

**The Question of Morality in the
Context of Faith and Reason:
Conceptualizing a Missing Essence**

by

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Abstract

This project explores the proposition that at present humanity is faced with a crisis of moral consciousness due to the weakening of faith in theocentric world views. Secular reason has failed to replace religion as a primary source of moral authority. The failures of faith, reason, and codified human rights to provide universal moral authority and guidance create a unique historical transitional moment and opportunity for a revision of secular reason as a source of a universalising moral guidance. A set of fundamental moral principles for individual responsibility has been developed, placing the locus of moral deliberation and responsible action for moral agency within individuals. The project examines several moral exemplars that both illustrate and test the moral principles for their viability and efficacy. Future prospects for the model are discussed.

Keywords: ethics and morality; moral principles; faith; reason; moral agency; individual moral responsibility; moral exemplars

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Prologue

I have inherited and lived with the legacy of a history with humanly caused suffering in the form of the evils of the abuses of people, other species, and the environment. Knowledge of wars, poverty, poor human relations, self-destructiveness, and conflict and violence justified by any motives pervaded our awareness. In my lifetime our consciousness was greatly dominated by the atrocities, ethnicides and genocides of World War II, and the later war in Vietnam of the 1960's and 1970's era. During this period, too, we knew the Cold War and the terrible threat of annihilation from nuclear weapons. This remains a threat in current times - perhaps more acutely so. From an early age after being assigned a topic of War in elementary school for a report, I chose to interview people who had seen war, and to focus on humour in the war. Through having people share their personal stories of humour amid devastation, it was clear from their individual accounts, their pain, and their confidences that war was inglorious and unlike how the media presented it. Since then, I have had an interest in peace, and in how morality is essential to peace as intrinsic to it, and to this day compels my interest in it.

Despite the many people who live morally and well, each new day global news media report an abundance of every kind of moral failing, human misery, and threats to humanity. Humanity has a natural urge to survive and to thrive, yet in contrast, people engage in behaviours that frustrate living contentedly and peaceably, and attaining the highest thrusts of life. It is incomprehensible that with thousands of years of advances in knowledge, technological thought and achievement, and scholarship, that little change

seems to have occurred away from the sources of moral authority of theocentricism and reason that have afforded only limited success in the formation and maintenance of civil societies, and more peaceful and fruitful lives. Several questions arise: Can we assume there are no solutions to these sufferings? Can we conceive of an understanding of morality and ways of living that aid in attaining another kind of existence that is more peaceful and hence more desirable? These are difficult questions, and the subject of morality and ethics is at once complex, deep, broad, and challenging.

Throughout life I have also been dissatisfied with much of the status quo of “accepted” beliefs and practices. For example, the notion that there are different races of people is one that must be denied among many notions that are wrong and may harm people. Denying this notion for the most part met with either outright dogmatic rejection, or strong opposition to the views that it was and is simply wrong. Reasoned or logical arguments typically failed to sway people, and their often impassioned arguments seemed never to have any substance. But what was wrong?

It is the theme of the relation between reason and passion that is the focus of the GLS program. In coming to GLS and engaging the Great Texts of humanity, I was impressed with the fact that they serve as diagnoses of the human condition. They provide a "trace path" of human consciousness, and the slow and soft evolution of mind toward betterment. Through a sort-of peeling away the layers of a palimpsest we attempt to recognize and understand the very essence of human good, and to attempt to understand why it is so long in being revealed in ways that are widely known to people. The study of the Great Texts provided a breadth and depth of historical knowledge that was necessary to provide a context in which to attempt to articulate my long-held

assumptions and notions. The GLS program afforded an “overview” of the human condition from which to attempt to articulate intangibles of human nature and existence as expressed in the texts. Each of the courses permitted me to advance my knowledge, and provided connections and a continuity of related pre-existing notions, recurring themes and adaptations, and new ideas permitting the opportunity to attempt this work.

This project comprises three chapters, each of which examines and develops an aspect of morality, and proposes alternative conceptions beyond the postsecular age: Chapter 1: *Morality in a Post-secular Age* contextualizes this project in postmodernist and post-secular discourse and discusses failures of moral codes. It begins with a brief history of our dominant moral codes, and responds to the view that morality from theocentric sources has declined and secular reason failed to replace it. Notions of civil and human rights are examined as transitional forms, and as what were intended as reactions to, and as alternatives to authoritative and totalitarian sources of morality in 20th Century moral discourses. One cause of the failure of secular reason is tentatively identified and a solution is proposed.

Chapter 2: *Morality as Universal Fundamental Principles* proposes a conception of moral principles that is intended to serve as foundational principles of morality that informs a universal morality that is internally consistent, and anticipates the deficits of existing moral systems by placing the locus of moral thought within individuals. The proposed set of moral principles draws upon and draws together the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Frans de Waal, and Albert Einstein in order to construct a useful moral concept. A universalising secular morality is advanced by this conception that emphasizes the necessity for people to become proactive moral agents, and impels

responsibility for moral deliberation and ethical action in a self-reflective way that does not rely on external authority. A set of guidelines is proposed that is intended to inform and enable people to become self-responsible in conjunction with the proposed moral principles and to inculcate an internal locus of moral authority, and to provide concrete examples of how responsibility may be understood in the context of a universal morality.

