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Lewis (1952) says that Christian behavior is concerned with three things: first, fair play and harmony between individuals, or relations between man and man; second, tidying up or harmonizing things inside each individual, or things inside each man; and third, the general purpose of human life as a whole: what man was made for, or relations between man and the power that made him. The heading under which Lewis writes about ethics is Christian behavior, or human action, or what one *does* with natural inclinations. Lewis likens moral individuals to sailing ships. The fair play and harmony relate to ships not running into one another or getting in each other's way; the tidying up and harmonizing things inside the individual relates to ensuring that one's own ship is seaworthy and has her engines in good order; and the general purpose of human life relates to what course the whole fleet ought to be on.

Like Lewis, when Van Til (1977) describes the questions with which Christian ethics is concerned he identifies three. First, we inquire into the nature of man, specifically Van Til means the nature of the human will. Under this question he discusses *motive*. Second, with respect to the will of man we inquire into the quality of one's deeds. Under this question Van Til discusses criterion or *standard*. Third, with respect the will of man we inquire as to the purpose or end of its action. Under this question he discusses the *end* toward which or for which something is done. Van Til begins by defining his subject more formally than Lewis. "Ethics," according to Van Til, "deals with the aspect of human personality which we designate as the will" (Van Til, 1977, p.

1). He contrasts this study (human will) with those sciences that deal primarily with knowledge (human intellect) or with appreciation (human emotions), though he is not willing to separate these disciplines too rigidly.

Pojman (1995) outlines the domains of ethical assessment. He identifies four: first, is action or the act itself, and involves questions as to whether or not the action is permissible, and obligatory or optional; second, are the consequences of the action, and involves discussion as to whether the outcome is good, bad or indifferent; third, is the character of the moral agent or person doing the action, and whether the person is virtuous or not; and fourth, is the motive or the intention of the person, or whether the action was motivated by good will or evil will.

There is remarkable similarity between the categories, though not necessarily the concepts, of these three diverse philosophers.

Pojman begins his treatment of the domains of ethical evaluation with “the act” itself. This is appropriate in that it introduces the idea that some actions are permissible and some are not. However, “actions” is the heading of the topic and Pojman’s three points that follow are properly the domains under the heading through which it is determined that an action is permissible (ethical) or not. Determining whether an act is right or wrong rests not with the action itself as Pojman suggests, but, as Lewis and Van Til agree, first with the nature or character of the moral agent, second with the criterion or standard by which the action is judged, and third with the end or purpose of the action. Thus in this writer’s opinion, “action” is more properly the overall subject of Pojman’s discussion of ethical evaluation and not a domain by which ethics is evaluated.

The Nature of Man

Van Til speaks of the nature of man as that which controls the acts of man. He is thinking essentially about whether man's will is good or bad. This is what Pojman calls character, which may be virtuous or villainous or neutral. Van Til would not agree that neutrality is an option. In fact, wherever Pojman offered neutrality as an option, (For Pojman both character and motive may be neutral,) Van Til would differ with him. Lewis agrees that that which is inside a man is what propels his outward behavior. "You cannot make men good by law: and without good men you cannot have a good society. That is why we must go on to think of the...morality inside the individual" (Lewis, 1952, p.73). Lewis likens the moral man to a seaworthy ship with her engines in good order.

Van Til's theory of the nature of man includes the concept of sin and the fall. "Just as sin has blinded the intellect of man," says Van Til, "so it has corrupted the will of man" (Van Til, 1977, p. 22; Van Til, 1955, p. 54). Van Til, a Calvinist, affirms the doctrine of the total depravity of man. By total depravity a Calvinist would mean that there is no aspect of the human being that is not affected by sin including the social, intellectual, ethical, physical, spiritual and social aspects of humanity. However, it is not the case that man is as corrupt and evil as he could be in all these aspects, (e.g., not all people are Hitlers), rather all aspects are affected and corrupted. Redemption is not limited to a person's spirituality alone, but involves the whole person. Though Lewis states that he will assume the Christian point of view in his treatment of morality, there are likely to be some theological differences between Lewis and Van Til in regard to the doctrine of man and sin.

