

Fundamentals of Integral Ethics: Religious and Secular Views

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I. Introduction

Aside from one extreme view that the characteristic of Christianity or any religion must be determined by philosophy, a view still perpetuates that Christianity's being religious has nothing to do with philosophy. And because ethics fall under philosophy's practical aspect, one might also say that there is no such thing as "Christian Ethics," that ethics only belongs to philosophy whereas Christianity only belongs to religion or spirituality. Although there is difficulty where to logically locate Christianity whether it is purely religious or ethical or aesthetic, this article explains how spirituality, religion, theology, and ethics find their place in relating with temporal matters, especially with culture, politics, economics, and ecology. Besides, this inserts biblical-theological principles and quotations to any ethical principle or inquiry and supporting social sciences as a way of stressing the presence and pervasiveness of religion in ethics and other aspects of life.

II. Defined Dimensions and Aspects of Spirituality

For the secular anthropology or non-religious or non-theological perspective, ethics or morality just falls under culture. But for the theological perspective, religion, culture, and morality or ethics fall under the broader reality called as spirituality.¹ The following are the distinctions of the three spiritual dimensions: Religion is the transcendental function of

¹ Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond* (NY: Harper and Row, 1963), 17-18.

humanity's spiritual life; culture is the creative function of humanity's spiritual life; and ethics or morality is the integral function of humanity's spiritual life.²

Similar to religion, spirituality has been defined in various and even complex ways. In other words, both the lay person and scholar can formulate his/her own definition of spirituality covering religion, culture, and ethics or morality.

Spirituality pertains to both visible and invisible realities, entities, beings, energies, powers, authorities, motivations, impetus, and influences, which functionally creates, moves, gives, shapes, directs, and determines human life, thinking, attitudes and values, consciousness, existence, and destiny. Spirituality's visibility manifests through the culture and morality of any individual person and social group. Spirituality's invisibility manifests through the inner dimension of religion within the individual person and social group.

As stressed above, religion is the self-transcendence of humanity's spiritual life. It is derived from three Latin words. The first is *religio*, meaning, "the fear or awe one feels in the presence of spirit or god."³ The second is *religare*, i.e., "to bind together."⁴ And the third is *relegere*, which means, "to reread," "to bind," and to rethink."⁵ In Latin religion also means "to be careful."⁶

[W]hat the religious man is "careful" about is above all the dangerous power inherent in the manifestations of the sacred

² Ibid.

³ Lewis Hopfe, *Religions of the World* (Encino, CA: Glencoe Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), 3.

⁴ Nels F.S. Ferre, *Faith and Reason* (NY: Harper and Brothers, 1946), 5; Ferre, *Reason in Religion* (Great Britain: Thomas Nelson Ltd., 1963), 16.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1967), 27.

themselves. But behind this danger is the other, much more horrible one, namely that one may lose all connection with the sacred and be swallowed up by chaos.⁷

The term used in Christian theology about the phrase “lose all connection with the sacred,” which is the consequence of desecrating the sacred itself, is Sin. In Christian context Sin is real. Its ultimate source, however, remains mysterious. The Biblical myth of creation (Genesis Chapters 2 and 3) just depicts that the cause of humanity’s alienation from the Divine and the rest of the Divine’s creation is humanity’s desire to know what is good and evil, which is an idiomatic expression for desiring to know everything. The only one who knows everything is God. This means that one root cause of Sin, which is simply defined as humanity’s broken relationship with God, self, fellow humans, and ecology, is humanity’s desire to take over God’s sovereignty in the universe. This notion parallels with Buddhism’s Four Noble Truths stressing that one of the root causes of extreme human sufferings is human craving which is tantamount to desire. However, the notion of the Supreme Being in Buddhism is vague. But Buddhism devotes itself to something sacred or absolute value assuring life’s rest and ease via its Eight-fold Path that can be considered as one good source of ethical insights.

The above-mentioned etymologies of religion have salient key words, especially “fear,” “awe,” “to bind together,” “re-read,” “rethink,” and “being careful.” They imply sense of sacredness that corresponds to prescribing habitual behavior or manner or conduct or ethics as a whole that does not bring destructive results or consequences alienating the human being from his/her harmonious relationship with spiritual, ecological, historical, and social entities. In this sense, religion serves as one resource of ethics and morality.

⁷ Ibid.

However, countries' histories differ their characteristics in acknowledging religions as sources of ethics and morality. There was a time in classical Greek philosophy that polytheistic religion opposes Greek philosophical ethics because the latter happens to be divulging in its inquiries the limitations and anomalies of the conventional presumptions of the former, especially when talking about worldviews. The Greek polytheism made Socrates as the classical Greek philosophy's early martyr. This causes the Greek philosophical ethics independent from religion. Ethical inquiries on nature divorce from Supernature.

In Biblical religion, ethics and morality root in the Divine command (e.g., The Ten Commandments). The same command, which belongs to Supernature, encourages humans to inquire on nature as a focus of intellectual and ethical reflections and insights. The Wisdom literatures in the Bible (e.g., Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes) have partially derived their ethical reflections and insights via discoveries of the laws of nature. Biblical ethical inquiries on nature closely relate to Supernature though there were times also, especially in Middle Ages, that authorities of Christianity suppressed and persecuted those who inquired on nature convulsing the worldview of the former. In its very essence, Christianity is scientific despite the extreme reality that there are still countless superstitious, anti-philosophical, and anti-scientific Christians. On the other hand, there are also some Christians who allow Christianity's ideas to be absorbed to and determined by philosophy.

The common ground between religious ethics, especially the Judeo-Christian one, and classical Western philosophical ethics is the quest for the highest good.⁸ However, the difference between the two ethical resources is that the classical Western philosophical ethics

⁸ Oliver A. Johnson, *Ethics: Selections from Classical and Contemporary Writers* (U.S.A: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1989), 13-15.

concerns only about life here and now in actualizing its principles whereas the Judeo-Christian ethics concerns on and for the life hereafter in the quest for the highest good without neglecting life here and now.⁹ In our modern and post-modern times, religion becomes complex and myriad in its definitions. It has been defined by some authorities of religion as follows: ultimate concern, unconditional concern, absolute value, highest aspiration, quest for and devotion to the highest good, supreme principle, worship of and devotion to the Supreme Being, supreme sacrifice, absolute allegiance, servanthood to the noblest principle, etc. But whatever these definitions are, they still prescribe some manners and cultural practices in expressing, attaining and fulfilling them.

In relation to religion's definitions as ultimate or unconditional concern and function as transcendental, Tillich writes:

Religion can be defined as the encounter with the holy, and the holy can be defined as the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately and with unconditional seriousness. The holy is the dimension of reality that shines through the bearers of the holy, be it stars and trees, ocean and earth, paintings and buildings, music and words, or persons and historical events. Through all of them one can encounter the holy. Through all of them human beings have encountered the holy, although none of them is holy in itself. They are holy as bearers of the holy. They are holy because in them something is encountered that is a matter of ultimate concern, something in which the question of the meaning of our life is asked and answered in symbols and myths. The unconditional seriousness of the encounter with the holy shows itself in the double effect of the holy upon us. It has an irresistible fascination as that which gives to our life ultimate depth. And it has an awe-awakening strangeness. We cannot touch it as we can touch with hands and minds everything in time and space. We can touch the

⁹ Ibid.

bearer of the holy, but not the holy itself. It remains the unapproachable mystery of being.¹⁰

Religion purposively aims to elevate humanity from trivial conditions. In this sense, the human being as a spiritual entity should not be tied up by any form of non-growth in personal, social, and ecological life. He/she must not be absorbed to any given culture whether the latter is static or dynamic. This is done, for example in two ways, i.e., through either outer-worldly or inner-worldly asceticism (Max Weber).

Being a hermit or monk is a form of outer-worldly asceticism. One dodges away from extremely corrupting culture which is beyond the control of the minority conscientious individuals and groups in certain history and society. Being actively engaged and involved in historical and social processes to improve the world is an example of inner-worldly asceticism. Within the tension between outer-worldly and inner-worldly asceticism, religion can either be absorbed to or liberated from culture in either conscious or unconscious manner.

Though religion has the transcendental function, it does not mean that all types and forms of religion are the same in their ethical and moral contributions to the whole life. In their institutionality, forms and types of religion have ambiguous role and function in relating themselves to cultures, ethics, and morality. That's why there has always been a contradiction of life within and among religions. Even Christ himself, who is the core of Christian ethics and morality, clashes with the ethos of his religious root and tradition – especially the particular versions of Judaism during his time – the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, etc. Christ, who is the core of Christianity, transcends his own contemporary

¹⁰ Tillich, *The Spiritual Situation in Our Technical Society*, ed. and intro. J. Mark Thomas (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 152.

interpretations of Judaic theology that corresponds to ethics and morality. He radically criticizes and reinterprets the very essence of Judaic theological ethics by not necessarily deviating from the core of Judaic theology – the *Shema* – i.e.,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deuteronomy 6: 4-7, RSV)

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27, RSV)

Aside from the supernatural virtues of faith and hope, the supernatural virtue of love is the foundation of Christian ethics or moral theology. But how do we define, describe, demonstrate, and actualize God's love? How are Christian institutions and individuals honest to God's love totally revealed in Christ? In this sense, religious institutions, forms, and types involve in the contradictions between good and evil, life and death, virtues and vices, love and hatred, humility and pride, selflessness and selfishness, humanization and dehumanization, transformed nonconformist and untransformed nonconformist, etc.¹¹ In other words, institutional religions are not exempted in becoming instruments of human whims and caprices or good and evil purpose though ideally religion informs us that our existence is either/or (Soren Kierkegaard) and teaches us to absolutely choose one loyalty

¹¹ See Solomon Rivas, *Discerning the Unknown: An Interwoven Theological Ethics* (Germany: Verlag Dr. Muller-Publishing, 2010), 34-61. This pertains to the general divisions and specific types and categories of religion, which helps us discern the nature of religion we engage in.

only in determining our existence and destiny although any object of absolute loyalty expresses itself in different manners and forms and has different correspondences.

As stressed above, culture is the creative function of spiritual life. It is derived from the Latin noun *cultura* and verb *colere*, meaning, “growth,” “improvement,” “cultivation,” “refinement, perfection of the mind or taste,” “education,” “veneration and worship.”¹² These derivatives run similar to the very essence of religion because religion itself, such as Christianity, seeks the growth, improvement, refinement, perfection, and ultimately the transformation of persons by cultivating and motivating virtuous values.