Chapter 3: *Moral Exemplars* is an examination of a sample of individuals for the presence or absence of the proposed moral principles combined with the notion of personal responsibility to test whether the proposed conception is viable. Available empirical evidence in the form of biographical or autobiographical writings is examined in order to assess whether positive moral exemplars possess and have exercised the principles and responsibility suggested. Negative exemplars are examined to determine whether the proposed conceptions were functional for those exemplars, or absent. Criteria for the success or lack thereof for each category is articulated and discussed. *Discussion of Viability* examines the results of the comparisons and contrasts between exemplars, and investigates whether the proposed model is viable. The chapter closes with reflections of issues raised in the work, and conclusions about some of the future challenges to, and prospects for the proposed conception of secular morality.

Epilogue: *Transitions* provides a discussion of ways and means to advocate the proposed conception(s) of morality and integrated personal responsibility. I explore methods of training, schooling, education, and public exposure at local levels, and at global universalising scales through World Wide Web publication. *Future Research and Interests* are discussed and will refer to the ongoing project of investigating the human condition and possible directions.

Chapter 1: Morality in a Post-secular Age

Chapter Summary: This chapter responds to and affirms the premises of the argument that something is missing for secular reason and by extension, both from and for theocentric morality. It examines notions of rights for their premises and efficacy, and suggests a conception of moral principles that universalises to all people independent of theocentric moral authority. A conception of human responsibilities that supports the moral principles and works in conjunction with them is proposed.

Morality in a Post-secular Age

If we assume a higher level of species intelligence, it is difficult to understand or explain the longevity of human conduct that is deemed problematic or immoral from the evidence that we have not yet understood or solved the difficulties that our conceptions of morality are intended to address. Prevailing moral codes are arguably problematic in the context of failing to fulfil their stated aims. For example, generally there are the arbitrary and relativistic moral prescriptions regulating human behaviour conferred by varying theocentric belief systems (e.g., Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam.)

There are perversions of religious moral codes through which we see acts of violence or killing arbitrarily committed in the name of God or on the beliefs in divine command theory variously manifest as sectarian conflicts within religious groups, or between followers of different faiths. Here a contradiction is either that the “divine” texts

are not consistent, cannot necessarily be understood (relating to content, language or literacy constraints), cannot be followed, are not divine, or are simply not followed; hence bringing their moral integrity, veridicality and absolute authority into question.

There is the necessity of secular “legal morality” in most nations prescribed as criminal laws to protect people from the transgressions of others, and to restrain or punish transgressors. We have the persistence of a vast range of immoral, e.g., cruel, destructive, violent behaviours, and the abandonment of moral conduct despite having moral codes to adhere to and follow. In the case of theocentric morality or secular legal morality both rely on external sources of control and enforcement. As such they are authority based and authoritarian, typified as “top-down” models that both instruct and compel people to belief, compliance, and action.

Problems can arise when people may not either know or understand all the codes, or they have literalist interpretations of religious texts that may result in conflicting sectarian religious codes, or religious and secular codes coming into conflict. Or, people may be inhibited in acting morally if the codes conflict with their own ideas or intuitions and they feel that their “right” moral notions contradict the authoritarian models whether they actually are right (just) or not. Moreover, if people are compelled to be reliant for moral instruction or knowledge from external loci, and they do not have texts or people to refer to when they are alone or are in need of moral knowledge, (or no imperatives exist) they may have no means by which to discern for themselves what is moral or what ethical actions to take. This suggests a need for a conception of an internally consistent internal universal morality that people can query self-referentially to make decisions autonomously, and to act on their own responsibility.

In examining contemporary philosophical discourses and with supporting evidence from research included in this work, and with the decline of theocentrism which is argued to have failed as a source of moral authority, along with the failure of secular reason and notions of human rights to provide adequate moral models or codes, I have come to the conclusion that humanity is at a transitional moment and epoch in history. When existing normative models of moralities that purport to inform and guide people on how to live well and flourish in ways that affirm life and reduce human suffering fail to fulfil their intended aims - something must change, or something new must emerge in human consciousness if humanity is to progress and improve its moral standing. I take as evidence that people recognize, since moral codes and notions of rights exist, that there is a better way to exist. Otherwise, we would assume our state is normal in the sense of it being usual, and therefore inevitable; this is unacceptable defeatism.

The question arises, however: Can we respond to the needs of humanity in a changing moral “landscape” in the 21st Century? I will argue that we can respond in positive ways that both recognize and use our history, and understand how we can progress toward a more humane consciousness. Our intellectual and psychological heritage is one of progression both away from conceptions of existence that legitimized the abrogation and abnegation of the dignity and decency of people and the destruction of life, toward an emerging consciousness of the intrinsic value of representing more peaceful and humane human values that slowly come to fruition. Examples of this are the realization of the full fundamental value of women, the awareness and inclusion of minorities, the reduction of notions of “race” and inequality, and the advancements of science and philosophy that enhance life in medicine and other areas of human endeavour to name a few.

In this project I refer to the works of contemporary philosopher Jürgen Habermas et al., to situate my ideas in a contemporary discourse that relates to morality. I respond to the concerns expressed that with the weakening of theocentric morality and the failure of secular reason to replace theocentric worldviews, that there is a missing essence for secular reason, and for humanity. I acknowledge and agree with Habermas' position that something is missing for reason. Beyond this Habermas' discourse is examined to facilitate a divergent position on his reasons for the failure of secular reason, and to essay an alternative notion of why reason failed. From that, I attempt to build a case for a workable alternative of a conception of a universalising morality conjoined to reason as a new paradigm of morality grounded in secular reason.

