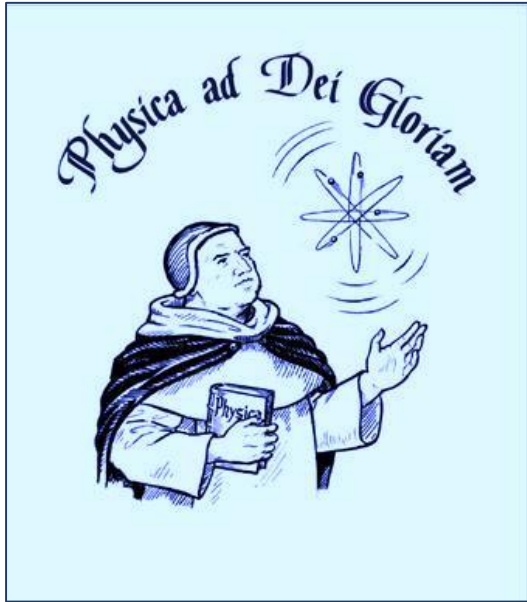


Science before Science Study Group

Week Seventeen



*St. Thomas Aquinas,
Pray for us.*

*St. Albert the Great,
Pray for us.*

Prayer before Study

Almighty God, You who are the creator of all things and our loving Father, send us Your Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds so that we can understand how You have revealed Yourself to us through the world around us.

Grant to us
keenness of mind
capacity to remember,
skill in learning,
subtlety to interpret,
and eloquence in speech.

May You guide the beginning of our work, direct its progress, and bring it to completion.

We ask this through Thy Son, Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Amen



Mathematical Morality

- The applied science of ethics – also called morality
- “What should I do?”
- “There is no absolute answer – all things are relative – indeed, no one should impose his morality on another”
- Steven Weinberg said – ethics is unlike science – there is no way to determine what is right

Relativism

- This idea not always so prevalent: Richard Feynman
 - Said he thinks all can agree on practical morality (not the why)
 - He wanted to have a science of externals of morality – a parallel to modern physics
 - He does not think views on the universe affects the way one thinks about morality
 - Yet he is proposing an empiriological or mathematical morality
 - He sees a future where we forget why we believe things as long as we believe the same actions

Relativism (continued)

- Are morals relative? Are they empiriologically accessible?
- Need to make some distinctions
 - Moral relativism's key statement is
 - No one should impose his morality on another
 - Or: one should not impose one's morality on another
 - There is no reason that would give one the right to tell me I am doing wrong
 - Current Relativism's key statement is contradictory
 - It says: one shouldn't say should not!
 - Hence there are only two alternatives:
 - We are left with *might makes right*
 - There is not way to tell others they misbehave
 - One must allow those who wish to do as they wish
 - Or: we must admit moral law of some type
 - In either case one can no longer use the relativism argument

Is morality purely relative?

- Many say they think so – I've never met anyone who acts as if they think so
 - E.g. would a relativist feel okay if they had to pay double for their groceries?
 - Would feel that is unfair
 - What about an editor who says he has not ethical duty to print articles as submitted
 - What if a child was kidnapped?
 - Many with regret they did not do everything to stop it
- All spontaneously recognize morel rights and duties - infra-scientific recognition

If we accept moral relativism...

- How to organize society?
- If nothing binds one's conscience then government must be by force!
- One obeys a moral law (or any law) for an internal or external reason
- Leaving behind internal reason leaves us with external reason – or might makes right
- This is repugnant to reason to suppose there is no moral law
 - Especially when we realize we have morality spontaneously

Empiriological Morality

- There seems to be moral law
- Kant says there is,
 - but since, in the pure sciences, he has abandoned hope of getting the real
 - He thought he was talking about the whole world but he was only talking about a subset of it – the empiriological
 - his moral systems is based on beings of reason not on reality
 - In the end, only left with logic as a rule
 - Since logic is content-less, one can invent whatever systems one wants
 - Only requirement is that it is self-consistent
 - Kant's philosophy sets framework for moral relativism
 - Feynman's approach at bottom the same, it is to come up with an empiriological (or even better empiriometric) morality

Mathematical Morality

- In general, empiriological is a tool of a larger science
 - Previously physics; in this case ethics
 - We take it as the science and not as a tool – we have absurdities like Kant's having only metaphors and models
- Mathematics works for physica because the first accident is quality
 - Physics is dealing with a low level of being that is closer to that first property of quantity
 - But morality is in the immaterial realm (lacks extension)– hence mathematics wouldn't work there and it would explain it in terms that don't relate directly to it

What happens with a purely empiriological morality?