You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect
(Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:48, RSV).

But how one grows, improves, refines, and transforms depends on the cultural processes whether they are healthy or unhealthy, whether they are enlightening or blinding, and whether they are making humans growing or stagnating. Several profound and broad secularly anthropological definitions of culture state that culture itself means the following: “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom, and many other capabilities and habits acquired by man”; “the whole social heritage or way of life of a particular society”; “the integral whole consisting of implements and consumers’ goods, of constitutional charters for various social grouping, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs”; “the whole distinctive way of life of a society”; etc. Also, Helmut Richard Niebuhr sounds secularly anthropological – in his being theological – in defining culture as “the total process of human activity and the total result of such activity.”¹³ For him culture “comprises

¹² John Hutchison, *Faith, Reason, and Existence: An Introduction to the Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1956), 203-231.

¹³ Helmut Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (NY: Harper and Row, 1956), 32.

language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical process and values.”¹⁴

Anthropology informs us that culture has material and non-material aspects. Any material object made by the human being, which is artifact, belongs to the material culture. Human ideas, gestures, habits, languages, signs, symbols, etc. belong to the non-material culture invented and devised by the human being to guide and direct his/her life. That’s why culture has dimensions, namely, symbol, wisdom and knowledge, and meaning.

Since culture’s derivatives run similar to religion’s function, how should culture be distinguished from religion? Culture lives up certain values whereas religion acknowledges a certain value or values to be absolute and worthy of dying for. In Christianity, for example, the values which are worthy of dying for are love, justice, truth, etc. Culture either gradually or radically changes. Religion’s cultural expressions either gradually or radically change. But the very essence and core of religion remain such as the senses of humanity, community, and justice in the context of Christianity, which transform all cultures.

Culture is always outward in its appearance whereas religion is always inward in its concern such as the question of one’s purpose, meaning, and aim of existence.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalms 139:23-24, RSV)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:8, RSV).

This leads to the third dimension of spirituality, i.e., ethics or morality.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Ethics or morality asks whether the culture one lives up harmonizes with his/her purpose, meaning, and aim of existence. In Christianity, humanity's purpose, meaning, and aim of existence finally revealed, culminated, replicated, and exemplified in the humanity and divinity of Christ. In this sense, ethics or morality serves as the integral function of one's spiritual life.

Both morality and ethics have ancient root words. Morality is derived from the Latin *moralitas*, meaning, "manner," "character," "proper behavior," "norm." The other Latin derivative of morality is *mores*, which means, "social rules," "etiquette," and "inhibitions from the society."¹⁵ It has three principal meanings.¹⁶ First, it is a code of conduct or a set of beliefs distinguishing between right and wrong behaviors. Second, it refers to an ideal code of belief and conduct which would be preferred by the sane "moral" person under specified conditions. The third is it is synonymous with ethics.

Ethics is derived from the Greek *ethike/ethikos*, which means, "accustomed place," "manner," "custom," "disposition," "character," "norm," etc.; "the manner common among all men in all places and in all times." The other Greek derivative of ethics is *ethos*, meaning, "moral character."¹⁷

With regards to their distinctions, morality and ethics just subtly differ.

Morality is generally used to describe a sociological phenomenon; namely, the existence in a society of rules and standards of conduct. Ethics denotes the field of moral philosophy. Along with logic, epistemology, and metaphysics, it is the traditional area of philosophical inquiry that dates back to the time of ancient Greeks...As a philosophical endeavor, it is the study of morality.

¹⁵ <http://www.wikinfo.org/index.php/Ethics>.

¹⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/morality>.

¹⁷ <http://www.wikinfo.org/index.php/Ethics>.

Such study is either descriptive or normative...It is not a substitute for morality; rather it seeks to organize our ordinary moral beliefs in a precise and consistent manner and to discover whatever justification they have.¹⁸

From other views, ethics is used in the following three different but related ways. First, it pertains to general pattern or way of life, e.g., custom, tradition, etc. Second, it signifies a set of rules and conduct or a moral code. And third, it is an inquiry about ways of life or code of conduct, i.e., analysis of the two above-mentioned uses of ethics.

The three dimensions of spirituality, which are religion, culture, and ethics or morality interrelate and complement one another. Religion lifts up, elevates, and transforms cultural conditions in transcending the former's self. It absorbs culture to the transcendental and eternal reality. It motivates selflessness and self-sacrifice for the sake of transcendence and eternity. Culture visibly manifests the very essence of religion; it creatively embodies religious insights in relative forms. Ethics or morality finds ways to unite, integrate, and harmonize culture's relationship with religion. It holds together different religious groups and cultures. While religion commands one to value and die for truth, ethics evaluates whether a religious person is really honest to the truth he/she professes via the aid of different philosophical perspectives, tools, and methods. Via philosophy and sciences, ethics or morality helps evaluate, categorize, define, and describe a life that promises and assures harmony, integrity, unity, and meaning. It prevents religion and culture to be hypocritical. And religion – in its being belonged to the transcendental and eternal – makes ethics or morality fulfilling, lasting, and enduring and liberates particular cultures. "Ethics without religion cannot last." (Leo Tolstoy).

¹⁸ John R. Boatright, *Ethics and the Conduct of Business*, third ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000), 22-23.

Spirituality has two aspects.¹⁹ The first is theoretical covering science, metaphysics, and arts. The second is practical covering social, political, and moral/ethical concerns.

In including science in spirituality's theoretical aspect, religion is not in conflict with science. Besides, the etymology of science, i.e., from the Latin, which means, "knowledge," is not essentially contradictory to religion. We can say that theology, which is a religious component, may mean "science of god/God." However, Greek is broader than Latin in terms of the synonym of knowledge because the former's word for knowledge is *logos* that covers not only knowledge itself but also "wisdom," "reason," "understanding," "study," etc.

In our modern time's common sense, science always means natural and physical covering biology, astronomy, chemistry, physics, etc. But technically, science is subdivided into sciences such as applied and social sciences aside from natural and physical sciences. Academically, religion and theology are in the same category with philosophy; they fall under humanities. However, they can be scientific also on the ground that they are concerned on knowledge and its truth and veracity. Besides, they are and must be concerned on facts and objectivity, which is a scientific prerequisite, before arriving at spiritual judgment on any issue tremendously affecting life. It is only the corruption by personal biases, fanaticism, and lie derived deeply from the subconscious that they lose their being scientific and objective. Also, religion and theology are scientific because they look for orderly systems and methods in arriving at a certain truth.

¹⁹ Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, trans. H. Richard Niebuhr (Cleveland, Ohio: The Word Publishing Co./Meridian Books, 1967), 53.

The relationship and distinction between religion or theology and science in general and particular can be categorized into general and specific technicalities. Thus, Millard J.

Erickson comments:

Until the thirteenth century, the term *science* was not applied to theology. Augustine preferred the term *sapientia* (wisdom) to *scientia* (knowledge). Sciences dealt with temporal things, wisdom related to the eternal matters, specifically to God as the highest good. Science and knowledge could lead to wisdom. For this reason, however, the truths acquired by the specific sciences would have to be ordered in relation to the highest good. Thus, wisdom, including philosophy and theology, can serve as an organizing principle for knowledge...In particular, science now is restricted to the object of sense experience, and verification to the “scientific method,” which employs observation and experimentation, following strict procedure of inductive logic. On this basis, theology is rather obviously not a science, since it deals with supersensible objects.²⁰

How about the relationship between ethics and science? The following speaks about the distinction and common ground of the two branches of knowledge:

Ethics is a science in the sense that its study represents an intellectual enterprise, a rational inquiry into its subject matter in the hope of gaining knowledge. As such, ethics can be contrasted with art or religion or technology, whose purposes are not the same. Although ethics differs from the various empirical sciences both in its subject matter and in its special methodology, it shares with them a general methodology, rational inquiry, and an overall goal – the attainment of truth. These relationships between ethics and science have led philosophers to speak of ethics as a *normative* science, because it concerns itself with norms or standards, in contrast to the *descriptive* sciences, which concern themselves with describing empirical facts.²¹

²⁰ Millard J. Erikson, *Christian Theology* (Manila, Philippines: Christian Growth Ministry, 1997), 33-34.

²¹ Johnson, 1.

III. Ethics and Morality Proper

A. Prerequisites for Ethical Studies

Just like in other endeavors which humans involve, there are some prerequisites for the study of ethics.²² The first is objectivity such as setting aside prejudgments, control of one's emotions, and open-mindedness to any theory presented. Under objectivity are questions of theoretical consistency, scope of facts covered, and the fitness of the theory to the facts the former attempts to explain. The second is intellectual ability such as to analyze, break a complex theory down into its essential part, ability to separate, distinguish, and differentiate concepts from one another. And the third is moral insight like the principle that to be an ethicist one must live up morally his/her knowledge through practical wisdom generating another ethical theory.

B. Branches and Subject Areas of Ethics

With my personal remarks, ethics has the following major branches and subject areas.²³ The first is meta-ethics, "which is the theoretical meaning and reference of moral propositions and how their truth-values (if any) may be determined." With the help of essential intuition, meta-ethics clarifies and explains to us any moral imperative considered to be having the paramount importance to any moral community. For all people, regardless of religious, racial, economic, political, and cultural orientations, justice serves to be the paramount importance among many virtues. However, how do we define justice as part of universal moral values and which is essentially synonymous with ethics? Should all cultures

²² Ibid., 4-6.

²³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ethics>; *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Ethics," <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics/>.

have the same definition of justice as a universal moral value? Does our violation of a certain culture mean a violation of justice? What do the books of prophets Amos and Micah mean by saying to religious and cultural practitioners the following?

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream (Amos 5:21-24, RSV)

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:6-8)

In Christianity love (or *Shema* or *agape*) is weightier than justice; that justice is just part of and in dialectical tension with love. But how do Christians define love and what must be its descriptions as an absolute Divine imperative and as the highest and deepest expression of Christian faith? How to distinguish love from other so-called supernatural virtues, especially faith and hope? Though it is more than enough explanation by Saint Paul, I Corinthians 13 is one of many biblical passages objectively and specifically describing and explaining the nature of love to be observed by its moral advocates; that love, for example, means the following.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will

pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away (I Cor. 13: 4-10, RSV).