Failure of Morality (A Brief Synopsis)

Let us start with antiquity. In antiquity as populations increased and began forming cultures and civilizations, they needed to know the parameters of acceptable behaviour. They also importantly needed a consensus as to what was unacceptable behaviour, and how the individual can be prevented or restricted from wrongdoing. In the era approximately 1000 – 500 BCE the Bible Genesis story emerged (The Old Testament Hebrew Bible: First book of Moses, Genesis 1)¹ as a foundational text of the Abrahamic religions.² The Genesis story relates a notion of a monotheistic God that creates the universe and humanity. In this narrative morality is conferred and explicated

¹ The Bible: *Authorized King James Version*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Genesis. 3.1

² The Abrahamic religions are those relating to Abraham, emerging from proto-Judaic traditions and which include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as three major world religions. Breasted, James Henry. *Ancient Time or a History of the Early World, Part 1*. (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing. 2003) 141.

through Mosaic Law in the Bible from God, in which imperatives of right actions and conceptions and descriptions of sin form moral laws as determinants of wrong thought and action.³

A single God was considered to be the absolute moral authority governing human morality, and hence is authoritative and absolute in nature. This theocentric construct has persisted as the traditional and predominant source of morality until the early 20th Century. In contemporary times, however, this traditional source of morality and institutional and social means of maintaining moral conduct is seen as weakening. As evidence it is noted that more laws,⁴ more codes, more notions of rights, more surveillance, more enforcement and more punishments by any method are failing to moderate human conduct in ways that are implicit in their ethical and moral intentions of maintaining or engendering morality and ethical action. Failures are evidenced as high rates of crime⁵ per capita in populations,⁶ extensive social problems with greater complexity,⁷ and high rates of domestic and international violence as conflicts and wars.⁸ The 2016 Global Peace Index (GPI)⁹ shows the world became less peaceful in the last year, reinforcing the underlying trend of the historic decline in world peace.

³ The first use of the word 'sin' as referent to morality is in Genesis. The Bible, *Ibid.* Gen. 4:6.

⁴ Includes religious and secular laws, as well as considers the necessity of both to adapt to scientific and technological change which results in challenges to cultural adaptation and assimilation of novel contingencies.

⁵ U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Crime in the United States 2012*. <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/tables/table-1>

⁶ Government of Canada. Statistics Canada. *Crime and Justice*. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/dai-quo/ssi/homepage/rel-com/theme2693-eng.htm>

⁷ Ciment, James. ed. Table of contents for *Social issues in America: An encyclopedia*. <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0516/2005018778.html>

⁸ United Nations. United Nations Global Issues. 2016. <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/>

⁹ Of 162 countries indexed, only 10 are not involved in conflict. Institute for Economics and Peace. *Global Peace Index*. 2016. <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#/page/our-gpi-findings>

Depending on which research and statistics are employed, whether it is the case that problems with moral dimensions are not on the rise, but are under-reported or unreported, remain stable, or are in nominal decline, the fact remains that we have evidence of a vast amount of humanly caused misery and suffering that our moral codes have not succeeded in preventing, mitigating, or resolving. These failures are seen in the inability of the institutions of church or state (faith or reason) to cope with problems, let alone control, cure, or stop them. Thus, morality that is extrinsic and is authoritarian in nature and imposed from an external locus is recognized to have failed substantively.

Fast forward, and in recognition of the moral problems, we come into the late 20th Century philosophical and ethical discourses that seek to investigate moral concerns. Postmodernist theory is a diffuse movement that is claimed to generally argue for scepticism and distrust toward grand narratives, ideologies, enlightenment rationality, and absolute truth.¹⁰ Theocentric worldviews and theocentric morality are argued to have lost their impetus during the postmodern era, showing a decline in numbers of people declaring religious beliefs or affiliations in western populations.¹¹ Charles Taylor, in his work *A Secular Age* queries the decline in theocentrism and affirms the change stating: "One way to put the question that I want to answer here is this: why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?"¹² The decline in

¹⁰ Aylesworth, Gary, "Postmodernism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta ed. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/postmodernism/>

¹¹ Pew Research Center. "*US Public Becoming Less Religious*" Global Attitudes and Trends. 2015. Washington DC. Published 2015/11/03. <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/>

¹² Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2007) 27.

theocentric/metaphysical beliefs and their force of moral authority derived from God may be argued in part to be attributable to the many contradictions evident in the Bible. For one example, it is problematic to be instructed that God states “Thou Shalt not Kill” and then to find instances in the Bible¹³ where God explicitly instructs people to kill.¹⁴ Further, the catastrophic events of the early 20th Century of World War I and II, and the economic depression of the era 1929-1939 appears to have resulted in the questioning and diminution of faith and adherence to theocentric worldviews when morality failed the greater populations during those times. These disruptions may arguably have given rise to postmodernism as a reaction to, or as an expression of the changes in awareness.

In the postmodernist era, with the tendency of postmodernist theorists to regard grand narratives with scepticism through the process of interrogating theocentric moral codes we see the inconsistencies embedded in the (moral) imperatives. This likely led to the weakening of their authority owing to their being recognized as unstable, unreliable, and corruptible. That is, conflicting moral imperatives cannot lead to definitive objective moral guidance which is what the authoritative code(s) intended. With these types of contradictions exposed, and with an evolving desire for moral guidance that is internally consistent and reliable, secular humanists and postmodernist theorists argued that secular reason would replace theocentric morality as a more integrally reasoned humanism. However, it is widely acknowledged that secular reason did not replace theocentric views, leading to a querying of reason to discover why reason failed.

¹³ The Bible, Ibid. 1 Samuel 15:3. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

¹⁴ It is beyond the scope of this work, however, most; if not all, religious texts show evidence of such irreconcilable contradictions.