- Is divorce good or not? You do a study!
- Model after physics
- Study connection between the number of people who get murdered and the number of jobs
 - Find a high correlation between the increase in murders and the drop in jobs
 - 1st: Need to determine whether the correlation is real or not
 - 2nd: Given correlation – does not imply causal link
 - 3rd: If you convince yourself of casual connection – how do you go from the facts to what you should do?
- Cannot be done within the empiriological system – Gödel's theorem – must decide outside the systems what is good and not good.

Mathematical Morality is a 'pick your own' activity

- For example – use the idea of 'efficiency' or 'maximizing scientific benefit' as Bronowski proposed – you are choosing your own good
- Why pick this one? It's your standard, it's arbitrary
- Because you're in the land of Godel and it's the same as Kant's with being of reason rather than real being.

So, is ethics a real science?

- The answer is 'yes' – there are indeed moral absolutes
- They are founded on the real – give real knowledge of how we should behave
- Ethics may use empiriological tools
- To found this science we must put first things first

Foundations of Morality

- Return to real being – look at its transcendental – good
 - Good is related to order and to final causality
 - Change is reduction of potentiality to act
 - Potentiality only means something with respect to something that actually is
 - H₂ and O₂ is potentially water - is ordered towards happening every time
 - Ordination implies foreordination

Finality

- Every agent (in so far as it is an agent) acts towards an end
- If agent were not determined to some particular effect it would not do one thing rather than another; consequently it must be determined to some certain one, which has the nature of an end
- Human nature: Man is material being with nutritive, sensorial and intellectual powers.
 - With any kind of knowledge comes an appetitive power
 - Appetitive power associated with the intellect is the will
 - Something judged good for us attracts us

Finality and Good

- All things are good in so far as they are
 - Evil is privation of good – absence of a good that a thing should have
- All things have a natural appetite for their completion
- Analogously, at an inanimate level, we can things strive for or ‘love’ them (agent oriented toward completion in another).
 - Not that they have a volition
 - This is not just metaphorical
 - Ontological (real) predetermination between them

Good

- Primary cannot be defined but pointed at
 - In terms of it other things are defined
- Good is in a broad analogical sense the 'desirability' or a thing
 - It increase in amplitude, in meaning as we ascend the scale of being
 - At low lever H_2 and O_2 are attracted for the perfection (good) called water
 - Good of plants is to assimilate chemicals into their leaves and stems thereby completing in some ways the potentiality in those substance in their substance.

Principle of Finality

- Every created thing acts to perfect itself and to perfect another
- This only applies to real being and not beings of reason, e.g. evil
- All things exist for themselves in operation and to overflow themselves by action
- Or as Maritain says
 - Every being is love of a good and this is the ground of its action
- Good is multi-layered, polyvalent and analogical character.

First Principles of Morality

- Do good and avoid evil
 - Once we know what good is, this principle is self-evident
 - The good is the end for which an intelligent agent should act
- An agent that acts with evil as its end acts towards no end at all.
 - Evil is the absence of something
 - What acts towards no end acts not at all
 - There is no action - no “do” to do
 - This absurd conclusion results from trying to deny the first principle of morality
- But men do evil. How?
 - What we choose to do must at least have the appearance of good to us to attract us
 - Only real being attracts

Moral Action: Exterior and Interior

- If we chose a real good, then it will increase our being while not it contracts it or increase disorder (remember unity is another aspect of being)
- Need more distinctions – moral action takes place in two realms
 - Internal (formal) – its primary sphere – the intellect together with the will – immaterial substantial form
 - External - secondary (material) sphere - man acts out what he decides in the world

Self-evidence of the First Principle of Morality

- When I consider something is good for me, I am attracted to it
 - It is a predicate waiting for a subject to do it
- The morally good (i.e. what you should do) is what is really good for you
- Self-evident because what is good for me implicitly contains the subject “what I should do”

Unintentional Evil

- We use the intellect – means possibility of error
- Can choose things that only appear good for us but actually not
 - To degree error is not really our own what we do is morally (internally) good but externally evil (have not damaged ourselves)
 - E.g. stamp machine – toxin released – causes cancer to repairman
 - My action remain morally good but still the external result remains evil

Deliberate Evil

- What we mean – we can choose a good despite the evil it brings with it
 - E.g. stealing something from a store – want the benefit of the thing – so we do it anyway
- In every choice for evil we deaden our reason so we can do what we please – an element of deliberate irrationalism enters
 - Even suicide is done because it is believed to be good to be released from life

Conscience

- First principle – do good and avoid evil cannot be denied
 - We decide what is good for us by reasoning
- The mind of man as it makes moral judgment is called conscience (with knowledge)

What is Good for Us?