Thus, “Meta-ethics investigates where our ethical principles come from, and what they mean. Are they merely social inventions? Do they involve more than expressions of our individual emotions? Meta-ethical answers to these questions focus on the issues of universal truths, the will of God, the role of reason in ethical judgments, and the meaning of ethical terms themselves.”

Aside from clearly defining the nature of ethical theme, meta-ethics in this sense also talks about the sources and foundations of moral knowledge such as emotion, intuition, cognition, and revelation. It addresses three problems.²⁴ The first is the problem of meaning such as what *good* and *right* mean, their definitions and descriptions. One of the main problems addressed by meta-ethics is the definition and description of justice. The second pertains to the problems of method such as the following: the process the ethicists reach their conclusions; statement of the theory of the good life for humankind and its appeal to support it whether its theories are based on empirical evidences as scientific theories are, or based on authority, or an intuition or moral insight, or perhaps an established practice; and the kind of arguments they use in defending their theories such as deductive, inductive, or other which is peculiar to ethics. And the third pertains to problems of knowledge, which questions whether our known ethical conclusions are true through the support of evidences and their corresponding arguments.

The second ethical branch is normative ethics, “which is the practical means of determining a moral course of action. It is to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and

²⁴ Johnson, 10-11.

wrong conduct. This may involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or the consequences of our behavior on others.” For instance, poverty implies and manifests immorality. To prevent poverty, therefore, a moral agent must acquire and develop virtues of initiative, inventiveness, and resourcefulness, to sharpen highly demandable and interesting talents, etc. Or if poverty is caused by injustices and corruption, citizens are duty-bound to be just, responsible, and accountable to higher and nobler principles like what has been quoted from Amos and Micah mentioned above.

Normative ethics talks about ethical theories and approaches to be lived up that assure basic social order and harmony such as deontology, teleology, virtue, etc.

The third is applied ethics, “which pertains to how moral outcomes can be achieved in specific situations.” This pertains to our personal position and moral judgment on specific moral issues deriving from our established notion and norm aside from knowing their root causes. The corruption of political authorities in the Philippines and other Third World countries is very rampant. Attempting to replace corrupt political leaders in said countries during elections is not yet enough. Therefore, applied ethics pertains to looking for effective and workable principles, methods, and strategies as means of eradicating moral problems through, for example, political and social actions and processes. Political science teaches us different methods in winning the hearts and minds of citizens to effect moral changes in society such as psychological, philosophical (ideal), empirical, pragmatic, experimental, economic, historical, sociological, evolutionary, and other available methods.

Besides, “applied ethics involves examining specific controversial issues, such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights, environmental concerns, homosexuality, capital punishment, or nuclear war. By using the conceptual tools of meta-ethics and normative

ethics, discussions in applied ethics try to resolve these controversial issues. The lines of distinction between meta-ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics are often blurry. For example, the issue of abortion is an applied ethical topic since it involves a specific type of controversial behavior. But it also depends on more general normative principles, such as the right of self-rule and the right to life, which are litmus tests for determining the morality of that procedure. The issue also rests on meta-ethical issues such as, ‘where do rights come from?’ and ‘what kinds of beings have rights?’”

The fourth ethical branch is moral psychology, “which pertains to what moral capacity or moral agency develops and what its nature is.” Any normal person has the capacity to do anything on the ground that he/she is the only multi-dimensional creature. He/she is historical, social, political, economic, cultural, ecological, natural and, above all, he/she is spiritual, religious-transcendental, and moral-ethical creature. To harness, motivate, and maximize the said potential faculties in humans is and must be the main concern of moral psychology. We can presume that the human being is moral. But why are there so many immorally behaving people such as rudeness, ungentleness, lust, orgy, greed, etc.? Therefore, one important task of moral psychology is to know the root causes of misbehavior of individuals and collective groups with the facilitation of all schools of thought of psychology. The other task is to identify proper social agencies that directly shape and form commendable habits and behaviors. Besides, moral psychology looks for timely ways, programs, strategies, and methods to effect and impact commendable habits and behaviors of humans as subject and object of ethics. This relates to what the Bible says,

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6, RSV).

This passage informs us of its being the best and most effective and timely way of evangelizing people, which addresses rampant social problems in the Philippines such as juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, pedophilia, poverty, prostitution, alcoholism, sexual violence, injustices, homelessness, etc. Aside from the state, the religious institutions came into being to address the behavioral and habitual problems of humans with the aid of sciences and philosophical communities and schools of thoughts. In this sense, there is always a need for communities of conscience, especially churches, to make themselves more empowered, available, and visible in effectively inculcating and living out virtuous values (love, faith, hope, justice, mercy, kindness, truthfulness, generosity, responsibility, accountability, benevolence, self-sacrifice, altruism, etc.) to citizens to eradicate vices (ungodliness, wickedness, lust, fornication, promiscuity, impurity, dishonor, lie, passion, shamelessness, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, gossips, slander, hatred, insolence, haughtiness, boastfulness, ruthlessness, idolatry, greed, superstition, fanaticism, drunkenness, etc.) which are the scourge of miseries.

A saying goes, “For evil men to prosper, let good men do nothing.” In parallelism with education’s processes of learning, unlearning, and relearning, this constantly calls moral communities, especially religious institutions, to assertively and sustainably initiate effective evangelization, revival, and re-evangelization processes in any given society by considering new and different strategies in carrying them out. The functionalist sociological theory of the social problem informs us that social problems, such as political corruption, just indicate that any social entity malfunctions in its reason of being, such as breakdown of family values and the paralysis of church activities and their basic ministries. The predicament of injustices in any given society should not always be attributed to the state and politicians; it must be

blamed also to the breakdown of family and church values and functions in shaping and molding the conscience of citizens, especially the youth. The same sociological theory also informs us that anarchy can be attributed to normlessness. Both religious and philosophical sources of ethics and morality prescribe virtues as the fundamental norm assuring basic social order. As a matter of fact, St. Paul's list of virtues and vices, such as in Galatians 5:16-26; Philippians 4:8-9, etc., cannot be totally detached from Greek philosophies' list of virtues and vices. Anarchy and lawlessness in any given society, however, relate to the question how effective and attractive enough is any Christian group in implementing Proverbs 22:6 – as quoted above. On the part of any conscientious believer, this requires commitment, which involves time, talent, and treasure (or self-sacrifice), courage, patience, endurance, power, authority, and will. This portion of the *Shema* remains a call and a challenge to our present generation that is rapidly secularizing or has been absorbed to secularism and neo-paganism:

And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (Deut. 6:6-7, RSV).

And the fifth is descriptive ethics, which is “about what moral values people actually abide by.” This is anthropological and sociological observation, description, and inventory of the real moral conditions of any society – and their corresponding cultural causes – serving as reference what ethical theories and approaches to be applied to the same.

C. Tasks of Ethics

Ethics has two basic tasks.²⁵ The first is descriptive, which “provides, as early as possible, an objective cataloguing of personal and social behavior. If morality concerns who

²⁵ Charles Kammer III, *Ethics and Liberation: An Introduction* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 11-13.

we are, we need first to get reasonable descriptions of the ‘who’ that ‘we are.’” The second is critical, “which judges our behavior according to some set of pronounced norms and values and also begins to investigate the consistency and adequacy of the set of norms and values we are employing.”

D. The *Moralscape* and its Elements

Charles Kammer III invented the term *moralscape* in studying ethics, which has the following elements.²⁶ The first is worldview, which runs similar to metaphysics which is one theoretical aspect of spirituality. The fundamental difference between worldview and metaphysics is that metaphysics itself inquires the nature of one’s worldview which covers beliefs, presumptions, and perceptions on any entity or object. Worldview covers many concerns such as view of God (theology, theodicy); the universe (cosmology); humanity (theological anthropology, philosophy of man or philosophical psychology); society (social philosophy, social sciences); history (philosophy, theology of history); and ecology.

Worldview has the following functions (Kammer).²⁷ First, “it is the cognitive influence of moral life.” Second, “it helps determine the persons we will become and the way in which we will use our life.” Third, “it provides information what are proper loyalties,” etc.

For the other perspective, worldview functions as follows.²⁸ First, “it represents the deepest question one might ask about the world and life, and about corresponding orientation that should take toward them.” And second, “it provides answer to such basic questions as ‘Who or what am I?’ ‘Why am I in the world?’ ‘What is reality?’ ‘How do humans differ

²⁶ Ibid., 16-34.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Louis J. Luzbetak, SVD, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 252.

from nonhumans (animals, objects, the invisible beings)? ‘Who belongs to the invisible world and what are the invisible forces in the world?’ ‘What is the proper orientation to time and space?’ ‘What about life after death?’ ‘What in life or the world is desirable or undesirable, and to what degree?’”

Worldview has four categories, namely, Supernature, Nature, Human Beings, and Time.²⁹ It has three groups (Robert Brow).³⁰ First, it “regards existence as meaningless, e.g., atheistic world views.” Second, it “regards existence as meaningful, namely theistic worldviews.” And the third pertains to “irreligious worldviews such as those of humanists and communists.”

For the other perspective, the following are groups of worldview (CS Lewis).³¹ The first is materialistic, “which find the world meaningless and which attribute its origin to pure accident.” The second is religious, “which see the Mind behind the universe and regard nature as reflecting Supernature. And the third is partly materialistic and partly religious, e.g., creative evolutionism.”

Worldview has three-fold nature (Luzbetak).³² The first is cognitive, “which tells the society what and how it is to think about life and the world.” The second is emotional, “which tells the society how it is to feel about, evaluate, and reach to the world and all reality.” And the third is motivational, “which is the society’s basic priorities, purposes, concerns, ideals, desires, hopes, longings, goals, and drives corresponding to its understanding of the universe.”

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 253.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 254-255.