Jürgen Habermas, in *An Awareness of What Is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* argues that something is missing for humanity. For Habermas the question is specifically to ask what is missing for secular reason in that it was assumed to replace religions as a source of morality, but he acknowledges this has failed to occur. He argues that “what is missing” for secular reason is the symbols and images that religion has and which serve as a basis of attachment, or of solidarity. Habermas states:

Practical reason provides justifications for the universalistic and egalitarian concept of morality and law which shaped the freedom of the individual and interpersonal relations in a normatively plausible way. However, the decision to engage in action based on solidarity when faced with threats which can be averted only by collective efforts calls for more than insights into good reasons. Kant wanted to make good this weakness of rational morality through the assurances of his philosophy of religion. However, this same strict rational morality explains why enlightened reason unavoidably loses its grip on the images, preserved by religion, of the moral whole - of the kingdom of God on earth - as collectively binding ideals. At the same time practical reason fails to fulfill its own vocation when it no longer has sufficient strength to awaken, and to keep awake, in the minds of secular subjects, an awareness of the violations of solidarity throughout the world, an awareness of what is missing, of what cries out to heaven.¹⁵

Habermas’ argument that something is missing is compelling; however, the notion that symbols and images preserved by religion of the moral whole are what will suffice for a collectively binding ideal and moral bearing does not address the concerns about, and the need to have a universalising secular basis for morality that can bind people together

¹⁵ Habermas, Jürgen, et al. *An Awareness of What Is Missing. Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*. trans. Cronin, Ciaran. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.)18-19.

in their common humanity. Variants of religions share similar characteristics (of beliefs, obeisance to a preternatural or metaphysical being, rituals, etc.), but they do not share the same images, symbols, or other ideals or practices that often see people of different religions come into conflict when they are in proximity to each other or, with secular state institutions. Habermas later recognizes this and other problems in the post-secular era:

This touches on conflicts which are currently being triggered around the world by the unexpected spiritual renewal and by the unsettling political role of evangelical and fundamentalist religious communities. Apart from Hindu Nationalism, Islam and Christianity are the main sources of this disturbance. From the standpoint of their geographical expansion, the winners are not the nationally organized religious communities, such as the Protestant Churches in Germany and Britain, but the Catholic world Church and, above all, the Evangelicals and the Muslims with their decentralized networks and globally operating movements. . . . The resurgence is going hand-in-hand with an increase of the conflicts between different religious groups and denominations. Even though many of these conflicts have different origins, they become inflamed when they are codified in religions terms.¹⁶

Here Habermas cites the unexpected renewal of religions, which raises the question as to why this might occur, which he does not discuss.¹⁷ One possible explanation is to speculate that with theocentrism on the wane and with secular reason failing to replace it, that what has occurred (but there is no empirical evidence to support) is that when populations are faced with a loss of beliefs that provide homeostasis, they need

¹⁶ Habermas, *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷ There are questions as to what is meant by “spiritual” and what is meant by “religious” with there being significant differences in understandings and practices. Bender, Courtney. “Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement.” *Social Science Research Council*. Jan 24, 2007. <http://religion.ssrc.org/reforum/Bender.pdf>

something to replace them. In this case, secular reason was expected to be what people could transition to but it was insubstantial – missing something. Stasis can become threatened when there is a significant loss of the familiar, and there is nothing to replace it giving rise to strong reactions evidenced as fundamentalism and evangelism. If there is fear and uncertainty, or fear of uncertainty, and people are threatened or cannot formulate or transition to new directions that can provide stasis, they are unlikely abandon the known or to risk the unknown.

Therefore, it may be that with the failure of secular reason the instability caused by a vacuum of stasis has given rise to the resurgence of religiosity as a return to the known and familiar. Moreover, it may be that religious resurgence, if it exists, is in part owing to the upheavals caused by conflicts that see people displaced from their homelands and roots. This is symptomatic of the failures of both theocentric morality and secular morality that conflicts persist to create these conditions. Another question is about whether there is actually a resurgence of religion as Habermas claims (he does not cite sources) or whether what is taken for resurgence is partially explained by population growth and the rise of religion(s) by volume rather than only as revivalism.¹⁸

A correlative and important concern is that with increasing populations and migration owing to global conflicts and economic factors combined with the politicization of religion(s) - that nations and governments are undergoing radical transformations as competing interests intensify, and conflicts increase as varying groups intersect and attempt to assert dominance. Moreover, various religions hold differing moral

¹⁸ Pew Research Center. "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050" *Demographic Study*. 2015. Washington DC. Published 2015/04/03. <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>

conceptions, hence challenging the capacities of people of varying religions to find common moral standings and reduce conflicts. The problem of moral relativism is stated “that there are deep and widespread moral disagreements and a metaethical thesis that the truth or justification of moral judgments is not absolute, but relative to some group of persons.”¹⁹ What this means is that moral conceptions are not anchored in a single unifying conception that universalises to all people in an increasingly globalized world.

In view of the fact that there are no images or symbols common to religions, images and symbols therefore cannot provide a unifying ideal that can motivate collective action that would lend support to secular reason as Habermas claims. This means Habermas’ notion of conjoining the images and symbols of religion(s) as “the kingdom of God”²⁰ to secular reason is arguably a searching attempt to enhance reason as a unifying and universalising basis for morality that can mobilize to meet threats in the post post-secular era.²¹ This does not address the concern that the transition to secular reason seeks to eliminate threats from any quarter entirely. This is noted since, as Habermas points out, the prescient threats often come from or through religions in the first instance. These manifold factors contribute to understanding the failures of both theocentrism, and for the artefacts of religion to complete and support secular reason.

With the failure of religions to retain their grip as a source of moral authority²² in response to historical eventualities and contemporary concerns, and without secular

¹⁹ Gowans, Chris, "Moral Relativism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta ed. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/moral-relativism>

²⁰ Habermas, *Ibid.* 19.

