as a separate and self-contained reality but as the subjective content of the being and acting that is conscious, the being and acting proper to man.<sup>384</sup>

Wojtyła stressed though that consciousness is an essential element and plays a key role in understanding the personal subjectivity of the human person. In order to fully comprehend the role of consciousness, we must disclose it in the “totality of human dynamisms and showing it as the constitutive property of action.”<sup>385</sup> This way of seeing and interpreting consciousness, that, is in the “substantial and subjective sense” protects us from conceiving it as an autonomous and self-contained subject,<sup>386</sup> and consequently avoid the error of subjectivism.

Consciousness is a key element in understanding the relation between the human subject and his self; it is the dynamic aspect of the human subject that allows him to establish a relation with himself. We cannot grasp and objectivize the relation between the human subject and the human self without considering consciousness and its functions. Although

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>383</sup> Wojtyła, *Person Subject and Community*, p. 226.

<sup>384</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Peron*, p. 33.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid. p. 33

<sup>386</sup> Ibid. p. 33

consciousness seems to function like cognition, the function of consciousness is not purely cognitive, because cognition consist in constituting in a specific way, the meanings of cognitive objects, in other words cognition has something to do with comprehension and formation of meanings. It is not the function of consciousness to comprehend and form meanings and concepts. Wojtyła explained, “consciousness interiorizes everything that man cognizes, including everything that the individual cognizes from within in acts of self-knowledge, and makes it all a content of the subject’s lived experience.”<sup>387</sup> It is consciousness that interiorizes everything that we experience, everything that we know, the meanings, the concepts, including the motives, the intentions, the wishes and aspirations of the subject.

Being a subject and experiencing oneself as a subject are two different matters and they happen in two different dimensions. The human subject is a being *per se* even if he does not have an experience of himself as a subject. But to experience himself as a self or subject, he needs consciousness. The human subject comes into contact with the actual reality of the human self in the experience of the self as a subject, and consciousness plays a key role in the formation of this dimension and in this relation. Through the mediation of consciousness, the human subject becomes a human self and is revealed to itself as a self. In other words it is consciousness that allows the subject to establish a relation with itself, without consciousness, the human subject can never establish a relation with itself, it can never have an experience of itself, it can never know itself. Knowing one’s self and establishing a relation with one’s self is possible because of consciousness. However, this does not mean that the human self is reducible to consciousness, rather, the human subject has an experience of itself as self because of consciousness. Wojtyła insisted: “human beings are subjects – and even subjects completely *in actu*, so to speak – only when they experience themselves as subjects.”<sup>388</sup> This happens because of consciousness.

Wojtyła further distinguished all the forms and kinds of knowledge which man acquires and possesses and which shape his consciousness in its mirroring aspect with respect to its content or objective meanings from “self-knowledge.” He wrote, “Self-knowledge consists in the understanding of one’s own self and is concerned with a kind of cognitive insight into the object that I am for myself.”<sup>389</sup> Aside from cognizing or comprehending external objects, we also cognize or know our own being and our own acts. Self-knowledge as such is genuine cognition and therefore it has the intentional structure of all cognitive acts. It intends an object

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<sup>387</sup> Wojtyła, *Person Subject and Community*, p. 227,

<sup>388</sup> Wojtyła, *Person Subject and Community*, p. 227

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36.

that is transcendent to itself. This transcendent and intentional character of self-knowledge is what reveals and guarantees the objective existence of the self and not merely something constituted in and by consciousness.<sup>390</sup> In self-knowledge, the self and its acts are brought into objective focus for the self and so they are recognized as ontological and objective realities. Here, the acting subject's ego is cognitively grasped as an object and because of this; the person and his action have an objective significance in consciousness. Consciousness through its reflection or mirroring function derives the objective comprehension of the ego through self-knowledge.

The "subject" man is also the "object;" he is the object for the subject, and he does not lose his objective significance when mirrored by consciousness. In this respect self-knowledge seems prior to consciousness, and cognitively relates it to the ego and its actions, even if consciousness in itself were not intentionally directed toward them. Self-knowledge therefore sets a limit to consciousness, the limit beyond which the process of subjectivation cannot proceed. However, for all the close connection between self-knowledge and consciousness, "they deviate from each other, since consciousness, for all the intimacy of its subjective union with the ego, does not objectivize the ego or anything else with regard to its existence and its acting."<sup>391</sup>

This function is performed by acts of self-knowledge themselves and it is to these acts that every man owes the objectivizing contact with himself and with his actions. It is because of self-knowledge that consciousness can perform its mirroring function of the self and its actions. Now since consciousness is a part of the self, then consciousness becomes the object of self-knowledge. Consciousness itself is the object of self-knowledge in the sense that in the cognitive act in which man knows himself, he knows himself as a conscious subject. Wojtyła explained, "the objectivizing turn of self-knowledge toward the ego and toward the actions related to the ego is also a turn to consciousness as such, insofar as consciousness also becomes the object of self-knowledge. This explains why, when man is conscious of his acting, he also knows that he is acting; he knows that he is *acting consciously*. He is aware of being conscious and of acting consciously. Self-knowledge therefore, has as its object not only the person and the action, but also the person as being aware of himself and *aware* of his action. This awareness is objectivized by self-knowledge. Man has self-knowledge of his being conscious and because of it (of self-knowledge) he is aware of the consciousness of his being and acting.

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid. p. 58-59.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

There is, however, a difference between knowing oneself as a conscious subject (in this case consciousness itself is, as it were, objectivized) and being aware of oneself, or being conscious of oneself. All the constitutive elements of human conscious action are objectivized by this self-knowledge, so that man can know his own actions and judge them.<sup>392</sup>

That man can be aware not only of his own self and of the actions related to it but also of the consciousness of his actions in relation to the ego is the work of self-knowledge, Wojtyła stressed. Hence, in such phrases as: “It is how I became conscious of my action” or “I became conscious of... this or that,” we speak of an actualization of a conscious process, which is in fact an actualization of a self-knowing process. Nevertheless, since consciousness is intimately united with cognition, Wojtyła clarified, we have expressed ourselves correctly. Self-knowledge, moreover, has to do with the “I” and is therefore not a knowledge of the universal kind; on the one hand, the I’s self-knowledge goes together with everything that the subject knows about man in general.

### 3.5.3 Intention and Consciousness

Wojtyła’s interpretation of consciousness is clearly different from that of the other thinkers in the phenomenological tradition, particularly Husserl. He stated that the fundamental function of consciousness consists not in intentional cognition but in mirroring the objects that are already known to the subject. Consciousness is “an understanding of what has already been understood,” hence, consciousness is different from cognition or knowledge. Consciousness does not have an intentional or objectifying character. Husserl defined intentionality as “the unique peculiarity of experiences to be always the consciousness of something.”<sup>393</sup> Wojtyła does not deny this phenomenological adage, but he based his anthropological reflection on the Aristotelian notion of act and defined the intentionality of human cognition differently from Husserl. For Wojtyła, intention consists in an active directing upon the object, so only the real cognitive faculties of the person, knowledge and self-knowledge possess such intentional character. Consciousness only mirrors the outcome of the cognitive process of knowledge and self-knowledge.<sup>394</sup>

Consciousness is connected with the cognitive faculties but is not identified with them. Knowing something is not the same as being aware of something. Being aware implies further reflection on something which has already been worked out in the cognitive

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<sup>392</sup> Buttiglione, p. 130.