The second element of the *moralscape* pertains to loyalties, dealing with our hierarchy of priorities as loving, wanting, and desiring beings. The crucial questions in this element are the following: “How our various loyalties relate to each other? How do we resolve conflicts between loyalties,” etc? In Judeo-Christianity, for instance, there is always a tension between vertical and horizontal loyalties. Vertical loyalty pertains to one’s absolute, total, and radical attachment with God corresponding to one’s absolute, total, and radical obedience to and observance of God’s imperative and absolute values and virtues such as love, justice, and truth and their corresponding sub-virtues. Horizontal loyalty pertains to one’s attachment to any mundane institution, especially the religious one, which always or sometimes deviates from the very essence and nature of God. That’s why for some Christians there must be a radical distinction between Christ-centeredness and church-centeredness because religious institutions, similar to other social institutions, have been corrupted by human whims and caprices since time immemorial. Histories of religions are not exempted from the tension between thesis and anti-thesis and between corruption and transformation though essentially religions, especially the monotheistic ones, must be agents of anthropological, historical, social, and ecological transformation.

Loyalties function as the “affective influence in moral life.”

The third element of the *moralscape* pertains to norms and values. Norms are “rules and guidelines used to inform one’s behavior whereas values are things one desires such as goods or state of being, e.g., health, well-being, self-determination, wealth,” etc. (Kammer). The functions of norms and values are as follows (Kammer). First, they “provide statements of what we should value and what rules we should follow if we are to live out the implications of our worldviews and loyalties.” And second, they “regulate our life together

and give collective expression to our shared worldviews and loyalties.” Here, values are defined from pure moral and non-neutral stance.³³

The fourth part of the *moralscape* is experiential and empirical elements. They have general and specific functions (Kammer). Generally, they “focus more directly upon the external world, relationships, and circumstances that provide the context within which we build our personhood and society in which we act.” Specifically, they “provide the experiences that develop, test, and challenge our worldviews, loyalties, norms, and values and they present us with moral situations to which we must respond and with moral problems we must solve.”

And the fifth element of the *moralscape* is mode of decision making, which “determines the characteristics of ethical system” (Kammer) in addressing moral/ethical issues. This pertains to the understanding and application of different ethical theories and approaches discussed below.

E. Foundations and Sources of Moral Knowledge

The following topics have been stressed above:... “meta-ethics investigates where our ethical principles come from, and what they mean. Are they merely social inventions? Do they involve more than expressions of our individual emotions? Meta-ethical answers to

³³ In one scholarly categorization, values can generally be classified into moral (non-neutral) and non-moral (neutral) values. Moral values can be categorized into being universal and non-universal. Universal moral values are respect, justice, human rights, human responsibility and accountability, etc. Non-universal moral values are fasting, church dress coding, tithing, religious holy days, etc. From pure moral values, we may also classify values into virtuous values (e.g., Fruits of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) and vicious values (e.g., Seven Deadly Sins: pride, lust, sloth, anger, gluttony, greed, and jealousy). There is also what we call sets of values which are either neutral or positively non-neutral, e.g., spiritual, religious, moral, cultural, historical, political, scientific, commercial, economic, technical, aesthetic, etc.

these questions focus on the issues of universal truths, the will of God, the role of reason in ethical judgments, and the meaning of ethical terms themselves.” In the other language, the said issues pertain to the foundations and sources of moral knowledge, which are as follows.

The first is emotion (emotivism). For example, the feeling of approval on any action means right; the feeling of disapproval on any action implies being wrong. The problem is one’s feeling/emotion is relative in its biological disposition and cultural orientation. For example, the way the Pharisees interpret and apply the meaning of the Sabbath becomes outrageous to Christ. Conversely, the way Christ interprets and applies the Sabbath becomes blasphemous for Pharisees. The Pharisees want the human being to be absolutely absorbed to the Sabbath whereas Christ wants the Sabbath to be facilitating and enabling to human growth towards total liberation.

Another, a devout Christian and Muslim wives differ their degrees of emotional and psychological reactions to polygamy. There must be more Christian wives, especially in countries where divorce is illegal, than Muslim wives who will be outraged if the former’s husbands live with other women on the ground that Christianity abolishes polygamy whereas Islam approves it.

The second is intuition (intuitivism). This is from the Latin *intuitio/intuire*, i.e., “to look at attentively (with astonishment or admiration),” “gaze at,” “contemplate,” or “pay attention to.”

Part of its tenets emphasizes that moral knowledge is innate, objective, self-evidently true, rational, etc.

There are distinct types of intuition.³⁴ The first is sensory (aesthetic) or empirical, which is “non-conceptual, non-rational grasp of reality.” In this sense, black is black even if we say that it is white. We can change the name of any reality but we cannot change its descriptions.

The second is intellectual, logical, or mathematical, which is the “self-evident grasp of fundamental ideas, axioms, principles, or truths.” This validates the veracity of our perceptions, speculations, and presumptions about any issue or reality. This helps us distinguish facts from perceptions, speculations, and presumptions.

The third is essential, which is a “grasp of the essence of a thing, a being, a cause, a situation.” This helps us distinguish the natural function of any entity like social institutions such as political and religious ones corresponding to church-state relationship. Both politics and religion value power, authority, and influence related to human destiny. However, politics pertains to the allocation and distribution of power, authority, and influence whereas religion pertains to the acknowledgement of the ultimate source (deity) of and it purifies the intention of one’s power, authority, and influence. In this sense, the church functions to be the conscience of the state whereas the state embodies and carries out concerns directly related to conscience, especially justice serving as part of the soul of the inherent powers (eminent domain, taxation, and police) of the state. The church applies persuasion directing citizens whereas the state applies coercion to citizens, especially those who defy or contemptuous to justice.

And the fourth is spiritual, which is the “immediate contemplation of the highest order of things, an insight gained neither through the senses nor through intellectual

³⁴ *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. “Intuition.”

reflection but stemming from the ‘inner man’ and akin to the receiving of a revelation.” It is inherent in the human being to fear and revere any reality considered to be more superior, awesome, authoritative, noble, and determinant than him/her in shaping his/her destiny, which implies acknowledgment of a deity. The question what must be the nature of the deity relates to the tension between general and special revelations serving as formative factors of theology corresponding to theological ethics.

The third source of moral knowledge is cognition (cognitivism) or moral sense theory. Its source is the natural world and the following are its tenets. First, we know that things are right or wrong because we are in a possession of moral sense faculty. Second, moral values are to be justified by reference to facts about the world and ourselves. Third, morality has a basis in human nature and, therefore, our duties often correspond to and are supported by our natural inclinations. And fourth, one’s goal accords with and fulfills one’s nature. Conversely, anything that contradicts and thwarts nature is evil.

Cognitivist ethics informs us to clarify whether our interest, such as choosing careers, fits to our natural inclination in order to attain harmonious social order. For example, even though all humans are political, not all of them fit to become politician. The choleric temperament usually fits to become politician whereas the melancholic temperament usually fits to become a political philosopher and analyst. This sociologically pertains to charisma which Weber categorizes into two – the inborn and induced. Theologically, even St. Paul acknowledges that humans have diverse and different gifts or charismata (I Corinthians 12). Any person must function according to his/her natural or spiritual gift rather than forcefully imitate which is naturally not his/her own.

And the fourth source and foundation of moral knowledge is revelation, which theologically pertains to the unveiling of God's mystery through God's own initiative. This claims that God is the ultimate source of goodness/moral law. The first three sources of moral knowledge (emotion, intuition, and cognition) can use philosophy to explain their natures and tenets though they also have religious and theological implications. The fourth one (revelation), especially the special type of revelation, is theological in nature though it has philosophical implications, especially the general type of revelation. In other words, to be dependent on the Divine Command Theory (DCT) of ethics, one must be profoundly and broadly knowledgeable about theology in general (biblical, systematic, historical, and applied theologies), such as in Judeo-Christian context, and philosophy of religion and philosophical theology in particular.

Emotivism, intuitivism, and cognitivism belong to the natural law, i.e., "a law of morality believed to be derived from human beings' inherent sense of right and wrong rather than from revelation or the legislation produced by society."³⁵ Though social legislation could be manifesting the natural law, but the natural law transcends the social legislation because the latter is relative while the former always questions and challenges the relevance of present and former times. From theological language, the natural law could be an anonymous prophetism; for prophetism's ethics, especially the Biblical prophetism, is directly derived from revelation. However, how to soundly understand the nature and meaning of revelation? Which is the true revelation and which is not? Again, these are questions of theological deepening involving many processes such as basic exposure to faith communities and their corresponding educational and insightful programs.

³⁵ *Encarta Dictionaries*, s.v. "Natural Law."

F. Ethical Theories and Approaches

The uniqueness of any historical, social, and geographical setting, the complexity and the plurality of societies and communities, and the differences of worldviews result in the variations of ethical theories and approaches. In traditional ethical studies, especially in pure philosophical ethics, there are only three ethical theories and approaches always being focused, namely, deontology, teleology, and virtue. But as history progresses, ethics has produced other theories and approaches which, some of them, still relate to the said traditional ethical foci or may fall under other theories and approaches.

The first is Divine Command Theory (DCT) or theological voluntarism, which holds that “the standard of right and wrong is the will or law of God.”³⁶ This stresses that “legitimate guidelines for how to live are necessarily related to God.”³⁷ Its standard is “what God commands people to do is good and what God forbids people to do is bad.”³⁸

The DCT has the following claims.³⁹ First, God’s commandments established the requirements for how to live and created an objective view of good and bad conduct. And second, aside from the attribute of God as being the creator of the universe and ultimately the creator of us all, humans have no place to question or even try to understand God’s commandments because God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, transcendent, uncreated, perfectly good, and eternal.

³⁶ William K. Frankena, *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 28-30.

³⁷ Douglas Birsch, *Ethical Insights: A Brief Introduction*, 2nd ed. (USA: McGraw Hill), 18-19.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

The DCT has the following justifications and strengths.⁴⁰ The first is the absolute sovereignty of God over all his creation and creatures and God's authority which cannot be questioned because of its being perfectly, absolutely, and eternally true and good. If one thinks that a certain being is a real deity, the former must absolutely and unconditionally obey the latter regardless of its consequences. Second, the DCT provides clear and universal guidelines. If God says "Thou shall not steal," this means stealing is absolutely evil. Therefore, its legal and moral consequences must be applied to all those who commit it regardless of their social status. And third, the DCT provides overriding guidelines for conduct because it is one and only absolute source of command whereas laws outside of DCT have conflicting sources of moral commands confusing people which among them must be observed and followed.

