

The search for happiness also relies on the wisdom of tradition. A moral approach to happiness includes taking account of reflections through the centuries of wise people who taught and gave witness to right actions. Morality draws on these reflections. It articulates these in the form of duties and obligations of a full human life. From them are derived the laws, principles and norms of human actions. Morality asks the question posed to Jesus by a young man in the Gospel of Matthew: "Teacher, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?" (Matthew 19.16) Chapter 8 explores laws, principles and norms of human action in view of human happiness.

What about happiness in the Christian context? What does the revelation of the Name of God tell us about happiness? Unit 2 showed how the revelation of the Name of God leads to a transformation of ethics and morality into a spirituality. Happiness is redefined. The beatitudes proclaim happiness as God's good gift, symbolized in the declaration of happiness of the poor, the hungry, the grieving, and the persecuted. With God's coming – the kingdom of God – everything will be different. As Christians we anticipate this life into our present. Chapter 9 shows how human life is transformed into a liturgy of praise and thanksgiving, a celebration of the nearness of God. "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." (Luke 6.20)

The good life: Our search for happiness

CHAPTER 7

Drop

*For the kingdom of God is not food and drink
but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 14.17

The good life and happiness

Who doesn't dream of the good life? You are in school, applying yourself to your studies, sports and activities, because you understand that somehow, by developing your mind and body and spirit, you will have greater access to "the good life." We are convinced that living "the good life" will bring us happiness. Blaise Pascal was probably right when he said, "All people seek to be happy, even those who are about to hang themselves." It is universally acknowledged that despite all setbacks and failures, sickness and disability, people want to be happy. And if they revolt against their current life situation, as Albert Camus wrote in *The Rebel*, it is because deep down they believe that they *can* be happy if only something were different. The search to be happy lies behind every human vocation, every choice we make, even when we are depressed or act in anger. It is one of our deepest convictions that

happiness is our due. The Christian tradition has always believed that we were created for happiness. It recognizes this desire for happiness as natural, insisting that God has placed it in the human heart. (CCC #1718)

This desire for happiness is connected intimately with ethics and morality. All ethical theories insist that ethics is in search of the good. When we act, we do so to obtain a good. We play sports, we eat, we go on dates, we shovel someone's driveway, all for some good. It is not difficult to name a good in each of

these actions. It may be friendship, challenge, competition, stilled hunger, love, sex, success, or any of the other things we go after in life. Our actions are never neutral. Even when I choose to do something evil, my motivation for doing so is not that it is bad. I will always choose even the wrong, or evil, action because there is some good in it for me – at least something preferable to the alternative. How is this good connected with happiness? Most ethical thinkers propose that the good life, that is, the ethical, moral life, is also the happy life. In the good that we seek, we seek also our happiness.

In this chapter we examine the way five thinkers understand the link between happiness and moral goodness. The search for the good and the desire for happiness has preoccupied ethicists and moralists for centuries. You will meet Plato, the father of philosophy, and also revisit Aristotle, Kant and Levinas, whom you met in Chapter 1. You will also be introduced to Thomas Aquinas, one of the most

■ Focus your learning

Cognitive

Describe the connection between living the good life and being happy.

Practical

How must you involve others in your efforts to live the good life? What skills are required to attain happiness?

Affective

Name the ways that you are supported throughout your life as you seek the good life.

■ Key terms in this chapter

chastity
friendship
good
happiness
institutions
solicitude
temperance
virtue

■ Key thinkers

Plato
Aristotle
Thomas Aquinas
Immanuel Kant
Emmanuel Levinas
Richard G. Cote

*We all want to live
happily; in the whole
human race there is no
one who does not assent
to this proposition.*

St. Augustine

influential theologians in the Church, from the thirteenth century. We will look at what each of these thinkers has to say about the good and how human effort to seek happiness is

connected to the human search for the good. Finally we will examine the impact of the good on ethics and moral living.



Plato (left) and Aristotle, detail from the School of Athens, 1508, by Raphael Sanzio.

to undermine all morality. Sophists proclaimed there could be no truth; all so-called truth is no more than opinion. If there is no such thing as absolute truth, then there can be no such thing as a universal moral code. In their view, moral values were nothing more than individual or cultural opinion. The sophists held that life is ruled by basic needs and desires, not by reason. A sophist named Callicles, for example, argued that the best life is a life of sensual pleasure.¹ In fact, the sophists held that it was useless to argue about the good in general. Neither good-ness nor justice exists on its own, they said. There are only good people or just people. They refused any kind of thinking about moral principles or the good.

With sophists ridiculing all moral reasoning about the good, there could be no agreement on how citizens should act. The state, according to Plato, had deteriorated to a near-total moral collapse. What ruled the state was the private

Our search starts with Plato, the teacher of Aristotle. Plato had a high regard for the good, comparing it to the sun: just as the sun is the source of light and through its light we can see things, so the good shines upon all our actions and is in all our actions. We cannot locate the good anywhere, because it is in all things without being something itself. Nowhere do we find the good; we find only good things. In this way the good is similar to beauty. Beauty is found everywhere and in all things, but nowhere do we find beauty itself.

The closest we come to the good, according to Plato, is in contemplation. In contemplation we bask in the good and the good enters into our knowing. In contemplation it is as if the good radiates its warmth in us and through us to life. That is why Plato had such a high regard for philosophy. As contemplatives of the good, philosophers are, according to him, closest to the good. They have chosen the best – the happiest – life. They are happy because they know how to act in accordance with beliefs; they make true choices about the value and worth of their actions. All others, he holds, are ruled by feelings. They measure their actions by how much they enjoy them, and not by their value. The philosopher chooses particular actions because these actions are true. In his book *The Republic*, Plato wrote at length about an ideal city-state where the philosopher would be king. He realized, of course, that a state which gave such high regard to the contemplation of the good might not be a very effective state practically speaking. In fact, when some of his ideas were put into practice in Sicily, they were a downright disaster.

In his time Plato had to struggle against a movement known as sophism, which threatened

Plato (427–347 BC)

Guiding questions

1. Plato places a high value on the philosopher's search for the good. Why is the philosopher's search to be preferred over that of others?
2. Where does Plato locate the good? How do we attain it?
3. In which areas do you agree with Plato? Where do you disagree?

Aristotle (384–322 BC)

pleasure of greed, the satisfaction of elemental needs for food and drink, sex, and the desire for power. This crisis led Plato to look for something that could stem this flood of social

You have already learned much about Aristotle's philosophy and his ideas about the good in Chapter 1. We return to him in this discussion the good, as was Plato's, arose out of political considerations. After all, he became a philosopher in the king's court when he undertook the education of Alexander of Macedonia. Aristotle agreed with Plato about many things. All people aspire to some good and all seek to be happy. Like Plato, he was concerned with the short-sightedness of searching for happiness by following one's instincts and sensual pleasures. The search for happiness and the good, he felt, has more to do with acting intelligently than it does with following one's inclinations. Also, like Plato, he thought that philosophers were

Aristotle was more down-to-earth than Plato. He considered Plato's idea of the good too abstract. According to Aristotle, people do not find the good; they find a good. When I go to the doctor, I want not health in general, but my health. My search must be identified with something real. The good, according to Aristotle, is to be found in God, for God is the mover of all things. The good is inscribed by God into the nature of all created things. To search for the good is to go to each thing and discover there its potential. In each case one needs to ask: What is the purpose or aim of this thing? How can it best achieve this aim or goal? Aristotle still thought that Plato was on the right track when he said that contemplation is the highest good.

Review of Aristotle's theory of the good

- Absolute good can be found only in God.
- Good is inscribed by God into the nature of all things.
- To find the good in anything is to discover first its purpose, what it is for.
- A person develops good character by acting virtuously. Virtues serve to control passions.
- The good is found in the middle ground rather than in the extremes.
- The mark of humanity is the ability to reason and to act rationally.
- To act ethically is to engage our capacity to reason.
- The highest form of happiness is to live an ethical life.

Aristotle

Young people can become mathematicians and geometers and wise in things of that sort; but they do not appear to become people of practical wisdom. The reason is that the practical wisdom is of the particular, which becomes graspable through experience, but a young person is not experienced. For a quantity of time is required for experience.

pleasure of greed, the satisfaction of elemental needs for food and drink, sex, and the desire for power. This crisis led Plato to look for something that could stem this flood of social

disorder and anarchy. He found it in and through reason. Reason, he said, finds the good that pervades everything. The highest pursuit in life is to contemplate the good.