Pojman speaks of ethical actions produced by virtuous persons. He believes that ethics can be separated from religion, a position I don't think either Lewis or Van Til would concede.

Van Til might say of Pojman's *virtue ethics* that outward virtuous actions do not necessarily proceed from a virtuous heart. Lewis concurs, "Unless we go on to... the tidying up inside each human being—we are only deceiving ourselves" (Lewis, 1952, p. 73). "There is a difference between doing some particular just or temperate action and being a just or temperate man" (Lewis, 1952, p. 79).

For Van Til, Christ was both priest and sacrifice on our behalf. He "offer[ed] himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and ... mak[es] continual intercession for us" (Van Til, 1955, p. 17). It is the work of Christ that changes the man and as Lewis says makes him moral inside. It is Christ who makes a person virtuous, not on their own merit, but on the merit of Christ alone by faith.

Standard of Behavior

Second, we speak about the quality of a person's action as determined by a standard or criterion. What shall serve as the ethical standard? Pojman's treatment of consequences is placed along side Van Til's search for a criterion and Lewis's standard of fair play and harmony standard. Pojman introduces us to teleological ethics when he discusses the consequences of a person's action as the standard for moral behavior. Mill (1863), a consequentialist or utilitarian theorist, proposed a moral standard that he called "the Greatest Happiness Principle," a theory of utility that meant "pleasure itself, together with exemption from pain." "Actions," Mill said, "are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness." (Mill, 1863) "...The theory of life on which this theory of morality is grounded – namely, that pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends..." (Mill, 1863).

However attractive this theory may seem there are insurmountable weaknesses. Pojman discusses several. Among the most significant obstacles for this writer are that man is both finite and sinful. As finite beings we are not capable of considering every option, nor can we consider the consequences of all those options. We cannot see into the future to evaluate all the consequences of our choices. The number possible choices and permutations of consequences are beyond imagination. Our finitude extends to our lack of objectivity. The task of quantifying the consequences of ethical choices would be too subjective and ultimately unworkable. Besides being finite, mankind is corrupt. Van Til says, “Man’s moral consciousness then as it is today is (a) finite and (b) sinful. If it were only finite and not sinful we could go to the moral consciousness of man for our information” (Van Til, 1955, p. 54). Being thus identified as a corrupt being, man is rendered an unreliable evaluator of consequences.

Van Til (1955) extends the effect of the fall to the question of the source of ethical standards:

This doctrine of total depravity of man makes it plain that the moral consciousness of man as he is today cannot be the source for information about what is ideal good or about what is the standard of the good or about what is the true nature of the will which is to strive for the good. (p. 54)

Plato suggests an ethical ideal that is beyond imperfect mortal man as the standard to strive for. Lewis’s (1952) suggestion that the standard should be “fair play and harmony between individuals” (p. 72), seems much more concrete, down to earth, and attainable. Lewis worked out his moral standard by describing seven virtues, four of which were cardinal, and three of which were theological. The cardinal virtues consist of prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude. The theological virtues consist of faith, hope and charity. (Lewis, 1952)

Van Til insists that, “the Christian position maintains that man, as a creature of God, naturally would have to inquire of God what is right and wrong” (Van Til, 1977, p. 33). It is the God of scripture who sets the standard through His revealed will. Christian-theistic “laws” may include the Ten Commandments, Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, or even Lewis’s cardinal and theological virtues. Van Til sees these as “principle summar[ies] of the expressed will of God to man” (Van Til, 1977, p. 146). Christ sums up the law succinctly, “The most important [commandment] is this... love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12: 29-31).