- Every act involves ontological good
 - What is good for us?
 - Reality – our nature and its relation to things
 - We should conform ourselves to reality – in process find ourselves not loose ourselves
- Images
 - Tuning fork
 - Chorus and harmony – increase or decrease

Moral Life

- Our moral life involves not some part of ourselves
 - But our whole self acting in the whole of reality
 - We use our reason to act in accord with reality or against it
- Moral evil is in the end irrationality
 - Physical evil like that found in the animal kingdom can be shown to be a good relative to a higher plane
 - Moral evil is not a disorder of that type

What is good for us? The Big Picture

- In analogy to accidents and substance in physical things
 - Accidental (or useful) goods
 - Substantial goods
- Accidental goods we do for an end goal (substantial good)
 - For example – Trip to Yellowstone park
- Final ultimate goal – must be ordered to Goodness itself
- We, like all things, are ordered to God – He is our ultimate end
- God seeks His glory not for His own sake for ours

What is specifically good for me?

- Everything is good, not everything is good for me
 - E.g. cyanide is ontologically good – but not good for me to eat
- Order of moral good is a subset of ontological good
- To identify special goods we must identify specific needs
- Two categories of needs
 - Body and soul – nutritive, sensorial and intellectual
 - All must work together for there to be unity
 - 1st intellect; 2nd sensorial; 3rd nutritive
 - Must keep this order
 - Act like animals ignoring needs of the intellect – we diminish ourselves
 - We should enjoy sensorial pleasures of eating etc. but should be directed by reason

Specifics

- Ten commandments – reference point – all are incorporated into American civil law and practiced (not a religious reference)
- Moral principles have character of a command – they come with the implicit “I ought to do this”
- First three reference God; the last seven are duties to fellowmen
- Our fellowman – implies a common nature – an immaterial immortal soul.]
- Golden rule – ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ is an expression of our common human nature

Examples

- Implies a duty toward self
- We should not steal
 - Must have control over some part of the world to be able to act for the good
 - To steal I am taking a place in the world that is not my own
 - A civilized society will have laws against stealing
 - But most of us will feel the internal force of this moral duty
- We should not murder
 - Only God has sovereignty over human life – acting to undo the decision of God to create that man
 - Attacking order of the universe at its core
- We should not bear false witness
 - Implies a broad prohibition against lying; it is about our need for truth (end of man's chief power of intellect);
 - Lying in court – destroys reputation – effect is clearly evil
 - Everything we do depends on having correct knowledge
 - We are made for the truth
 - Bodily integrity and intellectual integrity
 - Without intellectual integrity we are lower than the animals
 - The more ontologically good something, the more evil it is capable of.

Living truth in action

- Everything we do is either good or evil.
- How do we cope with so many decisions to make?
- In addition, we have some level of disorder in our structure right from the start – we are born with it.
- We develop habits to cope
 - Voluntary and involuntary
 - Involuntary are part of our sensorial and nutritive natures
 - Our subconscious is formed or deformed by our voluntary action
 - Second nature; scientists in the lab; liars;
 - It takes habits to counter our disorder nature
 - Habits that are good – virtues; bad – vices
 - Cardinal virtues – prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice
 - One for each power of the soul
 - Prudence – actions of the mind; justice – actions of the will; temperance – regulates emotions related to the senses; fortitude – emotions related to imposing danger.
- The degree to which my involuntary actions are in right order under the voluntary ones together with the degree that my voluntary actions follow right reason is a measure of my integrity (degree to which I am one)
- Virtues (or second nature) are what establishes the order, the ordination, and the subordination

Right Desire and Right Order

- Ordering our passions
 - Not suppress them or use them sparingly
 - But not using them *inordinately*
- Desire is the fuel of the engine of our actions