Reading questions

Plato places a high value on the philosopher's search for the good. Why is the philosopher's search to be preferred over that of others? Where does Plato locate the good? How do we attain it? In which areas do you agree with Plato? Where do you disagree?

Aristotle
(384–322 BC)

You have already learned much about Aristotle's philosophy and his ideas about the good in Chapter 1. We return to him in this discussion because his theory has influenced much of the Church's moral thinking. Aristotle's concern for the good, as was Plato's, arose out of political considerations. After all, he became a philosopher in the king's court when he undertook the education of Alexander of Macedonia. Aristotle agreed with Plato about many things. All people aspire to some good and all seek to be happy. Like Plato, he was concerned with the short-sightedness of searching for happiness by following one's instincts and sensual pleasures. The search for happiness and the good, he felt, has more to do with acting intelligently than it does with following one's inclinations. Also, like Plato, he thought that philosophers were

the most likely to succeed in the search for happiness and the good. Aristotle was more down-to-earth than Plato. He considered Plato's idea of the good too abstract. According to Aristotle, people do not find the good; they find a good. When I go to the doctor, I want not health in general, but my health. My search must be identified with something real. The good, according to Aristotle, is to be found in God, for God is the mover of all things. The good is inscribed by God into the nature of all created things. To search for the good is to go to each thing and discover there its potential. In each case one needs to ask: What is the purpose or aim of this thing? How can it best achieve this aim or goal? Aristotle still thought that Plato was on the right track when he said that contemplation is the highest good.

Review of Aristotle's theory of the good

- Absolute good can be found only in God.
- Good is inscribed by God into the nature of all things.
- To find the good in anything is to discover first its purpose, what it is for.
- A person develops good character by acting virtuously. Virtues serve to control passions.
- The good is found in the middle ground rather than in the extremes.
- The mark of humanity is the ability to reason and to act rationally.
- To act ethically is to engage our capacity to reason.
- The highest form of happiness is to live an ethical life.

Aristotle

Young people can become mathematical-
clans and geometers
and wise in things
of that sort; but they
do not appear to
become people of
practical wisdom.
The reason is that
practical wisdom is of
the particular, which
becomes graspable
through experience,
but a young person
is not experienced.
For a quantity of
time is required for
experience.

However, Aristotle's contemplation is not of the *idea* of the good, but of the good that is within all things. For him it was important to know the nature of each thing. That is why he was so interested in the sciences and politics. He appreciated the practical. Each thing has an end and each thing is oriented toward the good so long as it is oriented to its end.

So what about human beings? For Aristotle people are self-directed beings. They can discover who they are and can orient themselves to

- Guiding questions**
1. What good would Aristotle have you strive after?
 2. Evaluate Aristotle's notion of extremes. In what way are they similar / dissimilar to extremists today?
 3. What is the middle way in life? How would a typical student apply this principle in his or her life?
 4. What do you think of the role Aristotle assigned to the practical, wise person? Can you identify such a person in your life?

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)

Until the thirteenth century the main influence upon Christian theology and moral thinking derived from Greek philosophers came from Plato. From the eleventh century onwards, there was a gradual discovery of the works of Aristotle in the West. Most of these writings came to the West through the Arabs. Their high civilization and refined scientific thinking began to filter through in Western centres of thought, particularly in the newly founded Universities of Paris, Bologna and Salamanca. Most significantly, Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican friar, incorporated Aristotle's thinking into theology. He made extensive commentaries on Aristotle's ethics. Aquinas's two major works, his *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa theologiae*, reflect the impact that Aristotle's ethical thinking had upon him. In his texts he calls Aristotle "the philosopher."

Like Aristotle, Aquinas insisted that the ethical comes from the end that is inscribed in the nature of all creatures. What something is for is placed in the very core of what something is. At a person's core, Aquinas said, is a desire for the good. Following this natural desire for the good is the basis of ethics. Aquinas, as did Aristotle, equated God with the highest good. For Aquinas, however, this God is the Trinitarian God of Christianity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Aquinas's faith in the resurrection of Christ and the immortality of the human soul allowed him a vision of life with a much more refined notion of the end of human beings. Aquinas held that people were made for happiness. Aristotle had held this as well, and he had connected happiness with the good life lived by a virtuous person. Aquinas accepted this view but he added that human happiness was not exhausted with the good life lived on earth. Because of his belief in God's love for us as shown in Jesus, Aquinas held that there is a fuller happiness – called blessedness – that is to be found only in a loving vision of God. The fullness of a good life is not to be found on earth; the full good life only comes in the resurrection as God's pure gift.

St. Thomas Aquinas

Priest and doctor of the Church,
patron of universities and students
Feast day: January 28

Thomas Aquinas was born either in 1225 or 1227 into a noble family. His father, Landulph, was Count of Aquino, and his mother, Theodora, was Countess of Teano. The family was related to Emperors Henry VI and Frederick II, and to the Kings of Aragon, Castile, and France. When Thomas was five years old, his parents placed him under the care of the Benedictines of Monte Cassino who were to teach him and ensure a proper upbringing. He was an exceptional student. At the age of eighteen, Thomas decided to turn his back on noble privilege and to enter the Order of St. Dominic in spite of his family's opposition. Some members of his family were so upset with his decision, that they kidnapped him and locked him in a tower for over a year, trying to change his mind. They even sent in a woman to try to convince him that religious life was not for him. The story goes that he chased her out with a burning stick from the fireplace. The family finally relented, and he rejoined his Dominican friars.

He received the finest university education under the best teachers of his time, and his clarity of thinking and breadth of knowledge became legend. Even so, he received the nickname of "dumb ox" since he was quite large, and his humility was interpreted by some as dullness.

At the age of twenty-two, he was appointed to teach in Naples, during which time he also began to publish his first works. Four years later he was sent to Paris to teach at the Dominican school, and for further study at the University of Paris. At the age of thirty-one, he received his doctorate. While in Paris, he was befriended by King Louis IX, with whom he frequently dined. In 1261, Pope Urban IV called him to Rome where he was appointed to teach. Later, Pope Clement IV appointed him the Archbishop of Naples, but Thomas begged him to be excused from the appointment, his greatest work, the *Summa Theologiae*, would probably not have been written. Even so, on December 6, 1273, he decided that he could write no more. It appears that during Mass on that day, he experienced an unusually long ecstasy. To a fellow priest, Father Reginald, he said: "I can do no more. Such secrets have been revealed to me that all I have written now appears to be of little value."

Thomas died while travelling to the Council of Lyons convened by Pope Gregory X. He died at the Cistercian monastery of Fossa Nuova in 1274. St. Thomas was one of the greatest and most influential theologians of all time. He was canonized in 1323 and declared doctor of the Church by Pope Pius V.

Aquinas's ethics operated on two levels. He followed very closely what Aristotle had said about the good life and the happiness of the person who lives well and acts well. He too believed that people live the good life by using their intelligence and also their other capabilities, such as their senses, desires and physical abilities. For Aquinas, God's creation is good. To know how to use one's intellectual and sensual capacities, Aquinas said, one must follow



Saint Thomas Aquinas, by Bernardino Mei (1615-1676)

St. Thomas Aquinas

Priest and doctor of the Church,
patron of universities and students
Feast day: January 28

Thomas Aquinas was born either in 1225 or 1227 into a noble family. His father, Landolph, was Count of Aquino, and his mother, Theodora, was Countess of Teano. The family was related to Emperors Henry VI and Frederick II, and to the Kings of Aragon, Castile, and France. When Thomas was five years old, his parents placed him under the care of the Benedictines of Monte Cassino who were to teach him and ensure a proper upbringing. He was an exceptional student. At the age of eighteen, Thomas decided to turn his back on noble privilege and to enter the Order of St. Dominic in spite of his family's opposition. Some members of his family were so upset with his decision, that they kidnapped him and locked him in a tower for over a year, trying to change his mind. They even sent in a woman to try to convince him that religious life was not for him. The story goes that he chased her out with a burning stick from the fireplace. The family finally relented, and he rejoined his Dominican friars.

He received the finest university education under the best teachers of his time, and his clarity of thinking and breadth of knowledge became legend. Even so, he received the nickname of "dumb ox" since he was quite large, and his humility was interpreted by some as dullness.