With my comments, however, Birsch has identified three DCT predicaments.⁴¹ The first is different texts and interpretations of texts. Not all religions have the same sacred documents guiding their believers how to identify and recognize a deity or deities and how to live up a life in relation to history, society, and material and physical environments. The Bible is for Christians, but the latter do not even agree on the number of Biblical books to be acknowledged as really sacred. Koran is for Muslims, but the latter differ their notion about leadership and authority. Besides, Christians, Muslims, and other religious adherents still disagree on matters of interpreting and applying their sacred documents such as which among passages must be eternally bound or historically bound, universal or particular, absolute or relative, etc. The Christian Bible stresses that faith, hope, and love are the only

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19-22.

⁴¹ Birsch, 24-28.

life's driving forces that remain (e.g., I Corinthians 13:13). But what and which is the true faith in ever-changing times? (This is to be addressed by Systematic Theology.) What is hope and how to distinguish Divine hope from human hope? What is and how to actualize love? How to distinguish Divine love from self-love? Does it mean that I really love God with my perfect church attendance? Do Five Pillars of Islam totally, entirely, and wholly compose the very essence of Islam? How about justice, respect, tolerance, etc? Is the essence of love really absent in Islam? Is the essence of Islam's jihad really meant violent physical struggle? With the facilitation of philosophy and sciences, these questions are basically theological and exegetical.

The second DCT's predicament is the confusion with premises derived from Plato's dialogue with Euthyphro and Socrates that, first, something is right because the deity commands it and, second, the deity commands something because it is right. This results in the idea that any action which God does not command or does not prohibit is still automatically considered as evil. On the other hand, even if God commands his submissive believer to kill any person regardless of a cause, it is still right and good because God commands it and God is perfectly good like what God told Abraham to kill Isaac as an offering, which Abraham unconditionally obeyed (Genesis 22: 1-19). If one believes this principle, there is no need for him/her anymore to use reason supposedly inherent in him/her. Besides, he/she has no more initiative to do something right and good because he/she must look for what God must say to him/her through a sacred text. In other words, a person can no longer harness his/her common sense ethics. However, does the illustration of observing DCT only contain itself in the story about God's command to Abraham to kill the latter's son, especially in the context of Judeo-Christian ethical world? Does God really intend to

kill Isaac? How about the agenda of the story's author? Does he mean that God's command to kill the innocent Isaac illustrates God's goodness? Or, does he just exemplify the non-rational – but not irrational – aspect of Abraham's faith that God, if God is really God, must be unconditionally obeyed regardless of consequences? Does King Solomon wait for God's command via revelation to pretentiously decide to kill by cutting in two pieces the alive infant claimed by two conflicting whores that any of them must be the real infant's mother (I Kings 3:16-28)? King Solomon just uses a sort of practical psychology – by harnessing mother's instinct – in deciding who must be the infant's real mother between the two claiming harlots. In this sense, God's command also inheres in the human being's exercise of wisdom. If the human being's practical wisdom functions with pure intention, it becomes a manifestation of observing God's command. The Bible is not only a book preserving stories of God's revelations which are DCT's ultimate and absolute sources; it also motivates and encourages believers to engage in discoveries about laws of nature identical with God's laws, especially Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The DCT therefore must not be understood and applied traditionally and dogmatically; it must also pervade other ethical theories and approaches, especially on the part of an ethical person who is aware of a transcendental reality and being – or God – commanding his creation via love, grace, and providence operating in human reason. Here, any philosophical proposition and any scientific finding bearing the integral truth must still be considered as part of DCT.

And the third predicament of DCT is the distortion of the phrase God's goodness such as by equating goodness with God. Thus Birsch comments:

If good simply means “commanded by God,” then the claim that “God is perfectly good” means “God is perfectly commanded by God,” which is an odd claim to make...The rough meaning for

“God is perfectly good” is that on some scale of moral goodness God is at the top...No being could ever be better than God.⁴²

Aside from Birsch’s analyses of DCT’s negative tendencies, traditional interpretations of DCT tend to imply that it is equated with determinism. Humans are not free to decide for their own according to Divine providence rather than according to any form of fate, determinism, and predestination. Also, in its political translation, the DCT has been corrupted by the totalitarian ideology of the Divine Rights of the King or any theocratic political system. The Bible portrays that God gives humans the radical freedom to decide for their own and, at the same time, they are kept on being warned and instructed to exercise their reason and freedom under providence and sound stewardship.

The second ethical theory and approach is deontology deriving from the Greek *deon*, meaning, “duty,” and *logos/logia*, which means, “study,” “understanding,” etc. This asserts that an act is obligatory and right independent of its ends/consequences. It holds that certain actions are right not because of some benefit to ourselves or others but because of their nature or rules from which they follow. Under deontology, W.D. Ross introduced seven absolute duties, namely, fidelity (to keep promise, tell the truth, etc.), reparation (compensate people for injury), gratitude (to return favors that others do for us), justice (to ensure that goods are distributed according to people’s merit and deserts), beneficence (to do whatever we can to improve the condition of others), self-improvement (to improve our own condition), and non-maleficence (to avoid injury to others).⁴³ The very essence of seven duties is not new; it exists since time immemorial. The biblical Ten Commandments and the

⁴² Ibid., 28.

⁴³ Boatright, 32-34.

Confucian and biblical Golden Rule (Exodus 20: 1-17; Matthew 7:12) are rules covering Ross' seven duties.

The problem or question of deontology lies on the conflict between obligations, duties, and loyalties. There may be vertical (Divine-human) versus horizontal (human-human) obligations, duties, and loyalties within a person. Both vertical and horizontal entities demand obligations, duties, and loyalties from any person. Even the atheistic communist-run governments coercively demand duties and extreme sacrifice of their citizens to defend communism. The two dimensions of duty reconcile only if their intentions accord with truth and justice.

The third is teleology deriving from the Greek *telos*, which ordinarily means, “end,” “goal,” and “purpose.” In its non-ordinary Greek definition, it means “inner aim of a life process.”⁴⁴ It has following definitions corresponding to its historical development:⁴⁵

- i. Classical-Humanist (Classical Greek): “The human being’s inner aim is the actualization of his potentialities and the conquest of those distortions of his nature that are caused by his/her bondage to error and passion.”
- ii. Transcendental-Religious (Late Ancient and Early Christian): “The human being’s inner aim is the elevation from the universe of finitude and guilt to the reunion with ultimate reality.”
- iii. Scientific-Technical (since Renaissance and Reformation): “The human being’s inner aim is the active subjection and transformation of nature and the human being.”

⁴⁴ Tillich, *SSOTS*, 78-79.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Though the said aims may not be in conflict with the Bible, Christ substantiates them by stressing the Kingdom of God (love, justice and righteousness, peace, different virtues, etc.) as the top priority in building one's self and communities (Matthew 6:33).

Teleology focuses primarily on consequences in determining moral rightness and wrongness. It asserts that "actions are justified by virtue of the end they achieve rather than some feature of the actions themselves."⁴⁶ "The concept of goodness in this theory is fundamental and the concepts of rightness and obligation, or duty, are defined in terms of goodness."⁴⁷

The fourth is virtue. In the context of secular ethics this has been popularized by Aristotle. While deontological and teleological theories ask what actions are right, the virtue ethics asks instead, "What kind of person should we be?"⁴⁸ Moral character rather than right action is fundamental in virtue ethics.⁴⁹ This enables us to lead successful, rewarding lives – the kind of lives that we should call "the good life" – via developing the traits of character that we call the virtues.⁵⁰ Virtue is a character trait that manifests itself in habitual action (e.g., honesty).⁵¹ For Aristotle, this is the practical wisdom which is the whole of what a person needs in order to live well. Its traits are benevolence, compassion, courage, courtesy, dependability, friendliness, honesty, loyalty, moderation, self-control, and toleration (Aristotle).⁵² Other virtues are pride and shame in positive ways (Aristotle)⁵³ such as by

⁴⁶ Boatright, 32-34.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 62-63.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

commenting “Anglican Christians and black people are proud of Archbishop Desmond Tutu in receiving the Nobel Peace Prize due to his fearless and courageous natural leadership in morally and theologically opposing the peace-threatening apartheid” or “I am ashamed before the people with my lucrative and sensitive institutional office because I am not competent to carry out its duties and functions.”

Justice is the other most important virtue (Aristotle).⁵⁴ A virtuous person not only has a sense of fair treatment but can determine what constitutes fairness.⁵⁵

To be more specific, virtue ethics asserts the following.⁵⁶ First, it centers on the heart of the moral agent – in his/her character. Whereas deontology and teleology emphasize doing, virtue-based ethics emphasizes being. Second, virtue ethics seeks to produce excellent persons who act well out of spontaneous goodness and serve as examples to inspire others. And third, it views virtues as human qualities acquired through constant practice. It practically functions as the purifier of the intention of one’s doing of duty and one’s attainment of end, goal, etc. Though virtue ethics has some common grounds with deontological and teleological theories such as doing and attaining justice, the virtue ethics is both external and internal whereas deontology and teleology are just external in terms of motivation and intention. Within deontology, the citizen’s duty to pay taxes to the government can always be at stake when no governing authorities vigilantly monitoring it. But within virtue ethics, one honestly and voluntarily pays taxes even no governing

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Victor Aguilan & Al Fuertes, *Philosophy 61: Module 1* (Dumaguete City, Philippines: Silliman University Center of Excellence on Coastal Resource Management, N.d.), 16.

authorities monitoring him/her. Within teleology, replacing hierarchical power structure with egalitarian one remains to be enslaving if the whole society fails to produce virtuous (e.g., honest, just, generous, merciful, efficient, etc.) humans. Within virtue ethics, both hierarchical and egalitarian power structure become liberating if the whole society becomes intensely functional in producing virtuous persons. In this sense, a virtuous political figure who situates himself/herself in advantageous political position is willing to streamline and relinquish his/her power in order to facilitate and enable others to have power, authority, and influence motivated by sense of responsibility and accountability such as through making citizens highly educated in many aspects of life.

Though Aristotle was somehow the one who initiated virtue ethics in Western history, the contents of the said theory – especially its traits – are synonymous with and as old as or even older than biblically prescribed virtues such as justice, compassion, benevolence, gratitude, shame, etc. The same traits have been taught by Eastern social philosophers prior to Christ's birth, especially by Confucius and Lau Tzu. In the New Testament the said traits manifest the Holy Spirit and the New Being in the human being (e.g. Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 4: 8-9, etc.). Biblical virtues are more numerous than the virtuous traits often mentioned by Aristotle.