An interesting question, though one not pursued in this paper, would be whether God’s will as expressed in His Word, as the standard for moral actions, fulfills all of Pojman’s characteristics of moral principles: prescriptivity, universalizability, overridingness, publicity, and practicability. (Pojman, 1995, p. 7)

The End of Actions

Finally, we will speak of the end or purpose of ethical deeds. While a teleological ethic is concerned with the consequences of the action, ethical systems concerned with duty or “ends” are called deontological. One duty-oriented system that has been proposed is simply the obligation to obey God. Kant was familiar with this obligation through his Lutheran upbringing. Luther (quoted by Schneewind, 2002) said:

God is he for whose will no cause or ground may be laid down as a rule or standard; for nothing is on a level with it or above it... what God wills is not right because he ought or was bound so to will; on the contrary, what takes place must be right, because he so wills.
(p. 86)

Kant sought to defend human dignity by guarding free will from such a tyrannical God. Kant appropriated the concept of *autonomy* from its use in politics where it described independent and sovereign states that were appropriately a law to themselves, and applied it to the human will and morality. “Autonomy of the will is the property of the will through which it is a law to itself” (Kant, 1785, p. 58). Lewis (1952) comments about autonomy when he says,

Does it not make a great difference whether I am, so to speak, the landlord of my own mind and body, or only a tenant, responsible to the real landlord? If somebody else made me, for his own purposes, then I shall have a lot of duties which I should not have if I simply belonged to myself. (p. 74)

Van Til uses the phrase *summum bonum*, or the highest good, to express the end or purpose of all human actions. Using Lewis’s ship analogy the general purpose of human life as a whole is the direction in which the fleet ought to be sailing. For Van Til, the direction can be described as “Man.... Seek[ing] God’s glory in every act that he does” (Van Til, 1977, p. 41). The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks the question: What is the chief end of man? The answer is given: Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. (Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 1)

Lewis’s concept has a sense of the human race collectively rather than individually, but that need not conflict with Van Til’s end or purpose of man. Van Til says that God’s glory is man’s highest good. He treated the *summum bonum* for the individual, and shows how this leads to self-realization, righteousness and freedom. When Van Til considers the *summum bonum* for society, we find that it leads to altruism, prosperity, happiness, utility, and good will. (Van Til, 1977)

Summary

Christian theistic ethics starts with the nature of man with specific attention to his will as a moral agent. Through Christ's work God's image is restored and man is once again made capable of exercising his will in a moral and righteous manner. The Reformation's maxim *sola fide* (faith alone) is appropriately applied to the ethics of redeemed man. His moral character, the motivation of his will, the tidying up and harmonizing of things inside the man is accomplished by faith in Christ alone, through God's grace and not by human effort.

Christian theistic ethics looks to God's will revealed in His Word as the standard and criterion for ethical behavior. God's word tells us how to play fairly and live harmoniously with others. Once again, the Reformers offer a maxim that points to the standard and criterion of ethical behavior. *Sola scriptura*, (scripture alone) claimed the reformers, was the only rule of faith and practice on which the believer could rely.

Finally, Christian theistic ethics follows the Reformation in establishing the end or purpose of man's actions. This is the general purpose of human life as a whole, what man was made for, both individually and collectively. *Soli Deo Gloria!* The summum bonum, the highest good of man's actions is to glorify God alone.

Appendix A

Comparison of the Pojman, Lewis, and Van Til Ethical Frameworks with Reformation Principles

Pojman's Action	Lewis's Christian Behavior	Van Til's Human Action	Reformation Maxims
Character of the moral agent	Tidying up or harmonizing things inside each individual	Nature of man; Motive in the sense of that which is inside a person that impels one to do a deed.	Sola Fide; By faith alone is man made righteous
Consequences of the action	Fair play and harmony between individuals	Standard, criteria, or quality of man's deeds	Sola Scriptura; Scripture alone is the standard of faith and practice
Motive or the intention of the person; This has more of the sense of the "End" of actions	The general purpose of human life as a whole; What man was made for	Purpose or End; The end toward which or for which something is done	Soli Deo Gloria; To God alone be the glory

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