At the age of twenty-two, he was appointed to teach in Naples, during which time he also began to publish his first works. Four years later he was sent to Paris to teach at the Dominican school, and for further study at the University of Paris. At the age of thirty-one, he received his doctorate.

While in Paris, he was befriended by King Louis IX, with whom he frequently dined. In 1261, Pope Urban IV called him to Rome where he was appointed to teach. Later, Pope Clement IV appointed him the Archbishop of Naples, but Thomas begged him to be excused from the appointment so that he could continue to teach and to write. If he had accepted the appointment, his greatest work, the *Summa Theologica*, would probably not have been written. Even so, on December 6, 1273, he decided that he could write no more. It appears that during Mass on that day, he experienced an unusually long ecstasy. To a fellow priest, Father Reginald, he said: "I can do no more. Such secrets have been revealed to me that all I have written now appears to be of little value."

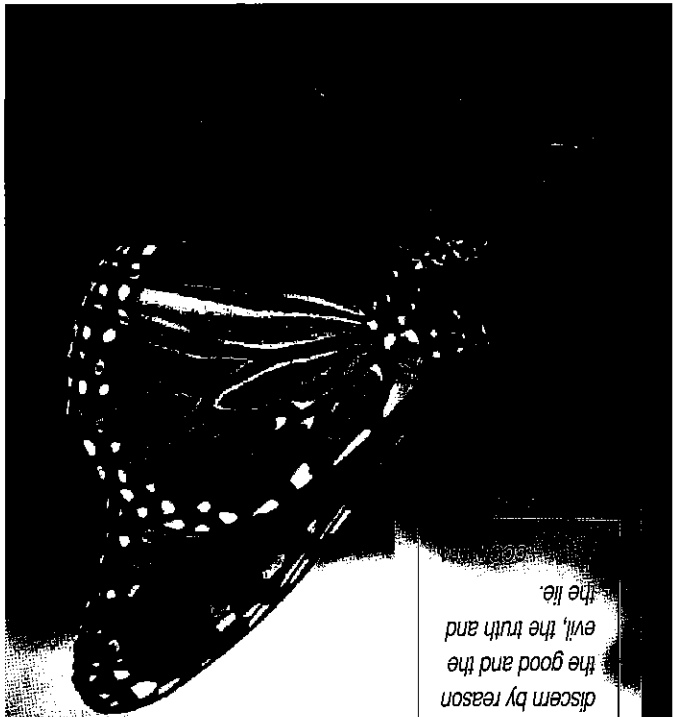
Thomas died while travelling to the Council of Lyons convened by Pope Gregory X. He died at the Cistercian monastery of Fossa Nuova in 1274. St. Thomas was one of the greatest and most influential theologians of all time. He was canonized in 1323 and declared doctor of the Church by Pope Pius V.

Aquinas's ethics operated on two levels. He followed very closely what Aristotle had said about the good life and the happiness of the person who lives well and acts well. He too believed that people live the good life by using their intelligence and also their other capabilities, such as their senses, desires and physical abilities. For Aquinas, God's creation is good. To know how to use one's intellectual and sensual capacities, Aquinas said, one must follow

Saint Thomas Aquinas, by Bernardino Mei (1615-1676)



The natural law expresses the original moral sense which enables man to discern by reason the good and the evil, the truth and the lie.



1. prudence (how to reason well in full people have:
2. temperance (how to remain moderate in the exercise of the emotions)
3. fortitude (how to be courageous in the face of life's difficulties)
4. justice (how to act well in relation to others)

Traditionally these have been called the cardinal virtues (cardinal: from the Latin *cardo*, meaning hinge). These virtues are the "hinges" supporting human life.

Aquinas identified a second level of moral life that had no place in Aristotle's thinking. God's self-gift to us in Jesus and the Holy Spirit changes the way we define what is good. Aquinas here introduces the three virtues of faith, hope and charity. The initiative for these virtues does not lie with us. Charity, for example, is first of all God's love for us. It is because God loves us that we can love others. Faith is first God's self-revealing action before it becomes a virtue in us. These virtues begin as pure gift. Our response to the gift is to accept it, to give praise and thanks, and then to live in accordance with the gift.

the natural law, which he described as "nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God, through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid."

Like Aristotle, Aquinas had a lot to say about virtues. Much of his ethical writing is taken up

Guiding questions

1. How is Thomas Aquinas similar in his thinking to Aristotle? How do they differ?
2. What is the highest good and happiness for Aquinas?

Immanuel Kant
(1724-1804)

Kant's notion of the good and happiness may seem the most difficult to follow. Kant lived in the period of the Enlightenment, a time characterized by the sweeping away of any sort of authority or religion except that which could justify itself in the court of reason. No more kings, no more priests, no more bibles, no more churches - unless they could prove by reason that they had a right to have authority. Only reason had authority. It is in this context that Kant sought to find an unassailable ground for ethics.

Guiding questions

1. What is the greatest concern in ethics for thinkers in Kant's time? What did the Enlightenment stand for?
2. What is the moral price you must pay if as an individual you want to be free and independent of any authority?
3. According to Kant, how does a person act out of good will? What would motivate such a person to act morally? How do you understand "doing your duty for no reason than that it is your duty"?

Emmanuel Levinas
(1905-1995)

Levinas places the infinite Good, who is God, at the heart of ethics. For Levinas the good comes as a call, a vocation. It does not come from myself. Recall the beggar in Chapter 1, asking, "Please, can you spare some change?" I must respond. Even if I refuse, the appeal follows me. When I am called to respond to another, I am called to be good without a reward, without any self-interest. Levinas has a great appreciation for things like good food and wine, or the comforts of the home. However, he is keenly aware of the danger of being totally absorbed in caring for oneself. It is the other who awakens me to the highest good. In the face of another I am turned from myself and my own interests and desires toward the other.

Guiding questions

1. What is the highest good for Levinas? Where do we encounter it?
2. What good is there in it for me, if the other is higher than me?

Review of Kant's theory of the good

- The only good is good will.
- Good is only good if it is done out of good will and provides no personal gain.
- An act is not moral if you enjoy doing it.
- Moral acts are performed out of duty and obligation.
- Reason dictates what is good.

human beings can indeed achieve the supreme good. In contrast with Aquinas's view, this supreme good is no longer the self-gift of God to us, but a necessary condition of reason. Faith, hope and charity lose their place in Kant's ethical theory.

(Kant rejected an ethics such as proposed by Aristotle and Aquinas, which emphasized happiness as a byproduct of doing good. Kant argued that people who dare to take up the duty to do so. This is how people of reason act. They must find the reason for doing good within themselves. They must live autonomously. All the other goods in life - even intelligence, love, the experience of beauty or religious experience - are of lesser value than the good will. All these are only means to obtain a good will. Kant did, however, acknowledge that humans could not achieve the supreme good in this life. There must therefore be a life beyond this life. Kant's God is a God who is also held to duty. Kant's God has to make certain that

Guiding questions

1. What is the highest good for Levinas? Where do we encounter it?
2. What good is there in it for me, if the other is higher than me?

Levinas places the infinite Good, who is God, at the heart of ethics. For Levinas the good comes as a call, a vocation. It does not come from myself. Recall the beggar in Chapter 1, asking, "Please, can you spare some change?" I must respond. Even if I refuse, the appeal follows me. When I am called to respond to another, I am called to be good without a reward, without any self-interest.

Levinas has a great appreciation for things like good food and wine, or the comforts of the home. However, he is keenly aware of the danger of being totally absorbed in caring for oneself. It is the other who awakens me to the highest good.

In the face of another I am turned from myself and my own interests and desires toward the other.

Emmanuel Levinas
(1905–1995)

Guiding questions

1. What is the greatest concern in ethics for thinkers in Kant's time? What did the Enlightenment stand for?
2. What is the moral price you must pay if as an individual you want to be free and independent of any authority?
3. According to Kant, how does a person act out of good will? What would motivate such a person to act morally? How do you understand "doing your duty for no reason than that it is your duty"?