²¹ Post postsecular is a term used that refers to the transition from the postsecular age in which secular reason did not take hold and there was a resurgence of religions, and as a term to refer the next age which may be called something different but is not at this time.

²² Resurgence or population growth does not equate to retained authority or moral ascendancy.

reason having been established as an independent, self-referential, internally consistent, coherent, and non-authoritarian source of morality that eliminates threats while concomitantly supporting life – there is a missing essence to be discovered.

Human Rights – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In the mid-20th Century another transition away from traditional authoritative moral codes came in the form of the creation of notions of civil and human rights. Codified human rights are arguably our best moral codes insofar as that they tend to be proactive in affirming and supporting fundamentals of human existence (survival) and positive intrinsic human value. Human rights are typified and termed as “natural rights,” rights that we are argued to possess merely by the fact of being alive. As a pre-eminent manifesto of human rights, *The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR)²³ is a secularized expression of the urge of humanity to seek alternative ways to view itself, and to create an alternate conception of morality through recognizing and asserting the fundamental natural value and dignity of all people exquisitely.²⁴

The failure of both theocentric and secular morality was evidenced as World Wars I and II in which the extreme violence of totalitarianism occurred. The UDHR emerged as a reaction to the degradation of humanity and the evidence of the failure of theocentric morality to prevail or to intervene that led to the creation of a supranational governing body that was initially called the League of Nations, which is now called the

²³ United Nations. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

²⁴ United Nations. *What are Human Rights?* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>

United Nations (U.N.).²⁵ The UDHR as an instrument of the United Nations is arguably the best moral code for its conceptual universalising notions in asserting, “. . . the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”²⁶

As an example of a 20th Century transitional and transformational moral ideal, Jay Winter, in his work *Human Rights and European Remembrance* notes that Eastern and Western European societies attempted to embrace emerging human rights treaties as a reaction to WWII where he states: “To some, the Cross represented that transformation; to others, the Universal Declaration represented a secular story of liberation, one moving away from both authoritarian rule and war.”²⁷ In contemporary times with the increase of internecine and international wars and religious terrorism, the world has seen both a disarray of civilized societies, and an increase in authoritarian rule in the form of the invasions of privacy and the loss of freedoms and rights of people to governments claiming to be compelled to do so in order to prevent terrorism. While rights were argued and expected to improve the human condition, without the active participation of people to respect, protect, or enhance the rights they are claimed to have, the impetus to establish and further a greater conception of morality is brought into question.

Some interlocutors argue that notions of rights have failed entirely. In their work “Human Rights as a Holistic Concept,” A. Belden Fields and Wolf-Dieter Narr argue that:

²⁵ United Nations. *History of the United Nations*. <https://www.un.org/en/aboutun/history/>

²⁶ United Nations, UDHR. Ibid.

²⁷ Winter, Jay. “Human Rights and European Remembrance.” In *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*. Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, Julie Fedor, eds. Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History. (US: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013) 57.

[t]here is a sense that the world is progressing in a linear direction toward the universal respect for human rights, or indeed that the crucial normative issue finally has been determined. The problem is that all of the momentum toward human rights remains at the level of ideology. While the rhetoric is not without importance, it is a double-edged sword; while spiritually uplifting, it also deludes us into accepting a very rosy picture of a New World Order - a world order of a billion points of light; a kinder, gentler world order.²⁸

This statement points to the fact that notions of rights, and the UDHR in particular, are not without detractors and cannot be accepted uncritically, or seen to be an operative force in the creation of new normative and functional models of morality. As a form of either idealism or intended pragmatism, the UDHR fails owing to the inversion of its purpose: It does not establish rights in a positive sense; rather, it seeks to protect people from the intrusions of authoritarianism and totalitarianism in a reactive sense. The UDHR has little effect on those who would impose their agendas on other people in order to exercise control over, or inflict harm on them, as those types of people tend not to care about any presumed rights of others. Therefore, the rights prescribed in the UDHR remain purely ideological unless they are actively protected and backed by force of law, and/or by might (violence). Rights can, and only need to exist in apposition to wrongs; with no wrongs, there would be no need to assert rights.

This is shown in the text of the UDHR where it states “Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against

²⁸ Fields, A. Belden, and Narr, Wolf-Dieter. “Human Rights as a Holistic Concept.” *Human Rights Quarterly* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Feb., 1992), (pp. 1-20) 1992. (Johns Hopkins University Press) 1.

tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.”²⁹ If notions of freedoms and rights were fundamental and normatively moral, then no need of defence or prosecution would be necessary, and no force or penalty applied for purposes of enforcement. Fields and Narr emphasize this point when they ask: “This universal profession of love for human rights begs some crucial issues. For example, what do we mean by human rights?”³⁰ If an entitlement to a right cannot be defended, or is not defended, the notion of a right is moot, making it, as Fields and Narr indicate - idealism. In this view there are no such things as rights. Moreover, where the UDHR proclaims the right to religions, there is no mechanism except by force of secular law or violence to resolve conflicts that arise out of competing religious claims, hence creating further conflicts. If people assert rights that abrogate the rights of others, how can conflicts be resolved other than by negating the rights of one or both parties? From the standpoint of establishing a normative morality, the notion of rights poses challenges to their own principles in that they are a form of idealism, and in some cases may require use of authoritarian application and action - making them similar to authoritarian theocentric morality.