<sup>393</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, pp. 303-304

<sup>394</sup> Kupczak, p. 97

faculties.<sup>395</sup>Wojtyła stressed that it is not the function of consciousness to cognize the object, cognition has an intentional character and it is performed in order to investigate, objectivize and comprehend its intentional object. Cognition or knowledge as one of the functions of the mind or intellect, is intended to comprehend and form a representation of the object; this is not the function of consciousness. However, it can reflect or mirror what has been cognized or has been known. “Consciousness is, so to speak, the understanding of what has been constituted and comprehended.”<sup>396</sup>He explained:

But while comprehension and knowledge contribute in an intentional way to the formation of the object – it is in this that consists the inherent dynamism of cognizing – consciousness as such is restricted to mirroring what has already been cognized. Consciousness is, so to speak, the understanding of what has been constituted and comprehended. The purport of the preceding remarks is that the intrinsic cognitive dynamism, the very operation of cognition, does not belong to consciousness. If acts of cognition consist in constituting in a specific way the meanings referring to cognitive objects, then it is not consciousness that constitutes them, even if they are indubitably constituted also in consciousness.<sup>397</sup>

#### **3.5.4 Consciousness and Emotivity**

All human and psychological events are reflected in consciousness; it reflects sensible as well as emotional experience and it receives sensible and emotional impressions. Hence, emotions play a role in the function of consciousness and can influence consciousness owing to the fact that man is not only a thinking and conscious subject, he is also a feeling subject. Wojtyła pointed out that emotions are not only reflected in the mirroring aspect of consciousness, they affect the images of the various objects including the self and its actions that are reflected in the consciousness. Diverse feelings, according to Wojtyła “emotionalize consciousness,” that is to say, they blend with its two functions – reflecting and reflexiveness — thereby modifying in one way or another their character.<sup>398</sup> Emotions can add color or some qualities to the objects reflected in consciousness. This specific influence of the emotive element on consciousness is known as the “emotionalization of consciousness” according to Wojtyła.

The emotionalization of consciousness begins when the image of the meanings of the particular emotive instances, and the objects they are related to fades in consciousness, so that

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<sup>395</sup> Buttiglione, p. 130

<sup>396</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, p. 32.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33

<sup>398</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, p. 52.

feelings may outgrow their current understanding by man. This is practically tantamount to a breakdown of self-knowledge; for consciousness, without ceasing to mirror the emotive distances just as they come, loses its control, that is to say, its objective, attitude toward them.<sup>399</sup>

Wojtyła mentioned two possible reasons for the emotionalization of consciousness. The first one points to the intensity and changeability of emotions, which makes them difficult to control. Emotions have varying degrees of intensity and they can be modified at any given moment, so that objects affected by them may change their perceived value. The second consists in the weakness of self-knowledge, which, to some extent cannot objectivize the emotions efficiently. When consciousness no longer mirrors the feelings as “something that happens in me” but rather as “something that happens” then the link between the emotion and ego is broken.<sup>400</sup> Wojtyła points out that the emotionalization of consciousness touches not only the mirroring but also the reflexive function of consciousness. In the most intense stage of emotionalization, consciousness still mirrors the emotions, but the reflexive function consciousness is gone, the subject can no longer turn back towards the real subject. When emotions have taken over the consciousness, the subject or the person can no longer return to the real subject or the person, it can no longer experience its real and objective self.

### 3.5.5. Causal Efficacy

Wojtyła applied his theory of consciousness to describe human causal efficacy. He distinguished two kinds of human activity which are – “acts of man” and “something is happening in man.” He writes that the former reveals the fully human, conscious activity of the subject (*agere*) while the latter, which he also calls an activation of the human dynamism (*uczynienie*), points to his passivity (*pati*).<sup>401</sup> Wojtyła affirm that, “when acting I have the experience of myself as the agent responsible for this particular form of dynamization of myself as the subject. When there is something happening in me, then the dynamism is imparted without the efficacious participation of my ego.”<sup>402</sup>

For Wojtyła writes that “happening” and “acting”, being two fundamental kinds of human activity, reveal two different aspects of the human person. “Man has the experience of himself as the subject when something is happening in him; when, on the other side, he is acting, he has the experience of himself as the ‘actor’...”<sup>403</sup> Wojtyła distinguishes two different

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>400</sup> Kupczak, p. 100.

<sup>401</sup> Jaroslaw Kupczak, *op cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>402</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, *op cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

meanings of human subjectivity: (1) subjectivity as revealed by what is happening in man and (2) subject as the common root of both acting and happening.<sup>404</sup> Wojtyła writes that it is the subject who is “under” every acting and happening. The subject is here understood as a real being, which according to the classic adage “*operari sequitur esse*”, makes possible every kind of human dynamism, both *agere* and *pati*.<sup>405</sup> Wojtyła emphasizes that any rejection of the dependency both of happening and acting on the ego contradicts the fundamental human experience. Also, he insists that the emphasis on the dependence of both happening and acting on the ego neutralizes the opposition between nature and the person. Wojtyła points out that the relation between human nature and human activity is well summarized by the old adage *operari sequitur esse*. First this statement points out that in order to act, one has to exist, precisely as the existing/real subject of action. Second, there is a cohesion between any kind of human activity and its source/efficacious agent, i.e. the human person. In the case of morality, a crucial aspect which distinguishes *subjectiveness* of the ego (i.e. in the case of happenings/activities in man) from the *subjectivity* of the ego (i.e. in the case of human action) is precisely the moment of self-determination. As already noted earlier, self-determination presupposes self-possession and self-governance which in plain words is the mastery of the dynamics of human nature in view of a virtuous disposition for human action. In a self-determined human action, the ego (‘I’) as the efficacious subject of action is a causal agent and not just a recipient of an action. This is the crucial moment of transcendence from nature to person. It is at this point that we can speak of Wojtyła’s discourse on the causal efficacy of the ego in the light of his virtue ethics. Though Wojtyła does not speak explicitly about ontology of virtue his understanding of the person as being the object of his self-determination and the concept of auto-teleology of the person lay the foundations for the realistic philosophy of the moral virtue. It is precisely because of self-determination that the causal efficacy of the personal “I” accounts for moral responsibility in virtue ethics.

It should be underscored here that in Wojtyła’s discourse on the auto-teleology of the person, he presents the basic outlines for the development of moral virtue constituted as a part of *fieri*, which means of becoming of the human person. The concept of *fieri* is seen here as a key concept in Wojtyła’s anthropological foundations of virtue ethics. In this respect, the moral self-constitution of the person occurs as conscious self-determination due to the fact that person himself/herself is the primary object of self-determination but its full realization in self-

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<sup>404</sup> Jarosław Kupczak, *op cit.*, p. 103

<sup>405</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, *op cit.*, pp. 72-73.

fulfilment is always a process of actualization. In this process, we find consciousness and freedom as the roots which constitute moral virtue as the internal effects of the human action. Therefore the theory of virtue in Wojtyła manifests itself to be tantamount with autoteology of the person.

### 3.5.6 Integration

Wojtyła's discourse on integration is connected with the problem of modern Cartesian dualism of mind and body. Hence, he highlights the complementary roles of *soma* and *psyche*. Wojtyła, works his way around this conflict and describes the dynamism of the body as instinctive and spontaneous, since it does not depend on the self-determination of the person. In this respect, the body becomes a substratum that constitutes the substructure of the person and the experience of human self-consciousness and personal subjectivity, and thereby not falling into the Cartesian trap of the "Cogito ergo sum", which defines human consciousness and personal subjectivity in terms of an individual entity existing independently from the composite substance of the human being as a body-soul unity, which ultimately results in an anthropological/metaphysical dualism of the human person. Wojtyła asserts that because of the autonomy of the body with its instinctive dynamism with respect to the self-determination of the person and the totality of the personal structure of man, his body becomes the substructure for what determines the structure of the person, thereby preserving the essential unity of the human being as an single entity which has personal self-consciousness as unique aspect of the human being per se.<sup>406</sup>This substructure itself forms part of the unity of the human being and thus the unity of the person. Hence the human body does not constitute a separate subject standing apart from the subject that is the man-person.