(Kant rejected an ethics such as proposed by Aristotle and Aquinas, which emphasized happiness as a byproduct of doing good. Kant argued that people who dare to take up the baton of reason will do good because it is their duty to do so. This is how people of reason act. They must find the reason for doing good within themselves. They must live autonomously. All the other goods in life – even intelligence, love, the experience of beauty or religious experience – are of lesser value than the good will. Kant did, however, acknowledge the immortality of the soul because he realized that humans could not achieve the supreme good in this life. There must therefore be a life beyond this life. Kant's God is a God who is also held to duty. Kant's God has to make certain that

human beings can indeed achieve the supreme good. In contrast with Aquinas's view, this supreme good is no longer the self-gift of God to us, but a necessary condition of reason. Faith, hope and charity lose their place in Kant's ethical theory.

Review of Kant's theory of the good

- The only good is good will.
- Good is only good if it is done out of good will and provides no personal gain.
- An act is not moral if you enjoy doing it.
- Moral acts are performed out of duty and obligation.
- Reason dictates what is good.

Virtue

Human virtues are firm attitudes, habits, dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will, that govern our actions, order our passions and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practises the good. The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.

CCC #1804

Three ways of pursuing the good

You have met five thinkers who have something to say about the good life and happiness. Each of them says something different from the others, yet there is something attractive and right in each one's thinking. So which of these ideas is consistent with Catholic ethics? A Catholic approach to ethics and morality has three components: natural ethics, the role of obligation and the impact of the gospel.

Teleological: natural ethics

Catholic ethical theory frequently turns to Aristotle's teleological approach, as reflected in the work of Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, begins with questions about human happiness. He then explores human actions, how actions are affected by passions and emotions, and how actions gradually become habits and virtues. He then explores human action from the perspective of God's self-gift. The remainder of this chapter will show what such an approach might look like in practice.

What makes for a good and happy person?

In the "natural ethics" tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas – even if we will not follow them to the letter – we can discern at least three practical considerations:

1. How do we define the standards of excellence of the "good life"?
2. What is the role of the other in attaining the good life?
3. What is the institutional context of this good life?

Paul Ricoeur defined this teleological ethics as "aiming at the 'good life' with and for others, in just institutions."⁵

1. The standards of excellence of the "good life"

There is an old saying: "Plant an act, reap a habit; plant a habit, reap a virtue; plant a virtue, reap a habit, reap a habit, reap a virtue; plant a virtue, reap a habit, reap a habit, reap a virtue."

Deontological: obligation

What is the role of obligation in our decision-making? What must we do in a given situation? How do we make a moral judgment, for instance, in an intolerable work situation with an abusive boss? What are the norms for human action? What is the role of laws and rules for human behaviour in particular circumstances? We will examine these and Kant's deontological approach in greater detail in Chapter 8.

Impact of the gospel

The third component of a Catholic approach to ethics considers the impact of the gospel on us and on our actions. The gospel proclaims that the Son of God has entered human history as a man to open up possibilities for action that are motivated by God's love in our hearts. Chapter 9 will explore this gospel dimension.

reap a character, plant a character, reap a destiny." The saying repeats what we have stated right from the beginning: all "good life" starts with you – an agent – initiating a certain orientation in life. The more you repeat an action, the more set in your ways you become, the more your action defines who you are – your character. The question we ask here is how you as an agent may be helped in your pursuit of the good life. Are there examples to follow? What have wise people said? Are there standards of excellence we might look at? Are they the same for everyone?

a) *There are no recipes*

The Catholic tradition believes, as we saw in Chapter 4, that each person created by God is unique. From birth each of us is called by God

to become the person that God created us to be. That is why each person is unique and irreplaceable. Hence there are no recipes that would serve each one in achieving his or her particular aim of life. But knowing the great tradition of human wisdom about a life of excellence helps. That is why the Catholic tradition places such an emphasis on the communion of saints, the people who have set standards of human excellence. It provides these examples to help each one of us plan our own path in life.

b) Standards of excellence

When someone is called to become a doctor or a priest, the aim of this calling is apparent: to heal or to make accessible life in Christ. Within that overall aim, it is possible – despite the individual differences of doctors and priests – to propose standards of excellence. Standards of excellence are sets of best practices. Consider the game of chess. Chess has certain strategies and rules without which it cannot be played. These strategies and rules are intrinsic to the

A person of virtue A quiet hero from the fields

by Stuart Laidlaw
Toronto Star, May 3, 2002

One by one students at St. Francis Xavier Secondary School approached Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schweiser with packets of seeds, each in a cloth bag carefully tied with ribbon. The students represented just a fraction of the 90 countries at the Mississauga Catholic school. They came from North and South Korea, China, the Philippines and India. Each bag seemed to be a surprise to the unassuming man as he looked around in wonder at the crowd of students who had come out to visit him. He cradled the bags gently in his arms until another student offered to help, and again seemed surprised at this simple gesture of affection. For the visiting Schweiser, whose long-running court battle against giant Monsanto reaches the Federal Court of Appeal in Saskatoon later this month, the sharing of seeds was the best possible gift. That's because farmers have saved their best seeds and shared them with friends and neighbours for as long as man has tilled the earth. But by taking out patents on plants and forcing farmers to pay them licensing fees for the right to grow those plants, the biotech companies are taking away farmers' traditional rights, Schweiser told the students during a visit Tuesday. "This is a fight between patent rights and the rights of the farmer," he said. "So far, the patent rights have won out."



game. One can learn the rules and the best practices of the grand masters. So it is with human life. Within the aim of human life it is possible to set certain standards of excellence.⁶

c) The study and practice of virtue

The standards of excellence in living the good life have a long history. They are known as virtues. We find frequent references to them in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Catholic thinkers quite happily borrowed from their wisdom about virtues. Literally, a virtue is a kind of excellence. Hence virtue in a student would be excellence in learning, in a printer its ability to print, in a knife its sharpness. In studying the virtues one can learn the human possibilities for excellence. Put in practice, virtues become the strengths, the solidity, of our character. For example, a just person is someone who consistently acts justly. It is not enough to have only a disposition for justice for it to be a virtue. The disposition to be just must be so entrenched as to not easily be lost. At that point it is a virtue.

game. One can learn the rules and the best practices of the grand masters. So it is with human life. Within the aim of human life it is possible to set certain standards of excellence.

c) The study and practice of virtue

The standards of excellence in living the good life have a long history. They are known as virtues. We find frequent references to them in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Catholic thinkers quite happily borrowed from their wisdom about virtues. Literally, a virtue is a kind of excellence. Hence virtue in a student would be excellence in learning, in a printer its ability to print, in a knife its sharpness. In studying the virtues one can learn the human possibilities for excellence. Put in practice, virtues become the strengths, the solidity, of our character. For example, a just person is someone who consistently acts justly. It is not enough to have only a disposition for justice for it to be a virtue. The disposition to be just must be so entrenched as to not easily be lost. At that point it is a virtue.

to become the person that God created us to be. That is why each person is unique and irreplaceable. Hence there are no recipes that would serve each one in achieving his or her particular aim of life. But knowing the great tradition of human wisdom about a life of excellence helps. That is why the Catholic tradition places such an emphasis on the communion of saints, the people who have set standards of human excellence. It provides these examples to help each one of us plan our own path in life.

b) Standards of excellence

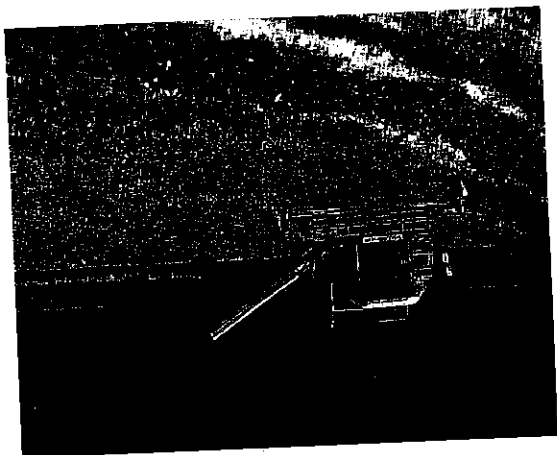
When someone is called to become a doctor or a priest, the aim of this calling is apparent: to heal or to make accessible life in Christ. Within that overall aim, it is possible – despite the individual differences of doctors and priests – to propose standards of excellence. Standards of excellence are sets of best practices. Consider the game of chess. Chess has certain strategies and rules without which it cannot be played. These strategies and rules are intrinsic to the

A person of virtue A quiet hero from the fields

by Stuart Laidlaw
Toronto Star, May 3, 2002

One by one students at St. Francis Xavier Secondary School approached Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser with packets of seeds, each in a cloth bag carefully tied with ribbon. The students represented just a fraction of the 90 countries at the Mississauga Catholic school. They came from North and South Korea, China, the Philippines and India. Each bag seemed to be a surprise to the unassuming man as he looked around in wonder at the crowd of stu-

dents who had come out to visit him. He cradled the bags gently in his arms until another student offered to help, and again seemed surprised at this simple gesture of affection. For the visiting Schmeiser, whose long-running court battle against biotech giant Monsanto reaches the Federal Court of Appeal in Saskatoon later this month, the sharing of seeds was the best possible gift. That's because farmers have saved their best seeds and shared them with friends and neighbours for as long as man has tilled the earth. But by taking out patents on plants and forcing farmers to pay them licensing fees for the right to grow those plants, the biotech companies are taking away farmers' traditional rights, Schmeiser told the students during a visit Tuesday. "This is a fight between patent rights and the rights of the farmer," he said. "So far, the patent rights have won out."