However, this does not negate notions of rights entirely. Rights exist as a soft evolution and historical transition in the way humans see themselves: no longer as subjects or instruments of authorities with group identities, (e.g., national or religious) but as individuals with yearnings and a need to survive and to thrive. As precursors to and formative of transitions to more humane conceptions of human existence - codifications of civil and human rights may be seen as constitutive and representative expressions of

²⁹ United Nations, UDHR. Ibid.

³⁰ Fields and Narr, Ibid., 1.

an awakening of human value(s). Here, what other moral codes hold in their intentions as implicit, notions of rights have made explicit. However, this does not solve the problems of human conduct and conflict that conceptions of rights and morality are intended to address. Thus, in conceptions of rights we see another example, along with that of secular reason, of what is arguably a stalled transitional moment.

Acknowledging the failure of secular reason, Habermas inquires: “Could an altered perspective on the genealogy of reason rescue postmetaphysical thinking from this dilemma?”³¹ The perspective recognizes, as do notions of rights, the necessary relation of reason to the absolute value and worth of all humanity as recognized in the UDHR, and to make that the crucial and only referent of reason and morality. This perspective, I will argue, is in part what comprises the “missing essence” of secular reason, and this deficit, in my view, has permitted the corruption and instrumentalization of reason leading to its failure as a source of moral guidance. Here, we provide reason with a referent that protects against corruption, and may in part create a substantive and proactive normative basis for secular reason to form on and to be operative in pluralistic societies. However, merely conjoining all that the UDHR stipulates as comprising a conception of human dignity and value as a referent is insufficient to complete a comprehensive constellation that makes it understandable, and provides ways to effect it. Hence, in the next chapter, I will propose a set of moral principles linked to personal responsibility that encourages individuals to internalize this essence of reason as inextricably bound to human value, and engenders becoming self-reflective, self-referential, self-aware, and therefore independent and interdependent moral agents.

³¹ Habermas, *Ibid.*, 19.

Chapter 2: Morality as Universal Fundamental Principles

Chapter Summary: This chapter proposes a basic set of moral principles that seek to be self-referential for people, and operative independent of external moral authority. A cornerstone of principles combined with personal responsibility that universalises to all people is argued to provide a stable and internally consistent conception of morality.

Morality as Universal Fundamental Principles

I propose that the missing essence of morality in secular reason, in conjunction with the UDHR, be a set of principles that are internally consistent, which, if they are understood and adhered to, provide a basis for a positive conception of morality that can function as a baseline of morality. The principles presented are expressed through the thoughts and writings of others. However, they are also the product of a “reverse thinking” process, by which it is meant not that moral principles were discovered entirely through a creative investigation, but instead that they were also deduced and realized through a process of questioning and rejecting flawed notions of morality. Additionally, they are derived from life experiences by being present when people acted in moral ways that appealed to a personal and often shared sense of true moral justice, which were recognized as being “true” on a level that is below the limen of consciousness; not cognized, but felt, recognized, and understood as being just. They were also in part

perceived and recognized through events and instances of injustice in the same way.

No conception of morality can anticipate or codify all aspects of human behaviour; hence a basic set of principles is proposed that can extrapolate to more sophisticated conceptions of moral understandings. The principles are intended to encourage and enable people to reflect and engage in dialectical thought to synthesize the best moral attitudes and solutions as individual moral agents. Here, the term “principle” is used in the sense of being a fundamental truth as a basis of reasoning or action. People are self-impelled to take responsibility for all aspects of morality and ethical actions: their deliberations, responses, actions, and the consequences. A chief intention is to link moral reasoning to the tenets of the UDHR, making the intrinsic value of humanity and all life the salient concern of the moral conception and for reason.

The proposed model defines morality as an active and pragmatic process, as distinct from systematized or theoretical imperatives, or of external authority that tends to distance moral agents from an innate sense of moral compass.³² It is intended to inform and foster a morality that becomes internalised, creating a self-other homeostasis that is benign, mutually beneficial, and life-affirming. Further, it is intended to provide the basis for the transition from dependence on existing moral codes to allowing moral independence and autonomy that consensually universalises to all people. Importantly, it seeks to function regardless of various categories of differences amongst and across groups, and may support creating a more peaceful and fruitful existence for humanity.

³² *Moral Compass*. A natural feeling that makes people know what is right and wrong and how they should behave. Cambridge Dictionaries online. Cambridge University Press. 2013. <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/moral-compass>

In this conception, we are not compelled to have or to ascribe to any “collectively binding ideal”³³ of images or symbols. Instead, we are encouraged to behave individually as self-guided moral agents through combined awareness of the moral principles in conjunction with the responsibility to do so, which binds people to their own humanity, and by extension to all humanity in the sense of our humaneness. People thus may all share a baseline of moral principles that universalise on the strength of their intrinsic merits as universally good for all, and which will hold appeal based on their survival value and that they will permit people to flourish if they observe them willingly. That is, people will recognize the inherent value for their own life, which universalises to others and is mutually beneficial, and they will be attracted to this conception on its own merits. This secondarily creates an interdependence of people who can, eventually, learn to trust and rely on each other to act morally through practice and experience.

The first, and more basic and general of a proposed three-part conception is adapted from Friedrich Nietzsche’s work *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche has argued that humanity creates truths that are “creative fictions” that aid people in getting through struggles in living that place the “truths” beyond good and evil (untruth as a condition of life).³⁴ Here Nietzsche appears to be suggesting that untruths are legitimized by the challenges of life, and are beyond moral considerations if they are “life-furthering, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps species-rearing.”³⁵ Whether Nietzsche is sanctioning this view, or merely acknowledging it, is questionable. In any case this view

³³ Habermas, *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1966) Ch.1, par. 4, 11. There are varying interpretations of Nietzsche’s philosophy. In this context I intend it to suggest a capacity for people to question and be disabused of false notions that limit or prohibit healthy and life supporting conceptions of life as desired and desirable alternatives, and not to live lies.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

cannot be accepted, for at best it perpetuates human suffering (in the forms that cause the necessity of untruths), and at worst it legitimizes the immoral causes of untruths. However, this notion of untruth is useful to provide a comparison and a contrast by which to provide clarity. In this context, I intend to clarify Nietzsche's conception to show that no fictions can comprise a pro-active and "true" life supporting conception of morality that rejects all conceptions that compromise human flourishing.