Both Aristotelian and Biblical virtue ethics challenge the presumption of Liberation Theology and other social theologies and social philosophies that are resources of ethics aiming and functioning to liberate humanity from forms of dehumanization. Originally, Liberation Theology presumes that the human being can be liberated from dehumanization by dismantling unjust social structures. This is only true if the one liberated from unjust social structure engages in self-improvement. The liberation of the human being therefore

has two-way process: dismantling the unjust social relationship and self-improvement via observance of virtuous values, e.g., good will, patience, endurance, self-discipline, self-control, selflessness, courage, industry, sense of initiative, etc.

The fifth is utilitarianism, which has the following features.⁵⁷ First, it upholds the principle “the greatest good for the greatest number.” Second, it is both impersonal and objective (insofar as we consider everyone’s happiness and not just our own) and answers to our personal interests (since we are included in the “everyone”). Third, it begins with the view that what motivates us can only be our own happiness, but it then derives the general principle (incorporating the universality requirement) that we ought therefore to act not just for our own happiness but for “the greatest good for the greatest number.” Fourth, it is based on the generally acceptable view that morality requires that the interests of everyone should be taken into account and everyone wants to be happy. And fifth, morality generally maximizes pleasure and minimizes pain.

Utilitarianism has several forms.⁵⁸ The first is consequentialism, which holds that the rightness of actions is determined solely by their consequences (teleological). The second is Hedonism, which identifies with pleasure and absence of pain. Pleasure and only pleasure is ultimately good. (The problem is people do not have unified object of pleasure. What is pleasurable to the one might be painful to the other.) The third is maximalism asserting that a right action is one that has not merely some good consequences but the greatest amount of good consequences possible when the bad consequences are also taken into consideration.

⁵⁷ Robert C. Solomon and Jennifer K. Greene, *Morality and the Good Life: An Introduction to Ethics through Classical Resources* (USA: McGraw-Hill College, 1999), 17-18.

⁵⁸ Boatright, 36-37.

And the fourth is universalism stressing that the consequences to be considered are those of everyone.

The sixth is feminist ethics. This is not only the theory of political and economic equality of sexes or only pertaining to the female principle (feminine).⁵⁹ It rather broadly functions and stresses the following.⁶⁰ First, it critiques traditional theories of ethics and morality. Second, it advocates the balance of concerns for both public and private realms of ethics. The public is characterized by the interactions that take place in the market place, the political arena, and the socio-political and legal institutions that govern them. It is governed by the standard of fairness, impartiality, and reason. The private realm represents those interactions in which personal relationships are key. This includes not only the home with its attendant commitments and obligations, but our friendship and personal interactions as well. The standards that make for moral behavior have more to do with caring, emotions, and partiality. (The problem is to what extent that we must be partial? Is genuine friendship between people possible without observing fair, impartial, and reasonable laws?) And third, the feminist ethics emphasizes that giving value to fairness, impartiality, and reason is not the only concern needed by any person. Humans are emotional, social, and psychological. Therefore, they need belonging and attachment in attaining their highest aspirations, e.g., fulfillment, security, etc.

The seventh is social contract. This is not the social contract theory in political science, which legitimizes the existence of the state. However, the social contract theories in

⁵⁹ Karl Gustav Jung's psychology proves that being feminine distinguishes from being female and being masculine distinguishes from being male. Both male and female have both masculine and feminine feelings.

⁶⁰ Solomon and Greene, 21-24.

both ethics and political science just closely relate to each other since they emphasize the importance of the people's values, will, and decisions determining human destiny and society's condition.

The social contract ethics has the following features.⁶¹ First, its morality enables us to live well together. Second, to live well together requires us to accept the rule of society, but in return we gain the benefits that such a society provides. In this sense, we both secure our safety and enjoy the fruits of cooperative ventures. And third, to live well together requires members of the society to forego certain liberties in order to gain others (Individual freedom or human rights in this sense are not absolute. One is free to do anything as long as he/she does not cause any emotional, psychological, physical, etc. injury to his/her neighbor.).

However, to what extent that society rules any individual or between individuals that guarantees harmony between freedom and security? How reasonable is the rule of members of society over individuals? This is a problem of what mode of laws that rules both individuals and groups (e.g., heteronomy, autonomy, and theonomy). This is a tension between the following: community versus collectivism; individualism versus individuality; individuality and community versus totalitarian collectivism; and individuality and community versus totalitarian individualism.

The eighth is ethical relativism emphasizing the following.⁶² First, different cultures have radically different moral system. Second, we have no basis of saying that one system is better, or more right, than another.

⁶¹ Ibid., 24-25.

⁶² Ibid., 25-27.

However, ethical relativism also faces the following criticisms.⁶³ First, not all values are relative. Although different societies obviously have different sets of customs, there are some moral claims that we might assert to be universally valid. Second, ethical relativism leads to the impossibility of judging some systems to be better than others. If it is true, then we are unable to say that what happened in Nazi Germany (and other genocides and holocaust, e.g., Stalinism in the former Soviet Union, Khmer Rouge's Killing Fields, Bosnian Serbs' massacre of Croats and Albanians) was wrong. And third, ethical relativism tends to be descriptive along the line of sociology and anthropology.

The ninth is pluralism and history, which has the following principles.⁶⁴ First, it promotes the necessity of mutual understanding and tolerance that a non-pluralist find unimaginable. And second, articulation and argument, justification and mutual understanding are themselves among the most important virtues of our society, and by developing these abilities we simultaneously create and reinforce our own pluralistic society, however many differences and disagreements will always be found within it.

Essentially, Judeo-Christianity has some elements of pluralism and history promoting peace and understanding between people amidst diversity of cultures and religions (e.g., Micah 4:1-5; John 4: 7-30, etc). Cyrus the Great, a non-Judaic Persian ruler, has been acknowledged in Isaiah as God-sent to liberate the Jews from Babylonian captivity (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4). He pioneered religious tolerance and liberty in the antiquity aside from being the most benevolent and humane ruler in history.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 27.

However, pluralism and history also have the following ambiguous issues. First, to what extent that we tolerate any culture amidst the principle that democracy is tolerant to tolerance and intolerant to intolerance? Second, how honest are we in articulating, arguing, and justifying in the context of peace talks between armed political groups (e.g., Armed Forces of the Philippines versus CPP-New People's Army ⁶⁵, Moro Islamic Liberation Front,⁶⁶ etc.) in the Philippines? Third, can we have mutual understanding with armed groups that make their ideal political cause as a pretext of their terrorism, extortion, totalitarianism, etc.? And fourth, is peace talk in the context of ceasefire intended to end the war or is it just a way of regrouping and re-strengthening the disadvantageous armed groups to prolong the war until their objectives are attained? The ethics of pluralism and history is only viable and workable for those who have honestly observed post-conventional ethics which abolishes all forms of sexual, racial, ethnic, religious, ideological, political, and class (etc.) prejudices.

The tenth is ethical egoism pioneered in the antiquity by Epicurus or Epicureanism, which has the following basic propositions. First, the basic human inclination is desire, which is natural in all human beings. Second, pleasure is what the human being desires; it is the standard of goodness. Pleasure has two kinds. The first is active (positive), which comes from the gratification of specific wants and desire. The second is passive (negative), which is the absence of pleasure. Desire has two kinds. The first is natural (necessary), which must be satisfied to preserve bodily health and mental peace. The second is beyond natural, which

⁶⁵ The Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army is one of the relentlessly active communist insurgent groups attempting to topple the Philippine government and replace it with Marxist, Maoist, and Leninist social system.

⁶⁶ The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is one of the Muslim insurgent groups in southern Philippines attempting to establish an Islamic state in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan islands.

must be satisfied through active pleasure. The standards used to guide and evaluate pleasure are the duration of pleasure that we desire and the intensity or degree of pleasure.

The Epicurean egoism's goal, which is the third proposition, is ataraxia (peace of mind, no worries) via withdrawal from public life. The Epicurean egoism's weakness is as long as one is not personally affected by any issue in the public by non-involvement, it's just alright. Epicureanism has the escapist tendency.

Ethical egoism in early modern period was pioneered by Thomas Hobbes who argues that humans are both rational and desirable. Reason and desire are not in conflict. Reason can scout for a better desire. Good and bad are matter of taste. Good is whatsoever desires and bad is what a person hates. The problem is we may desire the same thing, which results in conflict. The conflict between humans has the following sources: acquisitiveness, self-preservation (e.g., reproduction and perpetuation of species), and sense of honor, self-esteem, etc.

The natural world is in conflict. Therefore, the state must be created as a "third party" to settle conflict. This is for the purpose of self-preservation. The state's ethical standard is to guarantee individual security.

The human being's primary purposes of joining society are law of survival and law of reciprocity.

The above-mentioned principles of Hobbes are both social contract and ethical egoism in nature.

Although ethical egoism concerns primarily on one's personal survival, it is not and should not always be synonymous with being self-centered or narcissistic. It affirms the law of reciprocity as fundamental to the human being's personal survival. Even Epicureanism

itself, which tends to be escapist, teaches the virtues of humanity, community, and justice that abolish the vicious self-centeredness taking place in public life such as political activities involving struggle for fame, power, and wealth.⁶⁷ Therefore, related to Sigmund Freud's discernment of the tension of id, ego, and superego within humans, the highest form of ethical egoism is the concern of the one for his/her moral reputation, especially the aspect of superego, over the temporal, finite, and mortal values. In other words, to join society and to attain fame, power, and money, does not guarantee the one of survival, especially preserving his/her reputation beyond history. Only those who have sacrificed themselves selflessly for the noblest values such as love, justice, truth, etc., which is the very essence of religion, attain fulfillment and eternity.

The eleventh is personalism, which asserts that the moral life continuously realizes the full meaning of human relationships. Morality is not just a matter of crossing the line between what is evil and what is good, but a way of becoming fully a person in relation to other persons. This emphasizes therefore the sociality of the human being, i.e., he/she cannot exist without the other. To exist or existence in this sense is derived from the Latin *existere*, i.e., "to stand out." One's factor of personal growth depends on one's state of relationship with others.