For Agata Gapinska, 16, it wasn't just what Schmeiser was saying about farmers' rights and genetically modified foods that moved her to come out to his welcoming, but just the fact that he was saying it. "I really liked his message that this chance."

Schmeiser arrived at the school to find the halls lined with uniformed students holding candles and the lights dimmed. This man, who has been feted around the world for standing up to Monsanto, was clearly moved by this simple gesture and the entire morning's activities of assemblies, workshops and a lunch in his honour. A few times, when he thought no one was looking, he wiped his eyes. Others saw it, too, and were moved. Schmeiser, it must be said, is no zealot. He is, as my colleague Thomas Walkom said to me Tuesday afternoon, simply a Saskatchewan farmer. He's quietly determined, as you need to be to coax a harvest from Canadian soil. He's spent his life in the open prairies, tending to his crops in vast fields with no other people in sight and anonymously developing canola plants that match the soil and climate of his farm. He is uncomfortable in crowds, but takes them on for a cause he believes in. "I don't know how many years we've got left, my wife and I, but in the years we've got we'll go down fighting for the rights of farmers," he said to a standing ovation. Throughout the morning, the students, heeding Finamore's call that they "shake hands with a Canadian hero," pursued Schmeiser. At each event in his honour, Schmeiser inevitably retreated to a back corner, only to have the crowds follow him. "I just can't believe he's actually here," said Greenpeace campaigner Patrick Venditti, who was in Mississauga at 7 a.m. to meet Schmeiser for the first time. "I just couldn't pass up

rise the caption read, "The seeds of life belong to us all!"

general assembly to welcome him to the school. Underneath the watercolour mural of a farmer tilling his field at sunrise the caption read, "The seeds of life belong to us all!"

Brian Finamore, had been keeping the students informed of Schmeiser's case in the morning announcements in preparation for the visit. One class wrote a play about him. Another wrote a song. A female student painted a stained glass window inspired by his fight, and a male student painted a mural that hung in the school auditorium during a general assembly to welcome him to the school. Underneath the watercolour mural of a farmer tilling his field at sunrise the caption read, "The seeds of life belong to us all!"

years. Instead, he has argued that the gene must have got into his fields through crossbreeding with neighbours' crops, or that Monsanto seeds could have blown into his field, been carried there by birds or deer or simply fallen off a truck. Mackay ruled, however, that it didn't matter how the gene came to be in Schmeiser's field. Once it was there, the entire crop became the property of Monsanto, even breeds that Schmeiser had developed on his own over five decades. He now owes Monsanto more than \$19,000 in licence fees. And on Monday, Mackay ruled in Monsanto's favour again, awarding the multinational \$153,000 in court costs to be paid by Schmeiser. Together, the two rulings could cost Schmeiser \$175 an acre for a patent the company charges \$15 an acre to license. His own court costs have come to more than \$200,000. Monsanto's have topped \$750,000. Since the ruling last year, Schmeiser has become something of a folk hero in the international struggle against genetically modified foods. He has toured the world to give deputations to government commissions on the issue, meet other farmers and speak at biotechnology conferences. He was already a folk hero at St. Francis before he arrived Tuesday morning. The school's chaplain, Brian Finamore, had been keeping the students informed of Schmeiser's case in the morning announcements in preparation for the visit. One class wrote a play about him. Another wrote a song. A female student painted a stained glass window inspired by his fight, and a male student painted a mural that hung in the school auditorium during a general assembly to welcome him to the school. Underneath the watercolour mural of a farmer tilling his field at sunrise the caption read, "The seeds of life belong to us all!"

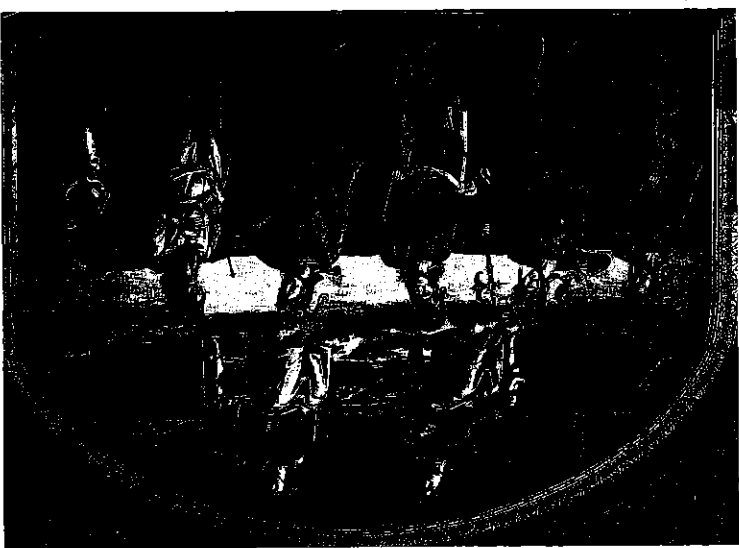


Percy Schmeiser

Last March, Judge W. Andrew Mackay of Saskatchewan's Federal Court of Canada ruled that Schmeiser had violated Monsanto's patent rights by growing canola that contained a gene patented by Monsanto to make the plant resistant to the company's powerful herbicide Roundup. Schmeiser never disputed that the gene was present in some of his plants, which he developed on his own farm by saving and sharing seeds for more than 50

one person can make a difference. It's inspiring for young people," said Gapinska, a Grade 11 student and a member of the school's Saints club, which organized most of the morning's events. During the assembly, she read the David and Goliath story. At 71, Schmeiser knows he may not live to see the end of his fight, which he expects to go to the Supreme Court of Canada, but on Tuesday he promised the students he would not give up. He and his wife of 50 years (he's only missed one anniversary, his 48th when he was in India receiving the Mahatma Gandhi Award) have had many long talks about a battle that has already cost them their retirement savings. She believes in this battle, too, even if they will never benefit from it personally, and says only one thing to him: "Make sure there's enough money left to bury us."

Stuart Laidlaw is a member of The Star's editorial board. Reprinted with permission — Torstar Syndication Services.



Fortitude and Temperance with Six Antique Heroes 1497, by Pietro Perugino

down so that they cannot rear their ugly head. The virtue of temperance, however, is not just about repressing the desire for sensual pleasure; it is the tempering of this desire — that is, using these passions for human growth. Our delight in food, drink and sex show how strong in us is the desire for self-preservation. Our enjoyment of these things is one of the prime forces behind self-preservation, both of ourselves as individuals and of the human race. They are part of our desire to exist. So even though temperance is directed to the self and is enjoyable, it is not selfish when it is integrated into genuine human growth. Hence temperance is a positive, life-affirming capability in life, not a negative, self-denying one. And so for Aquinas, abstinence humanizes our desire for food, sobriety humanizes the pleasure of drinking, and chastity humanizes our desire for sexual pleasure.

Destructive and selfish love (intemperance) means using these forces of self-preservation for

Temperance

What kind of excellences, or virtues, does Catholic tradition recommend? Moral theology identifies many virtues to which a human can aspire: generosity, patience, and humility to name a few. The cardinal virtues were mentioned earlier in this chapter: temperance, courage, prudence and justice? For now, let us explore the virtue of temperance.