In his explanation, the somatic and psychic dynamisms are identified with what-happens-in man, in contrast to the human act, that is, what man does consciously in self-determination. Although both the psychic and somatic are extrinsic to self-determination, because they are not determined or controlled by the self, they are subordinated to self-determination because of integration which makes these "happenings" into "doings" and allows them to take an active role in man's action. The sense of sight may just be at the level of the somatic and psychical, because man just sees with his eyes even without the control of the will, but because seeing is somehow integrated into his acting; it is transformed into personal level. Without the notion of integration, such "happenings" do not reach the level of the personal and do not take the

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<sup>406</sup> Wajjyla, p. 211.



meaning and quality that is proper to personal existence. In empirical science, these dynamisms only have a biological meaning and are studied and interpreted in the abstract separated from the personal dimension of man. They are merely considered as physical and regarded as belonging to the biological sphere of the man. Here the biological or the medical perspectives is depicted. A medical or biological practitioner may take or assume this perspective when he examines for example the body parts and their corresponding function for medical or biological purposes or for empirical reasons. But with the notion or structure of integration, these dynamisms are understood as aspects of the person and therefore have personal meaning and value.

Peter Sampson on soma says that the term “*soma*” does not exactly mean “body,” rather it refers more properly to the bodily functions as they enter into lived experience.<sup>407</sup> Wojtyła uses the term “somatic” to refer to the body both in the outer aspect, that is, the visible body parts, and inner aspects of the system, like the movements of the muscles and the functions of the vital organs. Hence, when one speaks of somatic dynamism, he refers both to the outer reality of the body, like the limbs, the torso, their shapes and the inner reality, that is, the human body system and the joint functioning of all the bodily organs. Growth of tissues, locomotion, and assimilation of nutrients and removal of toxic waste are somatic.<sup>408</sup>

The somatic dynamism usually refers to the human body, both its external and internal aspects. Externally, the body is a material and visible reality which is accessible to the senses; the access to it is, first of all, from the “outside.” The outer shape of the human body determines what is visible in man; it decisively affects his individual physical appearance and the definite impression that he makes on others. Internally, the human body is composed of different parts which have their respective places and proper functions. “The human body forms outwardly a whole that is proportioned in a specific manner appropriate to man alone. This applies both to the special distribution of bodily parts and to their mutual coordination in the whole of man's outward form.”<sup>409</sup> Wojtyła further describes the body:

The body has, in fact, simultaneously its own particular inwardness and on account of this inwardness we speak of the human organism. While the complexity is outwardly reflected by the diversity and the mutual coordination of bodily members, its inward reflection is in the diversity and the mutual coordination of the bodily organs. The

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<sup>407</sup> Peter Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyła*, Belmont CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001, p. 34.

<sup>408</sup> Jove Jim S. Aguas, Karol Wojtyła on the Psychosomatic Integrity of the Human Person, *Conference on Culture and Philosophy University of Athens, Athens, Greece August 1-3, 2013*, p. 2.

<sup>409</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, p. 201.

organs determine that vitality or dynamism of the body which has somatic virtuality as its counterpart.<sup>410</sup>

The body is the basis of man's corporeality and concreteness; it is what is visible and external in man. Man manifests and expresses himself through his body; he relates with others and the world through his body. It is through the person's dominion over his body that the freedom of the person is realized and the person comes into contact with the external world.<sup>411</sup>

From the etymological derivation, the root word for "integration" is "*integer*", a Latin adjective meaning whole or complete. Philosophically, the term is defined as "the realization and the manifestation of a whole and a unity emerging on the basis of some complexity."<sup>412</sup> Integration therefore, denotes a reality of the person that is complementary to transcendence. The person's integration in the action provides one with an adequate insight and comprehension of the human psychosomatic complexity. The somatic element refers to the human body, and can be seen in two dimensions in regard to its outerness and to its innerness. Wojtyła notes:

The body is material, it is a visible reality, which is accessible to sense; the access to it is first of all from the "outside." The outer shape of the human body determines, in the first place, what is visible in man, it decisively affects his individual appearance and the definite impression that he makes. So conceived, the human body is composed of different members, each of which has its place and performs its proper function.<sup>413</sup>

For him, the body makes the human person part of nature. There is something that exists in the human person which Wojtyła calls the *psyche* and the *soma*. For Wojtyła, the *soma* and the *psyche* should not be understood as totally separate entities. For him, the *psyche* is not material in the sense that the body is, but are internal and immaterial and depend on the *soma*. Wojtyła defined the somatic dynamism as reactive and *psyche* as emotive.<sup>414</sup> Their main difference is that the somatic impulses do not exceed the potentiality of the body, while in the case of feelings this potentiality is transcended both in quality and in essence. He notes that:

Integration of the person in the action refers essentially to truth which makes possible an authentic freedom of self-determination.

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyła: The Thoughts of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II* (Grand Rapids Michigan: WB. Eerdams Publishing Co., 1997), p. 159

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid, pp. 200-201.

<sup>414</sup> Jaroslaw Kupczak, op cit., p. 135.

Therefore, experience of values, which is a function of man's sensitivity itself (and hence also a function of feelings), must within the dimension of the acting person, be subordinated to the reference of truth. The fusion of sensitivity with truthfulness is the necessary condition of the experience of value. It is only on the basis of such an experience that authentic choices and decisions can be formed.<sup>415</sup>

In the light of the above statement, Wojtyła emphasizes the role of the body as the material base for the lived-experience of values. This is important for his virtue ethics since the exercise of virtues as habitual dispositions arises from the regular practice of the external dynamisms of moral actions, which forms the first layer of physical or somatic experiences of values (sensory: painful or pleasurable) before it develops to the second layer of affective or emotional experiences in the psychic level (emotive: resentment or acceptance of an affective value). In his discourse of the value sense of the object of affective experiences, Wojtyła is very much influenced by Max Scheler. As a phenomenologist, Scheler is not concerned with the metaphysical basis of action—things are accepted as they are in the experience of feeling.

Nonetheless, Max Scheler did not work out the relation between affective life and human choice, which is so crucial to Wojtyła's theory of human action. For Wojtyła, it is in choosing that man recognizes himself as the efficient cause of his action. It is in choosing the good that we have freedom. Scheler actually deprecates conscience, the means by which we can judge the choices we make prior to action.<sup>416</sup> He therefore has no means to authenticate the values in question. Scheler's intuitionist approach therefore does not dig deep enough to the underlying "metaphysical anchor" which Wojtyła seeks in order to give action a rigorous normativity grounded in truth. Scheler ultimately rejects the ethics of duty altogether. But in doing so—in replacing the formal a priori with the emotional a priori—Scheler also leaves himself open to the possibility that one's preference, or feeling, or a priori emotional experience is misperceived, wrong, or taken to an extreme, to the neglect of other values. Of course, Scheler's attempts can be fruitful in the analysis of human behavior from the psychological point of view. Nevertheless, Wojtyła's notion of the human person makes it clear that ethics does not primarily study behaviors, thoughts, intuitions, or emotions—it studies human action. He does not want to discard these former elements from ethics—they surely play a critical role. Here is where he parts with phenomenology (and Max Scheler); we see a strong personalist influence (a subjective focus) that is inseparable from truths about moral action (an objective

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<sup>415</sup>Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, p. 233.

<sup>416</sup> Rocco Buttiglione, Karol Wojtyła: *The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, translated by Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997, p. 58.

focus). This is precisely why Wojtyła speaks of the “good or evil contained in” ethical actions (a Thomistic view), rather than the good or evil “appearance” of ethical actions (a phenomenological view).<sup>417</sup>The normative character of the act is therefore derived from the philosophy of being—the Aristotelian-Thomistic notion of potency and act.<sup>418</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas saw that the will, an integral part of the person, is directed toward the good—the good submitted by right reason. Thus, reason’s object is truth. Because reason presents goods to the will to choose from, human freedom is necessarily dependent upon truth. There are goods that man ought to choose—goods that lead to the transformation of his or her person. When chosen, these goods allow the person to actualize his or her being—to move from potency to act, from what he or she is, to what he or she can (or ought) to be.<sup>419</sup>For Aristotle and St. Thomas, “the very essence of human action consists in the actualization of the will acting under the direction of intellect.”<sup>420</sup>But it is the person acting who occupies the central role in ethics—not categorical imperatives or consequences.