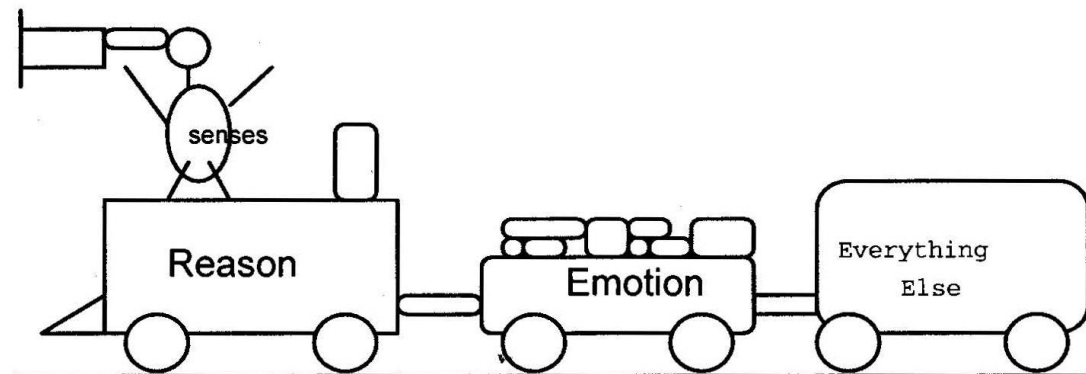


Figure 9-1: The train metaphor helps place the proper role of our various powers. Everything comes through the senses, from which our intellect spontaneously apprehends, through abstraction, simple essences in the world. Judgements are then made, which are analyzed by reason, resulting in further understanding, which in turn leads the emotions to respond in accordance with the understanding reached. If, for example, the conclusion is that something will be dangerous, fear or anger will arise moving one to flee or fight respectively.

Why is right desire not discussed?

- Two Reasons
 - Abandonment of reason hence concept of right and order in morality
 - Implicit belief that passions are bad when connected with intellectual work
 - Feeds back causing the first
 - Thinking ends in egotism (Bill Moyers) – dichotomy between reason and the heart – men without chests – go with the heart not the intellect!
 - Must be right ordering of the passions to the task at hand and to one's final end

Importance of Seeking Truth

- Sophists sought to be known as seekers, not to really seek.
 - Socrates was poisoned by these people for unmasking their appearance
- St. Thomas More example
 - Daughter wanted him to just say what Henry VIII wanted
 - Explains he is holding his very self in his hands
- Today renowned scientists who have said that truth is not important!
 - Problem comes from lack of philosophical and moral attention
 - Confusion comes from inability to distinguish empirical from the ontological

Happiness

- We all seek one final end and that is happiness
 - It consists in seeking and finding Truth Himself
 - Aligning oneself with what is really good can only increase one's degree of perfection
- How does intention effect happiness
 - Mistakes in reasoning, doing an evil unintentionally
 - Not a distortion in the moral realm but in the ontological
 - Note that one can purposely dull one's reason – in that case one's responsibility is increased (called vice)
- Ends and means
 - One may do evil because it is part or on the way to the good we want
 - E.g. Princeton University prof. – can kill a child up to one year old – good of quiet and freedom
 - E.g. politician can cheat someone so he gets a bill passed
 - Putting themselves in place of God – saying I know better
 - The end never justifies the means

Scientists and Morality

- Implicitly respect truth – they seek to understand quantitative interrelation among things
- Infected with moral relativism and even relativism of truth
- Feynman in 1963 that morality would be unaffected by science and religion. Why?
- Ignorance of sound philosophy and interest in empiriometric science
- He saw students coming around to traditional morality
 - Did they all figure it out?
 - Even when academic milieu is telling them they can't know what is moral
 - No. It came from the larger culture- the old doctrine was still in the air in the 1960s
 - Old doctrine was still in the air even though new doctrine was being taught

Squandering our inheritance?

- The cultural inertia that Feynman saw will not last forever
- Since 1963 we have seen change
 - Tolerance for divorce
 - Rejection of abortion
 - Child's problem at school - from tardiness to guns
- Morals are affected by science, by our thinking
- We can lose it all if we don't recognize it

Current issues

- Should we clone human beings?
- Should we use embryos for research?
- Should we genetically engineer new animals and plants?
- What limits should be put on technology?
- Should curiosity be our only limit?
- We can answer some of these questions relatively quickly with the base we've established
- We know the answer to the embryo research or therapeutic cloning
 - Killing an innocent human person is wrong
 - Human life begin at conception
 - Deliberately killing embryos for research (or any other reason) is wrong

Moral philosophy

- We've established both the base and the method for approaching all such problems
- Moral philosophy requires hard work of reasoning, applying and contemplating its truths
- Our thought must change our will, how we act and what we are. For the applied science of ethics is about living the truth
- Be willing to conform to reality. Living it makes it connatural to us and enables us to answer moral dilemmas such as the ones above, with greater facility and accuracy.