The virtue of temperance is widely misunderstood and often maligned. Many people understand temperance to mean moderation in eating and drinking. "Don't eat or drink in excess." In some circles temperance means: "Don't drink alcohol." The negativity attached to the virtue of temperance is unfortunate. Temperance touches mainly on three essentials in life: food, drink and sex. Without them the human race cannot survive. What does it mean to be temperate in matters of food, drink and sex? Is it following Aristotle's advice about finding the mean between too little and too much? And if so, what is too little or too much? Is it only quantity? No. Temperance means that I should take proper care of myself. My life must be well-ordered. I must "preserve" myself. Intemperance is a breakdown of the powers that are intended for self-preservation. Intemperance is a destructive and selfish love, whereas temperance is a love that is life-giving and selfless.

Let us start with this life-giving, selfless love. Temperance touches the most basic appetites and passions of human life. The passion for food, drink and sex are powerful forces. Plato saw these sensual cravings as "an ugly brute of a horse" which the human mind, like a rider, had to control. There is a danger in seeing these passions only as something to repress, to hold

one person can make a difference. It's inspiring for young people," said Gapinska, a Grade 11 student and a member of the school's Saints club, which organized most of the morning's events. During the assembly, she read the David and Goliath story. At 71, Schweiser knows he may not live to see the end of his fight, which he expects to go to the Supreme Court of Canada, but on Tuesday he promised the students he would not give up. He and his wife of 50 years (he's only missed one anniversary, his 48th when he was in India receiving the Mahatma Gandhi Award) have had many long talks about a battle that has already cost them their retirement savings. She believes in this battle, too, even if they will never benefit from it personally, and says only one thing to him: "Make sure there's enough money left to bury us."

Stuart Laidlaw is a member of The Star's editorial board. Reprinted with permission - Torstar Syndication Services.

What kind of excellences, or virtues, does Catholic tradition recommend? Moral theology identifies many virtues to which a human can aspire: generosity, patience, and humility to name a few. The cardinal virtues were mentioned earlier in this chapter: temperance, courage, prudence and justice.⁷ For now, let us explore the virtue of temperance.

Temperance

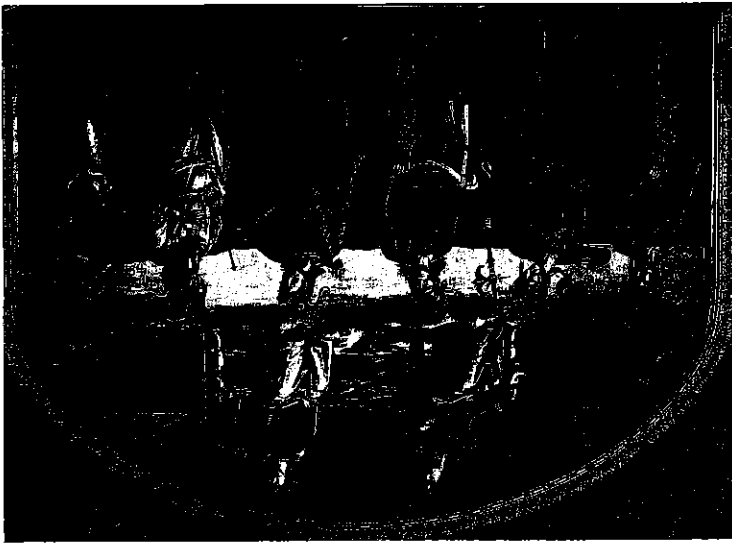
The virtue of temperance is widely misunderstood and often maligned. Many people understand temperance to mean moderation in eating and drinking. "Don't eat or drink in excess." In some circles temperance means: "Don't drink alcohol." The negativity attached to the virtue of temperance is unfortunate. Temperance touches mainly on three essentials in life: food, drink and sex. Without them the human race cannot survive. What does it mean to be temperate in matters of food, drink and sex? Is it following Aristotle's advice about finding the mean between too little and too much? And if so, what is too little or too much? Is it only quantity? No. Temperance means that I should take proper care of myself. My life must be well-ordered. I must "preserve" myself. Intemperance is a breakdown of the powers that are intended for self-preservation. Intemperance is a destructive and selfish love, whereas temperance is a love that is life-giving and selfless.

Let us start with this life-giving, selfless love. Temperance touches the most basic appetites and passions of human life. The passion for food, drink and sex are powerful forces. Plato saw these sensuous cravings as "an ugly brute of a horse" which the human mind, like a rider, had to control. There is a danger in seeing these passions only as something to repress, to hold

down so that they cannot rear their ugly head. The virtue of temperance, however, is not just about repressing the desire for sensual pleasure; it is the tempering of this desire – that is, using these passions for human growth. Our delight in food, drink and sex show how strong in us is the desire for self-preservation. Our enjoyment of these things is one of the prime forces behind self-preservation, both of ourselves as individuals and of the human race. They are part of our desire to exist. So even though temperance is directed to the self and is enjoyable, it is not selfish when it is integrated into genuine human growth. Hence temperance is a positive, life-affirming capability in life, not a negative, self-denying one. And so for Aquinas, abstinence humanizes our desire for food, sobriety humanizes the pleasure of drinking, and chastity humanizes our desire for sexual pleasure.

Destructive and selfish love (intemperance) means using these forces of self-preservation for

Fortitude and
Antique Heroes
Temperance with Six
1497, by Pietro
Perugino.





An illustration of Adam and Eve from a twelfth-century mosaic from Monreale Cathedral in Sicily. In this version, perhaps influenced by the first Genesis account, God introduces Eve to Adam. Note the fruit-bearing trees in the background (see Genesis 1:26-30).

their own sake. Intemperance abuses food, drink and sex so that they are no longer there for self-preservation, self-assertion and self-fulfillment but become the objects of addiction. These desires become ends in themselves. For example, the desire for food becomes intemperance when one's sole preoccupation in life becomes eating, to the detriment of one's health. The misuse of food, drink and sex can easily become crutches in life, ways of escaping our human and Christian responsibilities. Intemperance can also signal that we do not like or love ourselves.⁸

Temperance and chastity

"Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.... So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:26-27) This revelation is one of the fundamental building blocks of our understanding of sexuality and chastity. A second fundamental revelation comes to us in Genesis 2:18, 21-23: "Then the Lord God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone....' So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the

man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.' Here Adam recognizes himself in the woman, he recognizes that the other complements him and completes him. Reflecting on these Scriptures, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini writes the following:

My body has a precise word inscribed in it: this word is the *other*; it is a calling for the other; the body becomes itself in the face of the other, by relating to the other. But the other is a mystery that cannot be reduced...; if I want to own it, it is no longer the "other" and I am left alone, with no one else. The sex difference makes man and woman unfinished in themselves, each definable only with reference to the other. There is no space here for... Narcissus....

In the Bible, the man-woman couple is not meant to be simply a means for the preservation of the species, as is the case for the other animals. Insofar as it was called to become the image and likeness of God, it expresses in a bodily, tangible way the face of God, which is Love.... It is precisely in the reciprocal love of man and woman, a love that is neither self-enclosed nor self-sufficient, but open to the God who wants to be one with man and woman, that the body, bearing as it does the seal of God, leads us back to God.... Therefore, sex contains a sublime word of love that completes the person in the likeness of God, whose Holiness is Love....

The classic rule about sexuality is very simple. The gratification we receive from sexual acts acquires a true human meaning when it is directed to the loving union of a man and a woman who are bound to each other by total, reciprocal fidelity and who are open to procreation. Whatever falls outside of this rule falls outside of the Christian order.... As Karol Wojtyla, now Pope John Paul II, wrote in *Love and Responsibility*, chastity is "a transparent attitude with respect to

an individual of the opposite sex".... Far from being negative, chastity is true mastery of the self, in making this choice, we acknowledge that Jesus is master of our bodies and our lives.... Chastity makes us live our body in the freedom of the Spirit, a freedom that begets love, joy, peace, patience, benevolence, moderation, self-control, courtesy, meekness, forbearance (see Galatians 5:22).⁹ Canadian spiritual writer, Fr. Ron Rolheiser, puts it this way:

We can learn this by looking at its antithesis. We lack chastity when, for whatever reason (lack of respect, lack of reverence, impatience, selfishness, callousness, immaturity, undisciplined desire, lack of aesthetics) we relate to others, nature, or God in such a way that they cannot be fully who and what they are, according to their own unique rhythms and preciousness. We do this when we short-circuit patience and respect.