Furthermore, the personalist ethics stresses that the human being's moral life is a question of carrying out, of living out wholly and fully, in an integrated passion, all our

⁶⁷ Some Christians have misinterpreted Epicureanism on its use of the term "pleasure." One point of disagreement between Christianity and Epicureanism pertains to worldview, i.e., Epicureanism is a sort of metaphysical materialism. However, both Christianity and Epicureanism concern for the cultivation of the virtues of humanity, community, and justice. Christianity essentially affirms Epicureanism's goal, i.e., ataraxia (peace of mind, etc.), which is essentially synonymous with Christian notions of peace derived from Greek, e.g., *eirene*, *galene* (inner peace amidst troubles), etc.

human relationships. To be human in this sense is neither purely material nor purely “spiritual.” To be human means to be shaped by and to shape all realities – the spiritual, historical, political, economic, cultural, personal, and ecological realities. Moreover, the personalist ethics asserts that what a person ought to be is living in the best and fullest sense. To be human means to be freely away from all forms of stagnancy and entropy. A common saying goes, “Do your best and God will do the rest.” Personalism criticizes mediocre complacency. It agrees to a saying “Little knowledge is very dangerous.” It both inwardly and outwardly motivates the person to maximize his/her potential.

One of the great proponents of personalist ethics is no other than Martin Buber who is well-known with his notion of “I-Thou” relationship rather than “I-It” relationship between humans. The “I-Thou” preserves and safeguards the dignity of persons. The human being is a person rather than a thing. He/She must be treated as sacred. The “I-it” relationship is the human being’s treatment of fellow humans as just things, objects, and commodities.

The twelfth is evolutionary ethics. Descriptively, it means the following.⁶⁸

- i. It “consists of biological approaches to ethics (morality) based on the role of evolution in shaping human psychology and behavior. Such approaches may be based in scientific fields such as evolutionary psychology, sociobiology, or ethnology with a focus on understanding and explaining observed ethical preferences or choices and their origins.”
- ii. It “is empirical research into moral attitudes and beliefs (humans) or moral behavior (animals) in an evolutionary framework, e.g., evolutionary psychology, which “attempts to *explain* major features of psychology in terms

⁶⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolutionary_ethics.

of species-wide evolved (via natural selection) predispositions” which “include altruistic behaviors, deceptive or harmful behaviors, an innate sense of fairness or unfairness, feelings of kindness or love, self-sacrifice, feelings related to competitiveness and moral punishment or retribution, moral ‘cheating’ or hypocrisy, and inclinations for a wide variety of actions judged morally good or bad by (at least some within) a given society.”

Normatively, evolutionary ethics has been defined as the following.⁶⁹

- i. It “may represent a more independent attempt to use *evolution* alone to justify an ethical system.”
- ii. It “aims at defining which acts are right or wrong, and which things are good or bad in an evolutionary context. It is not merely *describing*, but it is *prescribing* goals, values and obligations, e.g., eugenics, which is a form of normative evolutionary ethics, because it defines what is ‘good’ on the basis of genetics and the theory of evolution.”

Under the normative evolutionary ethics, the human being’s moral life is a matter of evolution of growth and development. Its dynamism has been variously described by the contemporary experience of the following. The first is temporality emphasizing that the human being’s essence is time. The human being is past, present, and future. Time is not objective but it is human and psychological time. Temporality implies consciousness and freedom. Lived time is a mode of being a subject person of choosing to be an authentic individual in a world of human involvements. The human being’s temporality is also a matter of personal choice and commitment. What counts in the moral life is not how long one lives

⁶⁹ Ibid.

but how well and how fully the human being has lived. This is like playing in a basketball competition. Playing the whole forty-eight minutes as a player does not matter. What matters is how able is the player to make points, rebounds, steals, block shots, and assists in every minute he plays. Evolutionary ethics asks any moral agent what he/she engages in every moment, i.e., is he/she idle or productive in any field of endeavor? Related to this, a saying goes, “Idleness is the workshop of the devil.” Or Benjamin Franklin’s sayings go on: “Time is gold” and “Wasted time cannot be saved again.”

The second evolutionary ethics’ dynamism is historicity stressing that becoming human is not something given as a finished and complete whole, but a task and responsibility to be achieved in one’s whole lifetime. Although the human being is spirit, his/her body shares in the subjectivity (consciousness/freedom) of the spirit which transcends space and time. Through his/her body, he/she is “situated” or “present” as a being together with others. He/She enters, responds, and creates “his/her world,” the world of persons, which has meaning for him/her. He/She is a “presence or lived in time.” In a philosophical sense, time is not objective but human or “lived” time, which is the experience of personal “presence.” Human time or “presence” is temporal. Human existence is exercised as a presence with a past, present, and future.

Evolutionary ethics has positive side, i.e., the human being acknowledges reality’s impermanence and, therefore, he/she seeks progress and growth. It highlights humanity’s transcendental nature. It informs humans that change is inevitable and, therefore, they must always be cautiously prepared for it. Its negative tendency is that savages and barbarians must not be blamed on their savagery and barbarism because such historical status must just be part of humanity’s evolutionary process. The Bible portrays that even the ancient people

were also accountable to their decisions and actions. Historical stage does not matter. What matters is the achievement of historical projects – humanity, community, and justice – which have been actualized in the past and present guiding the future.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-16, RSV)...Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation (II Cor. 6:2b, RSV).

G. Stages of Moral Development

Morality has several stages. Any stage manifests how the human being is shaped and molded by his/her own social milieu and how he/she also internalizes the process of morally shaping and molding him/her. The cognitive process of morally shaping and molding any person corresponds to its contents and programs involving their frequencies. For example, evangelical Protestant churches in any part of the world offer Sunday school classes to all age levels. This is to morally condition the behavior of believers, especially the young. The question is whether the said churches have enough number of voluntary teachers to fulfill the task. Are voluntary teachers skillful enough in spiritually educating and nurturing believers? How interested are all age levels to the programs? How attractive and captivating are the programs to their target recipients? What must be the contents of churches' educational programs? Do they really enlighten and liberate their adherents or subtly enslave them in the indoctrination process? Do they inculcate inclusivism or exclusivism? All these questions contribute to the level and stage of morality a religious and moral person attains. That's why Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gillegan have categorized moral development into three

levels.⁷⁰ The first is pre-conventional. Here, a person obeys community's moral and legal norms due to fear of punishment. The intention of legal laws avoids the person to misbehave and become submissive to the authority figure. Besides, the person's main concern is how to satisfy his/her own desire. This is egoistic in nature. One's own need is the sole focus of concern.

The second is conventional. The moral agent in this level must appear as good and nice to his/her fellows. He/she is men pleaser. In a higher level he/she upholds society such as respecting rules and authority. He/She is self-sacrificing. The needs of others are his/her greater concerns. He/she is under the power of collectivism whether reasonable or unreasonable.

And the third is post-conventional, which is social contract in nature. Rules must be obeyed only if they are really useful. The same moral stage upholds individual autonomy and conscience and universal principles. This is a mature ethics of caring; it balances one's own needs and others.' While one selflessly and sacrificially concerns for others, the former must make the latter responsible and accountable also rather than just be served by others by pressure.

The psychology of Kohlberg and Gillegan helpfully measures and analyzes how far and mature already the religious and moral communities in their consciousness and its corresponding behavior and attitude. Kohlberg and Gillegan indicate that the post-conventional morality manifests the most mature stage of spirituality because it wholly affirms the universal humanity regardless of religious, racial, ethnic, national, cultural,

⁷⁰ Brook Noel Moore and Robert Michael Stewart, *Moral Philosophy: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1994), 10-11.

sexual, class, economic, and political conditions and orientations. This parallels with some Biblical principles which have universal implication such as the proposition that humans – both male and female – are made according to the Divine image (Gen. 1:26-31). The Parable of the Good Samaritan told by Jesus Christ (Luke 10: 25-37) also reinforces the universality of God corresponding to universal moral principles. It portrays that God transgresses legal – or cultural boundaries – hindering natural and genuine human friendship and fellowship.

H. Constitutive Parts of a Moral Act

Ethics concerns about attitudes, values, actions and conditions desired by humans and perceived to be assuring them of internal and external peace, unity, harmony, happiness, enjoyment, and meaning. Any action corresponding to certain conditions can be judged to be moral if it assures internal and external peace, unity, harmony, happiness, enjoyment, and meaning. Hence, morality has constitutive parts in attaining peace, unity, harmony, happiness, enjoyment, and meaning. The first is one's intention in doing things, which covers one's purpose, aim, goal, and end of life. Do one's purpose, aim, goal, and end have pure intention or good will? Immanuel Kant asserts,

Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond the world—can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a *good will*.⁷¹

The means in attaining one's purpose, aim, goal, and end are the second constitution of a moral act. They indicate whether one's purpose, aim, goal, and end are seriously motivated by good will. They are concerned on one's tools, attitudes, and manners in attaining something.

⁷¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics>.

The third pertains to circumstances that drive one and push him/her in using tools and revealing attitudes and manners to attain something. For example, what drives the Muslim and Communist insurgents in resorting to armed revolution against the Philippine government? The usual superficial answer is because the institutional violence inflicted by the social system, the corruption, and injustices perpetuated by the government upon its citizens are beyond redemption or no longer bearable. The other questions, however, are: How assuring is the said armed revolution in attaining liberation from institutional violence, corruption, and injustices? How winnable are the said means of revolution? And how long will the revolution attain its goals? Can we identify any revolution in history that really assure of liberating humanity for a life time? Can there be no more other armed revolution causing miseries after the one? Is it historically proven? Can we make Nicaraguan Sandinista, Afghan Taliban, and Cambodian Khmer Rouge revolutions as simple foci of studies in evaluating the “noble causes” fought for by our own revolutions in the Philippines? Was Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. right or wrong in his comment saying: “In revolution there are no victors, but all are victims,” aside from agreeing to Jose Rizal’s saying “Where there is tyranny there is resistance”?

Therefore, the fourth constitutive part of morality focuses on the consequences of our means in attaining our goals and ends. Aside from questioning the purity of our actions’ intentions and circumstances in attaining anything, our actions’ consequences help determine whether our intentions and actions are evil or not.

Ideally, the four constitutive parts of morality must be in harmony with each other. They are all applicable in both trivial and very important issues and decisions in both

personal and social affairs such as choosing a spouse, which has a life-long bearing, choosing any social system perceived to be viable, choosing political leaders, careers, etc.