People therefore must be prepared to question, and then to self-consciously relinquish their reactive and negative value-based beliefs - their untruths - to support an incorruptible conception of morality that refers to the tenets of our fundamental humanity as denoted in the UDHR, and to anchor to it. The beliefs relinquished must be replaced by ideas and beliefs that meet the test of being good (moral), defined as those that are in this explicit sense life-supporting, "life-furthering, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps species-rearing"³⁶ in a non-reactive positive way that takes an absolutist position for advocating and preserving the life and well-being of all people. I intend this pro-life conception to include other species, and the environment that all living things depend on for their existence as a comprehensive life-supporting holism - to the greatest extent possible. Preservation also implies passive "live-and-let-live" non-interference.

This conception as a baseline of morality proposes a model of reasoned deliberation, and implicit in his formulation is a no-harm or least-harm model. Implicit also in the deliberative process that refers to Nietzsche's cornerstone of morality is the intersection with the responsibility necessary to being willing and committed to being

³⁶ Ibid.

morally aware, responsible, accountable, and to be independent moral agents. I will argue that this concept seeks to encourage autonomy and to enable people to make moral decisions without authoritarian codifications that are restrictive, relativistic, or deprives individuals of the strength of their own moral awareness and capacity for ethical action. As a universalising conception that is life supporting, Nietzsche's ideal conjoins reason, knowledge, values, attitudes, and affect in a universalistic egalitarianism.

Dutch researcher Frans de Waal's³⁷ work comprises the second part of the three-part cornerstone of morality proposed here. The interest in using de Waal's research and findings pivots on that animal studies traditionally assumed a vicious and selfish "survival of the fittest" model of existence that did not admit of moral behaviors in animals, or in humans as animals. De Waal reoriented his assumptions about animals which resulted in a different view (worldview) that yielded substantially different facts about animal behavior and morality that inform the assumptions of this work. Here, I am arguing that people too, as de Waal did with animals, may see themselves in a different context with different sets of assumptions about their moral capacities, and their abilities to live in a greater community of humanity in a more natural moral way.

De Waal argues that morality consists of the essential "Two pillars of morality: Reciprocity-fairness, and Empathy-compassion."³⁸ The four constituents of de Waal's account of morality are complementary to Nietzsche's reasoned cornerstone conception

³⁷ Frans de Waal is a primatologist and ethologist. In anticipating objections to using animal research, it should be noted that de Waal's empirical observational research yields results of positive moral behaviours in animals similar to, or the same as humans. Numerous ethical codes and research on human morality can be resourced that match what de Waal posits.

³⁸ De Waal, Frans. *Moral behavior in animals*. Video on TED (Filmed Nov 2011. Posted Apr 2012) New York: TED Conferences LLC. 2012.
http://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_do_animals_have_morals.html/

insofar as it identifies and relates to, and includes a positive emotional basis for understanding and affirming the value of individuals in relation to others. De Waal recognizes that there are other elements of morality; however, he argues that if these fundamentals are absent, all morality collapses.³⁹ These pillars facilitate the building and maintenance of human relationships as a socializing process by both encouraging identification with others, as well as concomitantly reducing perceptions of “otherness” such as differing beliefs or habits of living.⁴⁰ De Waal further notes:

It is not hard to recognise the two pillars of human morality in the behaviour of other animals. These pillars are elegantly summed up in the golden rule that transcends the world's cultures and religions: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This unites empathy (attention to another's feelings) with reciprocity (if others follow the same rule, you too will be treated well). Human morality as we know it is unthinkable without empathy and reciprocity.⁴¹

Reciprocity and fairness to others are mutually supportive (Golden Rule),⁴² for example being seen as encouraging benevolent affects and altruistic intentions manifest as “right action” attitudes. Reciprocity and fairness are also exquisite expressions of human justice. Empathy means the ability and willingness to identify with others mentally (perspective taking) and emotionally as the capacity to recognize the joys and struggles of life common to all people, and therefore to respect sameness. Compassion is often

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “Habits of living” is coined to encompass socialization, culture, society, spiritual beliefs, nationality, etc. all of which are adaptable or changeable and hence are not defining of a person and cannot subjugate or abrogate their fundamental humanity.

⁴¹ De Waal, Frans. "The animal roots of human morality." *New Scientist* 192, no. 2573 (October 14, 2006) 60-61.

⁴² The Golden Rule is argued to exist in all the world religions. This suggests a universal understanding of morality that is operative at a level of consciousness below religious belief.

manifested as the inclination to help others or to be merciful as pro-social behaviour.

The essence of the conceptions of moral foundations from Nietzsche and de Waal is that in combination they represent and engender positive emotions and trust (mutuality) amongst and across groups of people, which in turn creates an interchange of “self-other” in life supporting ways that both recognize the intrinsic value of individuals, and reduce or avert tensions in social contexts. In the best case, moral awareness may arguably result in altruistic behaviours. Humans exist in mutual relationships; the broader the scope of the relationships people can envisage and accommodate, the greater the potential for human flourishing – to survive and to thrive.