Chastity as self-giving

Chastity is the joyous affirmation of someone who knows how to live self-giving, free from any form of self-centred slavery. This presupposes that the person has learnt how to accept other people, to relate with them, while respecting their dignity in diversity. The chaste person is not self-centred, not involved in selfish relationships with other people. Chastity makes the personality harmonious. It matures it and fills it with inner peace. This purity of mind and body helps develop true self-respect and at the same time makes one capable of respecting others, because it makes one see in them persons to reverence, insofar as they are created in the image of God and through grace are children of God, re-created by Christ who "called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Excerpt from: The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 1995, #17.

Chastity means the integration of sexuality within the person. It includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery.

Christ is the model of chastity. Every baptized person is called to lead a chaste life, each according to his particular state of life.

CCC #2394

CCC #2395

Excerpt from:
The Pontifical Council for the Family:
The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995, #17.

Chastity is the joyous affirmation of someone who knows how to live self-giving, free from any form of self-centred slavery. This presupposes that the person has learnt how to accept other people, to relate with them, while respecting their dignity in diversity. The chaste person is not self-centred, not involved in selfish relationships with other people. Chastity makes the personality harmonious. It matures it and fills it with inner peace. This purity of mind and body helps develop true self-respect and at the same time makes one capable of respecting others, because it makes one see in them persons to reverence, insofar as they are created in the image of God and through grace are children of God, re-created by Christ who "called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2.9).

Chastity as self-giving

We can learn this by looking at its antithesis. We lack chastity when, for whatever reason (lack of respect, lack of reverence, impatience, selfishness, cal-lousness, immaturity, undisciplined desire, lack of aesthetics) we relate to others, nature, or God in such a way that they cannot be fully who and what they are, according to their own unique rhythms and preciousness. We do this when we short-circuit patience and respect.

Chastity, properly defined, means living in such a way that our own needs, desires, agendas, and impatience do not get in the way of letting gift be gift, other be other, and God be God. Obviously this depends upon proper respect and proper waiting. puts it this way:

Canadian spiritual writer, Fr. Ron Rolheiser, (see Galatians 5.22):
control, courtesy, meekness, forbearance
patience, benevolence, moderation, self-
a freedom that begets love, joy, peace,
live our body in the freedom of the Spirit,
bodies and our lives.... Chastity makes us
acknowledge that Jesus is master of our
tery of the self, in making this choice, we
from being negative, chastity is true mas-
an individual of the opposite sex" ... Far

Sex, because it so deeply affects the soul, speaks most loudly about chastity or lack of it. Sex, like all other experience, is only chaste when it does not short-circuit full respect. But it often does so in a variety of ways. Prematurity, unfair pressure, subtle or crass force, taking without giving, posturing an intimacy that one isn't ready to enter, lack of respect for previous commitments, an unwillingness to include the whole person, disregard for the wider relationships of family and community, failure to respect long-range health and happiness, ignoring proper aesthetics, all of these make for a lack of proper respect within a sexual relationship... And, as is obvious, the key element in all this is WAITING. Chastity is 90% about proper waiting.

Carlo Carretto, one of the great spiritual writers of recent times, spent many years alone, a hermit in the Sahara desert. During these long, quiet years, he tried to hear what God was saying to us. In one of his books, written from this desert solitude, he suggests that God is trying to tell us today, especially in Western culture, is this: Be patient! Learn to wait - for everything, each other, love, happiness, God.¹⁰

CCC #2394

Christ is the model
of chastity. Every
baptized person
is called to lead a
chaste life, each
according to his
particular state
of life.

CCC #2395

Chastity means
the integration of
sexuality within the
person. It includes
an apprenticeship in
self-mastery.

I cannot live the good life by myself. Aristotle realized this and in his ethics he reserved an important place for friendship. Aristotle had a unique take on friendship. Friendship, he wrote,

2. The role of the other in attaining the good life

is not primarily a feeling of attachment for another. It is that, but even more it is a virtue, one of those excellences of life. As such, friendship is a deliberate activity that requires continuous exercise. The friendship that is essential for the good life is something we must work at.

Guiding questions

1. What is virtue?
2. How is the virtuous person a person of character?
3. How does St. Thomas Aquinas identify temperance? Give some examples of intemperance.
4. How would Aquinas describe a chaste relationship between an engaged couple?
5. Why does Aquinas acknowledge the good of the pleasures of eating and drinking?



Temperate use of food and drink

How does temperance apply to food and drink? Remember that temperance for Aquinas meant that a person was to enjoy food and drink within reason. Food and drink are fundamental to survival. The enjoyment we experience from eating is necessary to encourage eating and sustain life. In the same way, we were meant to enjoy the taste of drink. It is true that one could live their whole life without drinking alcohol and still survive, but Aquinas does not see this as a reason to avoid all alcohol. Rather he reasoned that the practice of the virtue of temperance was concerned with protecting the body from harmful substances. Consuming either food or drink in excess or failing to consume the necessary food and drink is a vice that undermines the body's health. He called the practice of excessive eating or drinking the vice

of indulgence. When we indulge our sense of taste by eating even when we are not hungry and for the sole purpose of pleasing the sense of taste, our actions are harmful to our bodies. Most people today are aware of the harm that overeating or under-eating can cause – obesity, bulimia and anorexia are all too familiar in today's society.

Drunkenness is a vice. Like food, alcoholic drink is not in itself an evil, but the excessive consumption of alcohol results in long-term harm to the body. Furthermore it results in a loss to the faculty of reason. Drunkenness not only has physical and psychological effects on the body and mind, it also has a moral effect. The harm can extend to others. Alcohol consumption is one of the major causes of traffic fatalities and high injury accidents. Relationships are often damaged and a family suffers greatly when one of its members is an abusive drinker. Excessive alcohol consumption can significantly limit moral reasoning, resulting in harmful actions. Intemperate acts of eating and drinking are destructive and selfish acts. We were meant to enjoy our food and drink, but only within reason and for the good of others and ourselves.

What is friendship?

Real friendship consists first in a frank, unhesitating opening of one's heart and mind to the other; it is the altogether free and independent communication of one's own person. Hence it allows the other to see right in and know us as we really are, unflinchingly sharing what we ourselves are and have learned. This is possible only if there is a willingness to communicate on both sides. That is where many an acquaintance falls short of friendship.

Furthermore, the openness of friendship calls for the total disarmament belonging to faith. Encounters in friendship are necessarily encounters without weapons. Between friends, there can be no built-in reservations, mental restrictions, or time limits. Only in total vulnerability can believing partners reveal themselves to one another in perfect availability and friendship. They must encounter one another not *despite* their human defects, but simply *with* their defects, because these happen to be part of the friend's makeup and nature.

Hope is also an essential feature of human existence generally, and of friendship in particular. Without hope there can be no true friends. Hopeful partners are so intimately united that one cannot let the other down without at the same time totally betraying himself or herself and breaking the engagement on which the other has placed all of his or her hopes. When I say to a friend, "You can count on me," I do not restrict "you" to any one aspect or part of my friend's being. As we can see, this personal involvement is much more than the intermittent and often capricious relationship of companionship, helpfulness, and obligingness; it is a permanent union in which two partners sustain one another and are at each other's abiding and resourceful disposal. Over and above the determination of common interest and reasonable expectation, they discover one another as unique personal subjects. They do not draw their hope from each other's human possibilities, talents, and qualities, as though they were somehow reading the future in them. It is not the possibilities in the other that engender hope; rather it is hope that creates new possibilities and a new future for mutually helpful friends.

True friendship exists only between those who love one another; it culminates in a willingness to spend oneself for the other – and this not only ungrudgingly, without reckoning the cost, but eagerly. Indeed, it need be, one will even give up one's life. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15.13). Love alone reunites friends to the extent that they share one another's existence completely and wholeheartedly. In loving friendship the element of self-giving finds its deepest expression, since the gift that is given is ultimately always the givers themselves. It is at once the gift of personal being and the gift of being truly personal. More than any other interpersonal relationship, love reaches and transfigures the centre of those who have become friends. Not only do such individuals come to possess themselves more authentically, but the uniqueness of their person is given its hitherto undisclosed real value. Thus with true friendship, a new sphere of existence is created and something quite unique takes place: the free self-giving of one person to another.