In his critique of Max Scheler, Wojtyła makes a point of saying that man as the efficient cause of his action is the only value that can be called ethical. In *The Acting Person*, he tells us:

It is man’s actions, his conscious acting, that make him what and who he actually is. The form of the human becoming thus presupposes the efficacy or causation proper to man...The qualitative moments and virtualities of actions, inasmuch as they refer to the moral norm and ultimately to the dictates of the conscience, are imprinted upon man by his performing the action. The becoming of man in his moral aspect that is strictly connected with the person is the decisive factor in determining the concrete realistic character of goodness and badness.<sup>421</sup>

Howsoever, we have to return to the question of integration where in, it is to be underscored, that the moment of personal choice goes beyond the above indicated two levels of lived experience of values (sensual and affective). In order to make such a transcendence, these two lower levels has to be integrated in view of their subsequent integration into the personal level (good of person) of lived-experiences. Sometimes it might be necessary to realize the integration of these levels by sublimation of the lower experiences (sensory and

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<sup>417</sup> Ronald Modras, “The Thomistic Personalism of John Paul II,” *The Modern Schoolman*, Vol. 50; January 1982: 119.

<sup>418</sup> Schmitz, pp. 48-57.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-53.

<sup>420</sup> Wojtyła, Karol, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM, (New York: Peter Lang) 1993, p. 26.

<sup>421</sup> Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, pp. 98-99.

affective) to the higher experience of personal values. Wojtyła's account of integration (of sensory, affective, and personal levels of lived-experience of values) forms one of the most original parts of his theory of the acting person. This theory forms an important part of Wojtyła's account of human efficient causality. Wojtyła went so far as to say that the person as the efficient cause of his or her own deliberate action is at the same time, the efficient cause of his or her own self.<sup>422</sup> For Wojtyła, integration is a complementary aspect of human transcendence because due to the phenomenon of human freedom and self-determination, it points to the subject's primacy and superiority over the objects of his cognition and volition. According to Kupczak, "in the theory of integration however, Wojtyła reminds the reader that the human person remains a part of nature due to his soma and psyche. Therefore for every human person, transcendence remains always a challenge and a goal to be achieved only through the painstaking creative and personal effort of integration."<sup>423</sup>

In addition, Wojtyła takes on the question of subjectivity, which follows naturally after tackling the problem of integration. Accordingly, he observes that the problem concerning the condition of the human person is not only caused by political ideologies and unjust social conditions and economic systems. In the area of philosophy, anthropology and ethics, there is a more specific problem which pertains to the human being per se, and that is the issue about the subjectivity of the person. Wojtyła explained that the problem of the subjectivity of the human person lies at the very foundation of human praxis and that philosophy has an important role in the proper understanding of this issue. He stressed:

In addition, the problem of the subjectivity of the person—particularly in relation to human community—imposes itself today as one of the central ideological issues that lie at the very basis of human praxis, morality (and thus also ethics), culture, civilization, and politics. Philosophy comes into play here in its essential function: philosophy as an expression of basic understandings and ultimate justifications. The need for such understandings and justifications always accompanies humankind in its sojourn on earth, but this need becomes especially intense in certain moments of history, namely, in moments of great crisis and confrontation.<sup>424</sup>

Wojtyła further observed that the subjectivity of man is a multifaceted problem, because it is a subject of multiple interests, and he acknowledged that he shared these same interest. He stressed that indeed the problem of the subjectivity of the human being is a problem of

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<sup>422</sup>Robert Barron, "The Christian Humanism of Karol Wojtyla and Thomas Aquinas," in Michael Dauphinais & Matthew Levering (eds.), *John Paul II & St. Thomas Aquinas* (U.S.A: Sapientia Press, 2006), p. 110.

<sup>423</sup>Jaroslav Kupczak, op cit., p. 143.

<sup>424</sup>Karol Wojtyła, "Person, Subject and Community," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*. translated by Theresa Sandok, OSM. New York: Peter Lang, 1993. p. 220.

paramount philosophical importance today, and divergent tendencies with their differing cognitive assumptions and orientations have given the problem a diametrically opposed form and meaning. He wrote: “The problem of the subjectivity of man seems to be today the focal point of a variety of concerns...”<sup>425</sup>The heart of the issue is precisely expressed in this following point. Wojtyła asserts that: “Today, more than ever before, we feel the need, and also see a greater possibility, of objectifying the problem of the subjectivity of the human person.”<sup>426</sup> Wojtyła traced the root of this problem from the long history of Western thought. He noted that while the old antinomies that arose in the area of the theory of knowledge formed a seemingly inviolable demarcation line between basic orientations in philosophy and seemed to have been set aside and ignored in contemporary thought, the oppositions between subjectivism and objectivism, idealism and realism are discouraging discussions on human subjectivity. He continues in the same article that: “the antinomy of subjectivism vs. objectivism, along with the underlying antinomy of idealism vs. realism, created conditions that discouraged dealing with human subjectivity – for fear that this would lead inevitably to subjectivism.” This dichotomy between the objectivist/realist schools of thought and the idealist/subjectivist theories of concerning the nature of the existence of human consciousness and the experience of human personal subjectivity created according to Wojtyła an unfavorable climate for the study of the human subjectivity per se, because of the fear that such endeavor would only lead to subjectivism and moral relativism. This fear is justified by the idealistic “overtones” of the analysis based on “pure consciousness.”<sup>427</sup>This issue on pure consciousness further strengthened the line of demarcation in philosophy and the opposition between the objective and subjective view of the human being.

### **3.6. Participation: Man as a Social and Responsible Agent**

Human beings are not just isolated individuals but are social beings called to live together in civic and political community. The common good refers to shared or public values and interests, which ultimately redound to the good of all the members of the community. Such an understanding of society is opposed to individualism which sees the society as the sum total of individuals and also to collectivism which denies the legitimate needs and rights of individuals who are submerged in the collectivity. Individualism constitutes the major problem

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<sup>425</sup> Karol Wojtyła. “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being,” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*. Translated by Theresa Sandok, OSM. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 209.

<sup>426</sup> *ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>427</sup> This is actually Wojtyła’s reaction against the idealistic tendency of the phenomenology of Husserl.

today. However, in the consideration of the value of the common good, there arises the question of the social virtue of justice. Wojtyła however tries to approach this issue from the consideration of participation as the very context within which arises a further realization or rather fulfillment of the person. The common good in this sense provides the opportunity for personal transcendence through co-actions with other people. In this sense interpersonal relationships are formed with respect to the realization of a common good, hence there arises an *I-other* structure of acting-together. In this interpersonal structure, each actor is a subject and so, we describe rather a lived experience of inter-subjectivity. Participation thus creates a very concrete context of recognizing the personal value of the other with whom I co-operate and with whom I co-participate for the actualization of the common good. The recognition of the *other*, as an equal subject as the 'I', as a person reveals, once again the very social structure of the virtues of love and justice within this context of participation.

For Wojtyła, participation in its current usage means to have a share or part in something. Through participation man is able to preserve the personalistic value of actions carried out with and among others. A mechanic is a mechanic for others who benefit from his giftedness as a being in existence. But the philosophical meaning of participation is deeper. Philosophically, participation is "the person's transcendence in the action when the action is being performed "together with others"...which is the basis as well as the condition of participation."<sup>428</sup> Therefore, according to Wojtyła, for a person to participate, he/she must retain in the acting, the personalistic value of his own action and, at the same time share in the realisation of the results of the communal acting.