I. Areas of Ethics

Ethics has three areas in actualizing itself. The first is personal. Since the human being is the only moral creature endowed by the gift of reason, ethics starts and actualizes in every person. Ethics defines the human being by the human being himself/herself, especially on the question what is meant by being human.

The second is the church or religious institution or any learning philosophical and educational institution. Antique Greeks learned ethics in different schools of thoughts such as Zeno's Stoicism, Epicurus' The Garden, Plato's Academy, Aristotle's Lyceum, etc. while Asians learned from Buddha, Confucius, Lau Tzu and their disciples, etc. In modern and post-modern times the said ethical schools of thought remain to be transmitted by both ecclesial and secular educational institutions. Besides, Jews and Christians learn ethics in synagogues and churches by considering ancient, modern, and classical Western and Oriental philosophies depending on their traditions. The primary Jewish and Christian ethical references are revelations received by prophets and sages and their corresponding interpretations and meaning in their own times and our own contemporary settings. The primary ethical reference of ancient Greeks and Asians, especially the Chinese, was the use of reason related to their sensed experiences and serious reflection and contemplation about how to live a worthy life.

Both religious and philosophical institutions transmit to every person the knowledge, wisdom, and values defining his/her humanity and personhood. The cognitive contents and programs of both religious and philosophical institutions and their corresponding personnel

assigned and frequencies greatly affect the moral behavior and conditioning of their target recipients. Therefore, in the Philippine context it is expected that the regular evangelical Protestant churches' Sunday schools for nursery up to adulthood are better than the Roman Catholicism's *Flores de Mayo* intended for children and done only every May. However, the question of superiority or inferiority of any religious group's educational program, especially in its long term effectiveness to the learners, is not only limited in its frequency. Other factors must also be considered. The first is the ratio between voluntary teachers and pupils and students in any religious group in any locality. The number of pupils and students affects the teacher's quality of teaching and classroom management. The second is the training and level of knowledge and skills of teachers. The third is the motivation and commitment of teachers since teaching in Sunday schools, Daily Vacation Church School, etc. in evangelical Protestant churches in the Philippine setting is just voluntary, which does not require formal academic qualification. The fourth is the attractiveness and relevance of the contents of the church educational programs and curricula. The fifth is the intensity and duration of the moral support of parents in sending, bringing, and exposing their children and youth to the church educational programs. The sixth is the budgetary allocation of the church for her educational programs, which can be based on the level of interest, values, commitment, and income of her members. The seventh is the accessibility of children and youth to the church in which they are members corresponding to the affordability of their parents to regularly expose them to religious programs and activities. The eighth is the organizational structure of the church whether it is more facilitating and enabling her children and youth to be empowered and equipped in becoming better persons. The ninth is the broader cultural setting where the church is located whether it deviates from or it motivates and reinforces

believers to be attracted to the significance of religion to both private and public lives. And the tenth is the leadership quality of religious officials managing and administering the whole institutional church, which includes their educational trainings, whether they are capable and willingly able to train future leaders who will surpass their capacity and capability to do something in exercising leadership.

The main concern of religious and philosophical institutions is to ideally shape and mold the person's conscience serving as one of the grounds and norms of morality.

And the third area of ethics is social life beginning from its basic unit, i.e., the family. Distorted family values corresponds corrupt values of persons who have started to grow in childhood and personhood in their respective families. A family that alienates itself from religious institutions' preservation and cultivation of conscience means alienation from moral laws and sense of sacredness that serve as the basic societal foundation and order. Franklin's wisdom that "Honesty is the best policy" starts its cultivation from both family upbringing and religious institution's orientation.

When talking about society as a broad area of ethics, this concerns about political, economic, and cultural issues affecting not only individual persons and their families but also the ecological condition. It is the widest proving and testing circumstance of one's moral strength. In this area, it is the basic individual and collective function and duty of moral agents to look for meaningful norms in attaining several aims and goals of ethics such as peace, harmony, unity, happiness, etc. amidst their diversity and complexity of values, interests, priorities, etc. by considering the relative truths and critiques of different social philosophies such as idealism, rationalism, realism, essentialism, nominalism, humanism, existentialism, empiricism, pragmatism, liberalism, materialism, etc. aside from ethical

theories and approaches and social sciences. The social area of ethics indicates that ethics itself – which is essentially synonymous to justice or righteousness – is very fundamental in any nation building.

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.
(Proverbs 14:34, RSV)

J. Grounds and Norms of Morality

Related to areas of ethics, morality has ground and norm.⁷² The first, as defined above, is the natural law. However, the natural law evolves in its definitions according to its sources.⁷³ The first is the objective and collective law of nature of the pre-Christian world. This is “the natural order of the cosmos, the logos pervading and ruling the cosmos, on which all true justice is based.” The second is the modern time’s subjective and individualistic law of nature. It “has its roots in late classical Stoicism.” It believes that “nature is always equivalent to human reason, though only in so far as divine reason rules in it.” And the third is the Christian law of nature. Meaning, “nature is the divine creative ordinance of God who revealed His will to mankind in Jesus Christ.”

The second is the philosophy of human being (philosophy of man or philosophical psychology). The ethical concern about what is meant to be truly human is a sort of philosophy of human being. But the philosophy of human being does not end here. It also concerns about other perspectives of and compositions of the human being that correspond to

⁷² Cf. Ramon C. Reyes, *Ground and Norm of Morality* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989), 91-134.

⁷³ Emil Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order* (London: Lutterworth Press and Camelot Press Ltd., 1946), 80-89.

practical daily concerns and things to be valued and prioritized most.⁷⁴ Is the human being pure matter or both matter and spirit? Is he/she pure nature or both nature and spirit? If he/she is pure matter only, then he/she must be concerned only on/for economic issues, dialectical, and historical materialism rather than engaging in spirituality, which implies that to be religious and ethical is nonsense. If he/she is pure nature, eternity is nonsense for him/her.

But the human being is neither matter nor spirit and neither nature nor spirit only. He/She is also the being of the past, present, and future (Martin Heidegger) or historical, which implies transcendence and eternity. Therefore, he/she must be viewed from the integral perspective.

The Christian belief in Incarnation, which has ethical implications, indicates that the true human being has both natural and supernatural and divine dimensions; he/she has cultural and religious and ethical dimensions; he/she has relative or temporal (secular, political, economic, cultural) and eternal dimensions, etc. Therefore, what the human being becomes and ought to be in preparing himself/herself for the reality beyond his/her natural death? If Supernature and eternity are not real, what is the sense of behaving properly and orderly within nature and history? Is it sensible to prepare one's self for physical death? One's fear of death itself implies eternity because one searches for the future assurance of his/her existence. Even the atheists want to become remembered in history, which implies eternity. How much more the martyred theists who have denied and forgotten themselves but

⁷⁴ Cf. Venancio Ardales B, *Introductory Text to Philosophy* (Quezon City, Philippines: Greatbooks Trading, Inc., 1987), 35-50.

firmly believed in eternity and are now well-remembered in history, especially by conscientious people taking part in eternity?

The philosophy of human being also concerns about human nature such as from essential, existential, paradoxical perspectives, etc. The example is the question whether the human being is good or evil or whether he/she is essentially good but existentially fallen and estranged.

How about the belief that the human being is created according to the Divine image totally replicated through the humanity of God in Christ? Theoretically, the Christian philosophy of human being, which is part of the ground and norm of morality, especially in the context of Christian ethics, is and should be grounded on Christ's humanity attested in the New Testament. Confucius emphasizes the quest for a Superior Human Being which is the virtuous person (e.g., gentleness, humility, benevolence, justice, self-conquest, etc.). For Christianity, Christ manifests and exemplifies the Superior Human Being by humbly mingling with and selflessly enabling and empowering the psychologically, emotionally, and socially inferior, especially the truly conscientious ones, without neglecting qualities of Confucius' Superior Human Being.

And the third is conscience, which is derived from the Latin *conscientia*, meaning, "trial of self." This serves to inform us whether we are on the right or wrong tract in making decisions that have life-long bearing; whether we are consciously objective or subjective in looking at and judging ourselves and any issue tremendously affecting our condition; and whether we have no prejudicial biases in our intellectual and moral judgments.

The etymological definition of conscience enables the one to do self-examination whether he/she has no share in any society's state of moral corruption and decay. Related to

this is the issue of freedom of conscience. How free is our freedom of conscience in deciding on and for any matter? Freedom of conscience does not only mean one is free from external pressure, coercion, and intimidation in making decisions; it means being motivated by good will in doing anything. It therefore means having clear conscience and freedom from personal guilt.

In the Protestant evangelical tradition, conscience takes place through the habit of inner criticism, which can be effective only if honestly internalized by its adherents and if it becomes a reinforcing regular educational program of its social institutions such as the church and its corresponding educational institutions.

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:3-5, RSV)

The unexamined life is not worth living...Know thyself. (Socrates)

IV. Conclusion

This article substantiates the notion that religion contributively forms and shapes the morality of any society. Religion is present in worldviews serving as part of the elements of morality's landscape and even in different ethical theories and approaches. In this sense, ethics can either be "religionized" or purely philosophized. Or ethics can be both "religionized" and philosophized. In relation to ethics and morality, religion functions as the source or channel of a moral imperative. Philosophy, with the help of theology, anthropological linguistics, philosophy of religion, philosophical theology, semantics, and social sciences inquires, clarifies, and explains the language, nature, and meaning of the

moral imperative perceived to be divinely originated and inspired and is pervading different ethical theories, approaches, areas, etc. Philosophy avoids making of blind followers and misunderstanding and fanatical observance of any divine command. The divine command absolutely says, “Do justice by telling the truth!” Philosophy responds by saying “Absolutely, yes! But what is justice and what is truth before obeying the said Divine command?” Even the quest for proper definition and meaning of justice and truth manifesting divine love is still an act of obedience to the Divine command. This could be the reason why there is such thing as religious ethics, especially Christian Ethics in Protestantism or Moral Theology in Roman Catholicism deriving its resources from the Bible, theology, and philosophy amidst the fact that the said discipline can hardly be identified to either pure religion or pure philosophy. What constitutes integral ethics is the harnessing of contents of sacred texts and their corresponding principles (e.g., Bible, etc.), philosophy, and theology with the help of sciences in the quest for life’s meaning and fulfillment.

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