Excerpt from:
Richard G. Cote, *Universal Grace: Myth or Reality?*
(Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977), p. 56-58.



What is friendship?

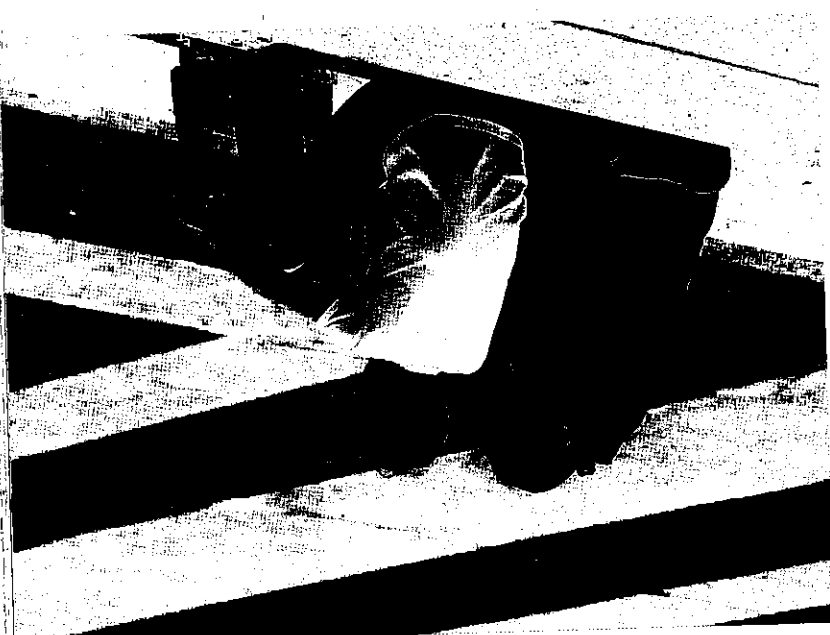
Real friendship consists first in a frank, unhesitating opening of one's heart and mind to the other; it is the altogether free and independent communication of one's own person. Hence it allows the other to see right in and know us as we really are, unflinchingly sharing what we ourselves are and have learned. This is possible only if there is a willingness to communicate on both sides. That is where many an acquaintance falls short of friendship.

Furthermore, the openness of friendship calls for the total disarmament belonging to faith. Encounters in friendship are necessarily encounters without weapons. Between friends, there can be no built-in reservations, mental restrictions, or time limits. Only in total vulnerability can believing partners reveal themselves to one another in perfect availability and friendship. They must encounter one another not *despite* their human defects, but simply *with* their defects, because these happen to be part of the friend's makeup and nature.

Hope is also an essential feature of human existence generally, and of friendship in particular. Without hope there can be no true friends. Hopeful partners are so intimately united that one cannot let the other down without at the same time totally betraying himself or herself and breaking the engagement on which the other has placed all of his or her hopes. When I say to a friend, "You can count on me," I do not restrict "you" to any one aspect or part of my friend's being. As we can see, this personal involvement is much more than the intermittent and often capricious relationship of companionship, helpfulness, and obligingness; it is a permanent union in which two partners sustain one another and are at each other's abiding and resourceful disposal. Over and above the determination of common interest and reasonable expectation, they discover one another as unique personal subjects. They do not draw their hope from each other's human possibilities, talents, and qualities, as though they were somehow reading the future in them. It is not the possibilities in the other that engender hope; rather it is hope that creates new possibilities and a new future for mutually helpful friends.

True friendship exists only between those who love one another; it culminates in a willingness to spend oneself for the other — and this not only ungrudgingly, without reckoning the cost, but eagerly. Indeed, it need be, one will even give up one's life. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15.13). Love alone reunites friends to the extent that they share one another's existence completely and wholeheartedly. In loving friendship the element of self-giving finds its deepest expression, since the gift that is given is ultimately always the givers themselves. It is at once the gift of personal being and the gift of being truly personal. More than any other interpersonal relationship, love reaches and transfigures the centre of those who have become friends. Not only do such individuals come to possess themselves more authentically, but the uniqueness of their person is given its hitherto undisclosed real value. Thus with true friendship, a new sphere of existence is created and something quite unique takes place: the free self-giving of one person to another.

Excerpt from:
Richard G. Cote, *Universal Grace: Myth or Reality?*
(Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977), p. 56-58.



Guiding questions

1. What does friendship have to do with ethics?
2. Why must I care for the other?
3. Give examples of how the good, or ethical, life is lived "with and for others."

solicitude: Anxious concern for another.



Solicitude: The other, not as friend, but as an ethical appeal

To live well, I need to live with others. However, the "other" has many faces – not everyone is my friend. Levinas, as we saw, presents us with another person whom I did not choose as a friend. This other person does not enter into my life because of the way that I reach out and invite him or her. The beggar forces himself or herself into my consciousness, raising the question of my generosity. The other invades my life and makes me responsible for him or her. This is perhaps not a friendly moment. This can take place in various ways, and not only on the street corner. To be confronted by television images of the African AIDS pandemic, to experience the devastation of a flood or a forest fire in the grief of the victims who have lost everything, to be stricken by the anguish of a mother and father whose daughter died because of a senseless, preventable accident allows the other to take over something in my life. Here I am not the active agent. I suffer the other. I can only give

sympathy, my compassion – I can only share the pain of the other. This experience of other is important for truly living the good life.

From: "Against Heresies" by Saint Irenaeus, bishop (Lib.4, 13,4-14, 1: SC100, 534-540)

Friendship with God brings the gift of immortality to those who accept it.

"I do not call you servants any longer, for a servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, since I have made known to you everything that I have learned from my Father."

Our Lord, the Word of God, first drew men to God as servants, but later he freed those made subject to him. He himself testified to this:

We have here two types of experience of the "other" that enter into ethics: one comes from friendship, the other from the appeal of the needy other. Whether out of friendship or through the appeal of another person, the good life, the ethical life, is lived with and for others. The good life at which ethics aims is a matter of giving and receiving. To say it in other words, one cannot live ethically without "solicitude" – without a regard for the other.

Guiding questions

1. Investigate: Who is Catherine Doherty?
2. According to Catherine Doherty, what is transparency?
3. What are some examples of the spiritual pollution?
4. What is the type of icon that is referred to here?
5. What is the meaning of the last sentence?

3. The good life needs just institutions

The good life goes beyond individuals and includes the social structure of institutions. Institutions are stable sets or systems of meanings, beliefs and values. Over time, the values of food, shelter, health, education, economy, and religion become stabilized in social institutions. We see this in such institutions as the family, the state, health care, churches, and the market economy. Ethics is very much interested in the way that these institutions promote and stabilize our search for the good.

Whatever you undertake in society, you are drawn into one or another institution. You live in a family, go to school, belong to a parish, work at the supermarket, save your money in a bank. Institutions structure the expectations of people who live together in society. They direct how things get done in order to promote and protect the common good. In institutions we find engraved our values, beliefs and practices. Most of these we have inherited. Over the centuries our ancestors have invented and refined the

Living with and for others

Poulinia

By Catherine Doherty

What is transparency? I see a window washed clean, through which whatever light is outside comes in, as if there were no window at all. For the window is so well washed, so transparent, that it ceases to be glass, and blends, or seems to, with the air around it. If there is sun outside such a window, it floods the room with its golden light, obliterating the window completely, because of its transparency.

Is transparency, Lord, the window you desire to make out of [those] who love you or try to? In our polluted, opaque world it is difficult to keep ordinary windows washed clean. Even if they can be washed clean, there is little light and sunshine that can seep through them. We have polluted the air to such an extent that even sunlight barely reaches the earth.

Is the word transparency your answer, Lord, to our polluted world, our polluted minds, hearts and souls? It may be, because if we unpollute our inner selves, then of course we will be selfless; and if we are selfless we easily will unpollute the air, the water and the earth, because selfless [people] in love with God are not subject to greed, and it is greed that today pollutes the earth. But greed pollutes the inner [self] before it pollutes the earth.

Lord, is this your way to unpollute the world? For if the person were truly defenceless, forgiving, and loving, the result would be transparent minds, hearts and souls. A transparent soul would show you to everyone who seeks you, for unless we become transparent, others will not know you. For every human face is an icon of Christ, as is every human heart. But for his icon to be reflected in a face, it must be painted in the heart.¹⁵