In *The Acting Person*, Wojtyła argues that personal freedom and the social nature of the person can be reconciled through personalistic understanding of the actions which he terms participation. Participation consists of actions that correspond to both individual freedom and the social nature of the person. For Wojtyła, the analysis of participation follows from the structure of 'I-act'. His aim was "to consider that aspect in the dynamic correlation of the action with the person which comes as a consequence of the fact that man lives and acts together with other men."<sup>429</sup> Wojtyła contends that it is necessary for us to consider the consequences of the fact that the personal nature of human actions may be performed together with others. The personalistic value of the action conditions its ethical value. An action could be said therefore to be morally good or bad when one has first determined the *efficacy, self-determination* and

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<sup>428</sup>Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>429</sup>Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, p. 262.

*responsibility*; in other words, we have first to establish whether this particular man-person *did* or *did not* perform the action.<sup>430</sup>

Wojtyła's considerations on participation precludes individualism on the one hand and collectivist conformism on the other hand. Individualism denies participation since it is based on the presupposition that the individual good is in contradiction to the common good. Wojtyła rejects individualism as in Hobbes and Locke who see man as fundamentally self-sufficient and then related to others just by accident. Wojtyła says; "for the individual, the others are a source of limitation, they may even represent the opposite pole in a variety of conflicting interests."<sup>431</sup>

On the other hand is collectivism, which can be exemplified in totalitarian systems on the other hand for Wojtyła, is characterised by the need to find protection of the community from the individual who has the dominant trait or inclination to seek achievement of his own good. Totalitarianism tries to block the individual from the common good. Wojtyła asserts that "the good thus advocated by totalitarianism can never correspond to the wishes of the individual, to the good he is capable of choosing independently and freely according to the principles of participation; it is always a good that is incompatible with and a limitation upon the individual."<sup>432</sup>

Conformism for Wojtyła is to denote a tendency to comply with the accepted custom and to reasonable others. Conformism and non-involvement lack the personalistic value of action and leads to self-alienation. In conformism, the person simply adopts an attitude of compliance and resignation. The person acts against the determination of his will but follows the crowd. Wojtyła argues that "when people adapt themselves to the demands of the community only superficially and when they do so only to gain some immediate advantage or avoid trouble, then the person as well as the community incurs irremediable loss."<sup>433</sup>

The above considerations of Wojtyła are significant for our discourse on virtue ethics given that he also argues that participation highlights the subjectivity of the *other* as a person. He employs the notion of *neighbour* to drive home this point. As such, the proper response to the neighbour as *another I*, is obviously implicative of justice and love – virtues which arise in the context of participation and co-acting with *others*. Participation thus reveals the

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<sup>430</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>431</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>432</sup>Ibid.

<sup>433</sup>Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, p. 290.



humanness of the other person and implicates an intersubjective relationship which highlights the social foundation of justice and love.

In discussing the notion of neighbor within his theory of participation, Wojtyła draws our attention to the fact that a failure to participate in the common good engenders alienation whereas to take part in the actualization of the common good is the rule of being and acting together with others. Alienation, according to Wojtyła, “refers to the separation of things that naturally belong together. In ordinary terms, alienation means being separated from something that one rightfully has ownership to.”<sup>434</sup> For Wojtyła, alienation is a problem and a hindrance to a person’s fulfilment through his actions. He talks of alienation as the opposition or negation of participation.

Moreover, in Wojtyła’s analysis of participation, the concept of neighbor concurs with that of a member of a community. Wojtyła contends that the idea of a neighbor is based on what is common to all men everywhere and not based on any particular group of people or community.

In the light of the above, we come to appreciate the need for social responsibility. When we talk about the acting person are we not talking about social responsibility? Does social responsibility not mean role playing? The answer is positively affirmed, a social responsible agent is a virtuous person. The human person is a member of the society only as a being, infinitely transcending the society. Definitely, the scope of human personhood is wider than that of his sociality. The human personhood is ontologically prior to the human social dimension. Therefore, a society which is worthy to be called human is a society of persons, founded on the ontological principle of common human spiritual essence and not on contract alone. So, while it is true that society emerged from contract or consent among rational individuals, it must be emphasized that those who entered into such contract are human persons who have the inherent capacity for interrelation and communication. The human person is a member of the society first by his nature and secondarily by contract. And therefore the human social dimension must be based on human personhood. Only such a human social dimension which rooted on his personhood, can provide all the means which are necessary for man’s self-fulfillment as a person. Hence while it is true that man is by nature a social being, he is first and foremost a person. Man’s personhood and social life are his two basic dimensions and although they interpenetrate and also overlap each other, one is not reducible to the other. The

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<sup>434</sup>Dean E. A. Mejos, “Against Alienation: Karol Wojtyła’s Theory of Participation,” *Kritike*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (June 2007), p. 71.

latter is founded on the former. The human sociality is an aspect of the human person's self-manifestation and self-sharing and also that of his openness to the world and to others. Man is not created by the society, but the society is created by man. Man is clearly not indebted to the society for his humanity and personhood.<sup>435</sup> But man can fulfill himself to the full extent only as a member of the human society and cannot have a fulfilled personhood without his society.

### **Concluding remarks**

Wojtyła's virtue ethics as discussed in this chapter reflects his considerations in two significant monographs wherein the Polish philosopher attempted to outline the principles of his moral philosophy. These works include *Love and Responsibility* and *The Acting Person*. In *Love and responsibility* – he develops the seminal ideas of his personalism and attempts to refute utilitarianism. In order to present the very core of his ethical theory, he goes on to develop what he refers to as the personalistic norm in such a way that it becomes compatible with commandment of love. In this way, love as virtue, becomes the context of his ethical analysis which finally leads to the anthropological analysis of the subject of morality, the human good.

Accordingly, in the later work, *The Acting Person*, Wojtyła continues to search for the anthropological (in-depth metaphysical) foundations of morality. Equally, here he emphasizes that virtue is essential for becoming morally good. It is however in his last philosophical book *Man in the field of responsibility*, that he writes explicitly on place of virtue in morality and this is a point to which he arrives. Although normative and axiological aspects prevail in his ethical investigations, he equally emphasizes the significance of praxis: (action!) in the aspect of morality as is shown in his considerations of lived-experience, especially as it pertains to psychological analysis – where he approximates to Elizabeth Anscombe's considerations. However, he goes beyond this psychological analysis of lived-experience of morality and digs deeper into the specifically ethical significance of moral life which he tries to ground on anthropological foundations. It can thus be said that Wojtyła builds his virtue ethics on the anthropological foundations of morals in contrast to Anscombe who attempts to search for a psychological foundation for her own virtue ethics.

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<sup>435</sup> Jove Jim S. Aguas, *The Notions of the Human Person and Human Dignity in Aquinas and Wojtyła*. Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing House, 2009, pp. 54-55.

## EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

### Evaluation

In what follows, I shall attempt a modest evaluation of what has been discussed so far on the contributions of Anscombe and Wojtyła to the foundations and development of virtue ethics. It is pertinent to note straightaway that structurally, the whole dissertation was divided into three chapters. The first chapter focused on the development of virtue ethics in the history of philosophical traditions, beginning from the classical tradition of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas down to the contemporary rediscovery of virtue ethics in Philippa Foot, Iris Murdoch and Alasdair MacIntyre. The second chapter presented an exposition of Elizabeth Anscombe's approach to virtue ethics with a highlight on her suggestion that virtue ethics be grounded on the foundation of a philosophy of psychology. The third chapter was the presentation of Karol Wojtyła's personalistic approach to virtue ethics and his insistence that a philosophy of person ought to be the foundation of virtue ethics. In both philosophers, it was noted that ethical experiences highlight such characteristic features of the both the objective context of morality and the subjective perspectives of the moral agent. These include intentionality, subjectivity, and the social conditions which provide the opportunity for such ethical context as participation wherein virtuous responsiveness to situations account of practical rationality. The above constitute the essential elements of what has been highlighted so far in this dissertation. In what follows, I shall attempt a cursory evaluation which take into consideration the constitutive elements of the pre-ethical discourse of Anscombe and Wojtyła respectively.

Notably, Elizabeth Anscombe's pre-ethical discourse takes a psychological appraisal of the person whereas Karol Wojtyła's pre-ethical discourse is rooted in philosophical anthropology which he develops from a metaphysical foundation following Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. Given the different entry points, it is much clearer to consider what is specific to each. The need to take analysis their pre-ethical discourse differently informed the structure of the chapters in this work, hence the consideration of Anscombe's philosophy of psychology in the second chapter and that of Wojtyła's philosophy of person in the third chapter. The question arises as to what results their different foundations for virtue ethics yielded? Are there similar conclusions or do we find differences? Could we say that the similarities or differences have helped to strengthen or weaken the robustness of the discourse on virtue ethics?

Responses to these will shape whatsoever trajectory an attempted of both Anscombe's and Wojtyła's virtue ethics could take. Such a synthesis will surely highlight some selected aspects of their philosophy of human action and moral virtue. To be sure, both Anscombe and Wojtyła, agree that virtue is a part of human active – rational and free – life. In this sense, virtue constitutes the human personality of a subject. However, there differences begin to emerge when we consider their positions on what should serve as the foundational ground for the analysis of virtue ethics. For Anscombe, virtue ethics requires moral psychology but for Wojtyła, virtue ethics requires a philosophical anthropology which takes into consideration the metaphysics of the human being.

Accordingly, for Karol Wojtyła, ethical action finds meaning only in an authentic understanding of the person; but it is through acting (*actus humanus*) alone that the human person reveals himself. Knowing what the person ought to be cannot be divorced from what he ought to do; for Wojtyła, the structure of the ethical "do"--the act itself--comes first. Anscombe's intention might be a bit difficult for some people to understand, but the point she made was that before any action takes place, there has to be buttress intention behind it. Wojtyła sets out to say that it is through human action that the wholeness of man is manifested, that is, when man performs an action, his action reveals the moral character of the person. When I perform an act, it is "I", the whole substantial being, which acts, not just a part of me, nor just my body or mind. I am a unity and this unity or integration is shown or revealed in my performance of action. This unity or integrity is rooted in the unity of the body or the soma and the psyche.

On the Anscombean view of action, what it is to perform an intentional action (doing A) is thus to understand what one is doing as contributing to one's aims ("I am doing A because I am doing B"). The concept of an intentional action, then, is essentially the concept of a kind of behavior that makes sense to the agent as her action.<sup>436</sup> An intentional act is action that is, therefore, partially constituted by the agent's point of view, or her own take on what she is doing. According to the Anscombean view, this, and not an appeal to special mental causes, is what distinguishes between intentional action and mere behavior. Explicitly, Anscombe's action theory amounts to the discovery, echoing John Austin's discovery that we do things with words, that we do actions with act-tokens, that action is discourse, that it is made too of several intertwined layers where each plays the role of a "brute fact" for the next one. She summarizes her main point by arguing that there is a difference between "intention" when it means the goal

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<sup>436</sup> Anscombe, 1957, p. 87. See, Annemarie Kalis and Dawa Ometto, *An Anscombean Perspective on Habitual Action*, Springer, 2009, p. 8. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-019-09651-8>. Accessed on 30/03/2020.

you hope to achieve in doing what you do – that you are doing this for a purpose – and when it means a further or accompanying intention with which you do the thing. For example, I make a table: that’s an intentional action because I am doing just that on purpose. I have the further intention of, say, earning my living, doing my job by making the table [...] It may help you to see that the intentional act itself counts, as well as the further or accompanying intentions, if you think of an obvious example like forging a check to steal from somebody in order to get funds for a good purpose.<sup>437</sup>

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that there is however a convergence of influence from the classical tradition of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas on both Anscombe’s ethical psychology and Wojtyła’s voluntariness of human action. This convergence is seen in the treatment of such themes as the role of intention in human action. In this wise, Anscombe analyzes intention as a property of an action, and so puts the discourse on the level of ethical psychology. In same manner, Wojtyła goes on to analyze the human action as a basic experience of man’s self-determination and self-fulfillment as basis of origin of virtue in any intentional and rational active life of the human person. In this way he prepares the ground for his analysis of the human subjectivity and personal self-awareness. He defines his anthropology as a metaphysics of the human being/human person, and so lays a solid metaphysical foundation of morality. Wojtyła goes on to stress that indeed the problem of the subjectivity of the human being is a problem of paramount philosophical importance today and divergent tendencies with their differing cognitive assumptions and orientations have given the problem diametrically opposed form and meaning.<sup>438</sup> Subjectivity means the quality of existing in someone’s mind rather than the external. It is partially responsible for why one person acts in a different way than that other way.

Aside the experience of subjectivity, another important aspect of convergence from which a synthesis can be attempted is the experience of an inner sense of duty in our actions and experience of morality. For Wojtyła, in his actions and personal morality, the person is supposedly guided by an “inner voice” to make authentic moral choices, that are consistent with his or her particular value system. What Wojtyła refers to as ‘inner voice’ is the moral conscience and on this, his views resonate with those of Anscombe, who asserts as follows: “If you act against your conscience you are doing wrong because you are doing what you think wrong, i.e. you are willing to do wrong. And if you act in accordance with your conscience you

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Karol Wojtyła, “Person, Subject and Community,” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*. Translated by Theresa Sandok, OSM. New York: Peter Lang, 1993, p. 220.

are whatever the wrong that your conscience allows, or failing to carry out the obligation that your conscience says is none”.<sup>439</sup> If we are ever going to grow in our loving relationship with God and neighbor, then we need to discern what is truly commanded by the voice of conscience as a good action to be done and a wrong action to be avoided. The command of conscience thus implicates a moral duty. For both Anscombe and Wojtyła, the consciences allows us to experience in our actions and morality, the inner sense of moral duty.

Yet another significant aspect of their moral philosophical routes to virtue ethics which provides a common ground for a synthesis is their negative reactions to the tendency towards utilitarianism is significant. In “Modern Moral Philosophy”, Anscombe initiated the return to the idea of virtues as the central concepts needed by moral thought. It was enormously influential, turning firstly most of her Oxford generation, and then probably a majority of philosophers worldwide, against utilitarianism as a moral and political theory, but also against the then-prevailing view that ethics is at bottom a matter of personal commitment or choice, a tool for voicing persuasions or exchanging social pressures. If this was not enough, it was also remarkable for two other theses. Morality and ethics must be properly defined. Morality applies only to human acts, that is, actions which proceed from man’s rationality; these are actions which are done with knowledge, freedom and voluntariness. Actions which do not have a rational character can be considered amoral; they cannot be judged as morally good or morally evil. On his part, Wojtyła’s ethics is normative and he proposes deontology. In this sense, his affinity and difference with Kant is conspicuous. The moral duty, according to Karol Wojtyła is a truth about good. He does not speak about divine law, but about rational justification of the moral norm derived from the cognition of truth concerning the dignity (value) of the human person. This way Wojtyła combines deontology and virtue ethics.

Thus, Anscombe and Wojtyła both emphasize that it is possible to rise above the cleavage in modern thought between the logical and the transcendental. Anscombe does so particularly through her philosophy of the human person—her study of our spiritual nature and our special dignity—which pervades the rest of her work. Yet a careful reading of Anscombe’s work suggests that her philosophical legacy cannot be divided up neatly into “Catholic” and “analytic” parts. In truth, both aspects of her work are deeply intertwined, degree of perfection<sup>440</sup>. For his part, Wojtyła asserts that the structure of the person belongs an “inner”

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<sup>439</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, “Must One Obey One's Conscience?,” in *Human Life, Action and Ethics*, ed. Mary Geach and Luke Gormally Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic, 2005, p. 241.

<sup>440</sup>Michael Wee, “Elizabeth Anscombe’s Philosophy of the Human Person” in *Public Discuss*, The Journal of Whitherspoon Institute. <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2019/03/50333/>. Accessed on 24/03/2020.

in which we find the elements of spiritual life and it is this that compels us to acknowledge the spiritual nature of the human soul and the peculiar perfectibility of the human person.<sup>441</sup> The result is an extraordinarily rich synthesis of thinkers as diverse as St. Thomas Aquinas and Wittgenstein both of whom had great influence in the philosophies of Wojtyła and Anscombe respectively.

In the light of the above, we note that for Anscombe and Wojtyła, virtue ethics holds the key to the philosophy of human action. Anscombe has appropriated the classical tradition of virtue ethics in Aristotle and Aquinas in her search to ground virtue ethics on the philosophy of psychology of man. On the other hand, Wojtyła makes use of the philosophy of the human person and attempts to re-interpret the classical tradition of virtue ethics as grounded in the metaphysics of the human person as the subject of moral actions. Hence for both philosophers, this second question – *who should I become?* reveals the dynamics of the personalization of man as the subject of moral action, in which context man strives to become a virtuous agent of his personal acts. A virtuous person is someone that focuses on living a morally correct life, what this implies is that virtue is action oriented, the more one practices virtue, the more he or she gets acquainted with it <sup>442</sup>. They understand that any actions or spoken words are better when they are said and done in a positive way. They understand that life doesn't always work out as planned, and if success is gained it won't be as good if it is tarnished by the guilt of dishonesty and injustice. We believe that when we start thinking this way, then we can address those larger and controversial issues on how human conduct ought to be, after having first established and defined the essential elements of what constitutes the virtuous life first for ourselves individually and then secondly communally. To the extent that we are examining our lives and seeking ways of bettering of ourselves and others, we are engaging in virtue ethics.

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<sup>441</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. by H.T. Willets San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993, p. 121.

<sup>442</sup> Aristotle insists that one acquires virtue through striving to practice it. He comments in Book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that 'You do not see men becoming qualified in medicine by reading handbooks on the subject.'

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation set out to search for a systematic response to the key questions: How can an academically viable virtue ethics be grounded on a prolific foundation? Could such a foundation be provided on the basis of the ethical views of Elizabeth Anscombe and Karol Wojtyla? Did Anscombe and Wojtyla propose compatible or exclusive foundations for virtue ethics? In an attempt to address such questions, I considered it expedient to delineate what philosophers over the history has taken virtue ethics to mean. I did note that perhaps the non-academic appraisal of virtue ethics will not be totally out of sync with the scholarly philosophical theories which explain the human person's capability to achieve goodness and attain a virtuous character. From the panoply of available theoretical frameworks, I was able to select Anscombe's psychological foundation and Wojtyla's anthropological foundation for virtue ethics as provided reliable roadmaps for the construction of a virtue ethics for contemporary studies on human action and morality. In order to expose the view of these protagonists -Anscombe and Wojtyla, I had devoted the second and third chapters of this dissertation to highlighting the significant elements of their ethical views.

The research did not take it for granted that the operative understanding of virtue ethics is a settled issue for scholars, hence the need to make clear in the first chapter basic questions regarding virtue ethics as were addressed by ethicists in the history of philosophical reflection on human action and morality. To be sure, it was noted in the course of this research that virtue ethics sees the ordinary as the terrain on which the moral life moves. Thus, while most ethics make their considerations about rather controversial material (genetics, abortion, war, and so forth), virtue ethics often engages the commonplace context of man's capacity for actions which are morally significant. It is concerned with what we teach our children on becoming good people and how; with the way we relate with friends, families, and neighbors; with the way we live our lives. Moreover, it is concerned not only with whether a physician maintains professional ethics, for instance, whether she keeps professional secrets or observes informed consent with her patients. It is rather concerned with her private life, with whether she knows how to respect her friends' confidences or whether she respects her family members' privacy. It is her life as a person which virtue ethics is specifically concerned.

While it is historically correct that the philosophical concern for virtue thrived amongst the ancient Greek classical philosophy, it is no gainsaying the fact that in retrieving virtue ethics today we realize that we cannot return to the early Athens of Aristotle or the thirteenth-century



Italy of Thomas and there is need to ask from what perspective is Aristotle going to envisage virtue if he were living in our world of today? Moreover, we recognize that there are some novel concerns about virtue ethics being raised by contemporary scholars. First and foremost is the argument that virtue ethics cannot deal with practical issues. Because virtue is concerned with persons, some argue, it cannot adequately deal with human action<sup>443</sup>. Though one can equally ask these objectors how effective their ethical systems have been<sup>444</sup>, or more importantly, whether their ethical systems for all their clarity have ever helped people to become more ethical?<sup>445</sup> Still virtue ethics must show how practical it can be; it must show its applicability to such other specialized ethics like medical ethics. For instance, how does virtue ethics shape the principles of nursing ethics, particularly in showing how a relationally-based concern for agents as persons is a more constructive ethics than any present rule or code-based ethics<sup>446</sup>. In fact, the application of virtue to medical ethics has raised several issues about the delivery of health care that other ethical systems never asked<sup>447</sup>. Such specialized ethics we must underscore are rule-oriented and it needs be noted that rule-oriented ethics is just professional ethics, whereas virtue ethics is about the person, about his or her character. For example, the person is a bad person because he or she has a bad character. A nurse with bad character may be highly professional in her nursing field just to protect her profession.

Virtue ethics which is the quality of moral excellence requires disposition of the mind to embrace character formation which may come in the form of moral education. It is the training of our ego to what I call super-virtue, the zenith of moral worth. While virtue ethics is at times introspective, the complaint that it needs to be more extroverted and practical has prompted a variety of writers to demonstrate that it can give specific advice, that it can improve our ability to know the right and to do it, that it can give us new issues to address, and above all that it can make us better and our actions morally right.

Another significant issue which this academic research brought to the limelight is that attempts to construct a virtue ethics from the psychological foundations of Anscombe and the anthropological foundations of Wojtyla, implicates the tendency to assume that the actions of an average adult human person springs from any specific ideal of moral principles, which could

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<sup>443</sup> Tom Beauchamp and Robert Veatch in E. Shelp (ed.), *Virtue and Medicine* (Boston: Reidel, 1984).

<sup>444</sup> David Solomon, 'Internal objections to virtue ethics' in Peter A. French *et al.* (eds), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy 13: Ethical Theory: Character and Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 428-41.

<sup>445</sup> Leon Kass, 'Practicing ethics: where's the action?', *Hastings Center Report* 20.1 (1990), pp. 5-12.

<sup>446</sup> Martin Benjamin and Joy Curtis, 'Virtue and the practice of nursing' in *Virtue and Medicine*, pp. 257-74.

<sup>447</sup> James Drane, 'Character and the moral life: a virtue approach in biomedical ethics' in Edwin DuBose *et al.* (eds), *A Matter of Principles?* (Park Ridge: Trinity Press, 1994), pp. 284-309.

either be psychological or anthropologically grounded. I am quite aware that some scholars warn about the flaws of such an assumption. For instance, Owen Flanagan warns against the hypothetical reliance on any preconceived ideal of the moral person and imposing this ideal moral form on others. He argues that the possibilities for moral excellence are unlimited, for each individual human person is complex, and his or her experience is uniquely personal and incommunicable. He argues that no single portrait of a saint, or moral hero, has ever definitively embodied what a human person ought to be. St Elizabeth was not Mahatma Gandhi, nor St John the Baptist. The Christian community sustains this insight: the communion of saints demonstrates the enormous variety of ways that the holy is incarnated or as Flanagan beautifully puts it, 'the deep truth that persons find their good in many different ways'<sup>448</sup>. He insists then that people can only become morally excellent persons by being themselves. The saint has always been an original, and never an imitation.

Flanagan rightly emphasizes that we are not trying to become a clone of someone else, when he asks: 'Who ought I become?'. The emphasis is rather on the "I", who I myself ought to become. Mr. Flanagan would be correct to say that every saint no matter how holy they are will never be a clone of Jesus Christ, but can only hope to conform himself or herself to the ideal of love, mercy, compassion, courage, forgiveness etc. which is embodied in the Person of Christ. For it is true that a person can never lose his or her uniqueness and the absolute irrepeatability even as he or she strives to conform himself or herself to the Person of Christ. But this is not to say that a moral ideal does not exist, for the Person of Jesus Christ, is the moral standard and ideal of all personal holiness that all the saints have striven to imitate.

The most frequently quoted phrase by St. Pope John Paul II/Karol Wojtyła from the Second Vatican Council, states that: "Jesus Christ fully reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear"<sup>449</sup>, speaks about the necessity of Christ for the human person to attain moral and personal perfection. For although it is not possible for any human being to become someone other than he or she is, the fulfillment of the person cannot be identified solely with the external observance of the moral law, but rather needs to be identified with the perfection and fulfillment of the entirety of the human person.

But Flanagan is not alone in such a stance which tends to oppose the basic assumption of my thesis. One also finds such critiques in MacIntyre who asserts that each person ought to strive to become the person that God has made him or her to be, and to recognize that at least

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<sup>448</sup> Owen Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 158.

<sup>449</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, par. 22

minimally there are some virtues that each person is responsible to develop in him or herself irregardless of where and when they live or who they are.<sup>450</sup> For although it may not be possible to define the content of each virtue definitively, for history, geography and the individual circumstances of each person's life will necessitate a profoundly personal and unique experience and instantiation of each virtue and their practical meaning.

Nonetheless, I consider the critiques regarding a general assumption of any ideal of operative foundations for virtue ethics as enriching rather than a detraction on the relevance of the discourse on the grounding of virtue ethics. Hence, on the basis of the suitability of my operative assumptions that virtue ethics needs such a foundation, as can be constructed from Anscombe's psychological and Wojtyła's anthropological frameworks, I went on to execute the second task which I have embarked upon in this research, namely: to provide a convincing answer to the question - How then does Anscombe and Wojtyła's proposals serve as a suitable foundation for any theory of virtue ethics that is worth its value? Given that many theories vie for attention, I noted that it could be even more relevant to ask what is the contemporary state of the debate on the challenges of pursuing the goal of attaining a virtuous character in modern society? In responding to such a question then, we are drawn to highlight the contributions of Anscombe and Wojtyła in a bid to employ their arguments for a proper foundation for virtue ethics as a guide to ascertain the suitability or otherwise of any, some or even all the theories on the table. Accordingly, I have relied on the trajectory of considerations made by these two protagonists – Elizabeth Anscombe and Karol Wojtyła. To be underscored is the fact that they did not really build their opinions from a clean slate as they equally attempted to update the traditions that precede their contributions, hence the need to take a short historical overview of the philosophical discourse on virtue ethics in the classical Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition and the modern/contemporary rediscovery of this tradition.

In her appropriation of the preceding virtue ethics traditions, Anscombe feels that there are strict limits to the progress we can make by exploring Wittgenstein's social practices or language games. She noted that in recent years, the virtues have made a dramatic reappearance in English-speaking ethics. But the interesting discovery I had made is that Elizabeth Anscombe herself did spark the neo-Aristotelian interest in virtue ethics with her 1958 essay *Modern Moral Philosophy*, combining radical claims about the deplorable state of moral philosophy with cryptic suggestions about how we should change our ways. On the other hand,

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<sup>450</sup> Martha Nussbaum offers a helpful response to MacIntyre's warnings in 'Nonrelative virtues: an Aristotelian approach' in *Midwest Studies* 13, pp. 32-53.

Karol Wojtyła looks towards phenomenological and metaphysical insights in his appropriation of the traditions that preceded him. He seeks to show what characterizes the human person through a systematic investigation of action. In the process, several classic problems of metaphysics such as causal efficiency, human freedom and intersubjectivity are given a profoundly fresh interpretation. Its limited openness to contemporary philosophy, especially to phenomenological realism, cautiously establishes the direction to be followed for future Catholic philosophers who do not wish to compromise their fidelity to the essential doctrines of Thomism. At the same time, Wojtyła affirms the ontological ground from which a suitable anthropology for virtue ethics draws its strength.

For Anscombe and Wojtyła, the philosophical understanding of human action and morality in classical tradition of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas serves the foundational sources which ought to shape contemporary theories of virtue ethics. However, they differ in their proposals for the aspect of this tradition which should ground contemporary virtue ethics. For Anscombe, this should be the philosophy of psychology, whereas for Wojtyła this foundation is rather the philosophy of person. On this account, my task was tailored in this dissertation to the highlighting of the various elements and arguments which both philosophers had put forward to defend their divergent proposals for a philosophical foundation for virtue ethics.

In spite of their differences on the question of the foundation of virtue ethics – (i.e. whether philosophy of psychology or philosophy of person is to serve this purpose), both philosophers also noted that philosophical traditions of virtue ethics account for one of the oldest attempts at moral philosophies, which has gone through cycles of development, decline, and revival in the past, beginning with the Aristotelian notion of the individual's highest good.

While I appreciate Anscombe's efforts to show that a thorough assessment of the psychological dynamism of human action as necessary to understand virtue ethics, I am more inclined to Wojtyła's personalistic approach to virtue ethics. His arguments are more lucid with regard to the experience of attaining a virtuous character through a continual act of self-transcendence that begins in experience and knowledge, first of the ontological truth contained in an object, then an apprehension of its moral value. These acts of the intellect are accompanied by a concomitant recognition of their object by the will and propel the subject toward deliberation, decision and action, inspired by the sense of duty proper to the conscience. Involved in this process is the personal structure of self-determination and its essential elements, self-possession and self-governance, which, when accompanied by consciousness,

allow the subject to act as an agent not only to an external reality but to one's own conscience subjectivity. All these factors make human action worth more than any other consideration. It is the "personalist value" of the action that must be distinguished from its moral value. Moral values belong to the nature of the action but refer to a norm. The personalistic value of an action is anchored in the fact that the one who executes it is a person and is determined as either a good or evil person depending on the moral character of the decision and action of the person performing the action. This value "is a special and probably the most fundamental manifestation of the value of the person himself". For if the value of the person is prior to the value of the action (since the being is prior to the action), it is in the action that the person manifests himself or herself. The ethical value of the action is conditioned by the personal nature of the act; its moral value is compromised if, in its performance, the authenticity of self-determination is betrayed, as it is the foundation of its moral content. The value of the action is personalist because, in accomplishing it, the person "accomplishes it too". Human acts are cases where people actualize themselves by adopting the dynamic structure of self-determination; their ethical value is rooted in this reality and as such virtue is the fulfillment of the person.

From the various layers of discourse, it is the conclusion of this dissertation that the rediscovery of virtue ethics in contemporary moral discourse has to take into account both the psychological base and the personalistic (anthropological) value of the moral agent in order to account for the full dynamisms of moral obligations in the objective sphere as well the subjective dynamisms that actualize the moral person through the practice of virtue. Finally, the findings of this dissertation confirm that interpreters of Karol Wojtyła's ethics locate the categorical demands of ethical experience in rational agents' demand for respect human dignity and love, while Elizabeth finds it in noble adherence to the demands of virtuous living as Karol Wojtyła. I also arrived at the conclusion that Wojtyła's metaphysical analysis of the moral significance of the personal agency of the "I" is more fruitful for virtue ethics than analytical analysis of Anscombe's psychological experience of moral intention which in spite of its significance in preparing the moral agent for cultivation of virtue, fails to reach it.

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