Albert Einstein in “The Laws of Science and the Laws of Ethics” discussed ethical axioms relating to survival and to truth statements. In the present project I am viewing Einstein’s work as the third element of the cornerstone of morality. Here, he attempts to articulate intangibles of human existence that, I argue, finds a consensus with, and supports the life affirming statement derived from Nietzsche, and also affirm de Waal’s pillars of morality insofar as Einstein articulates that at base morality is tied to survival and emotion, and our urge for life. Each of the four elements has a strong emotional component - benevolence and justice - or may garner strong emotional reactions if they are denied or ignored, or assailed. Einstein articulates this as ethical axioms:

For pure logic all axioms are arbitrary, including the axioms of ethics. But they are by no means arbitrary from a psychological and genetic point of view. They are derived from our inborn tendencies to avoid pain and annihilation and from the accumulated emotional reactions of individuals

to the behavior of their neighbors.⁴³

Einstein's observation may be extended from the negative (avoiding pain and annihilation) to include the positive accumulation of emotional reactions that are the consequence of being treated in an unfailingly life supporting, moral way. Here I find support for the argument that it is possible to suggest a non-arbitrary conception of moral principles. However, while Einstein discusses the notion of ethical axioms, he does not articulate a conception of how they may be understood, except obliquely. I have attempted to define an ethical axiom that complements and augments Einstein's notion. It seeks to articulate the premises of an ethical axiom as life/moral principles that explicates and attempts to elucidate what underlies the notions from Nietzsche and de Waal that may universalise to all people as part of the *raison d'être* of this work:

An ethical axiom based on the psychologicistic notion of "projection-identification" is proposed. It is conceived of as follows: If I am human and you are human, and we both have innate drives to survive and to thrive, then in a fundamental sense we are identical, and we therefore must identify with each other by virtue of our common humanity. If we interfere in the physical or psychic existence of another individual with malicious intent, or to bring about pain and suffering intentionally which necessarily incurs a negative effect, we violate the principle of our axiom, and by extension violate ourselves. In this light we can see that by the volitional incurrence of pain and suffering we consequently reject our own life and nature: and by extension may be seen to reject life itself.⁴⁴

⁴³ Einstein, Albert. "The Laws of Science and the Laws of Ethics. (Preface to Phillip, Frank Relativity. A Richer Truth, 1950, Reprinted in Out of My Later Years, 1950)" *Humanist Anthology: From Confucius to Attenborough*. Margaret Knight. ed. (New York: Prometheus Books, 1995) 158-160.

⁴⁴ Marshall, Dan. *Female Genital Mutilation, Religious Rights, and Religious Praxis; Humanity Betrayed: Canadian Law as Humane Intervention*. July 29, 1998. Unpublished.

The conceptions of moral principles offered by Nietzsche and de Waal provide a fundamental baseline of morality that may effectively articulate what is implicit in the Golden Rule. Together, the basics of morality from Nietzsche, de Waal, and Einstein might constitute a “universal morality” that is natural to all people. While it is useful to propose a conception of basic moral principles and a way to understand and think about them, a basic set of insights and guidelines as to how to usefully implement them is also required. Insofar as that a conception of morality that has an internal locus is advanced, it is necessary to suggest a complementary notion of the responsibilities needed to support it. A guide of responsibilities that completes a conception of a missing essence is proposed that I have called the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities.

Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights⁴⁵ (UDHR) is notable since while rights are advocated, there is no inclusion of any concomitant responsibilities to support them. There are only the assertions of rights and authoritative demands that rights are to be observed since the assumption is that rights must be backed by laws⁴⁶ to compel individuals or associations to act morally. In order that people may mature morally, and to become disabused of authority/authoritarian models of morality, it is essential that people take individual responsibility for their moral deliberations and actions in a way that is self-referential and bound to the moral principles argued for, and in order that all people may become self-reflective moral agents. Here, I propose a guide to individual

⁴⁵ United Nations, UDHR. Ibid.

⁴⁶ United Nations. *International Human Rights Law*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (OHCHR)
<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/Pages/InternationalLaw.aspx>

responsibility that is intended to bind to the U.N. UDHR and moral principles as a chief component of a universalising secular morality, and that the three be used conjointly.

The notion of human responsibilities arose very early in my life from observing the human condition and witnessing an abundance of human misery and suffering. In my view, it appeared that two possible conditions prevailed: One condition was that people were not aware of the causes of their suffering, and their faiths (religions) often either ignored the causes, or served to create as many problems as they purported to assuage, which suggested on some level a self-fulfilling and self-justifying iterative constellation. The other condition was noting that people typically avoid moral responsibility in many situations. In particular, there were those who did wrong things and claimed an external locus (God or the Devil or another person) made them do it.

Moreover, it is my observation that it was often the case that people would not take responsibility so that they would not have to “confess” or expose their wrongs and receive punishments or other consequences. This raised important questions for me about the legitimacy and usefulness of punishments except to skew morality. Often, too, it appeared that people simply did not know what constituted a right or wrong action or the impact, meaning, or consequences of their actions in either the short or long term. The notion of responsibilities also arose from observing people who refused to accept the burden of thinking for themselves and stand behind their views and convictions rather than merely report or abide by the mistaken and often damaging views of others.

For example, the notion of race was often used to rationalize racism and was often used as a justification for hatred, marginalization of people, or using violence. What

is missing from this notion is recognition of the humanity of another person. The problems and contradictions in such thinking and practices could be shown when people learned that they might become the object of another's "racist" views, and they did not like the realization of their former position, or how their lack of awareness and knowledge could imperil them, or had limited their sense of their own humanity and humaneness.

From this kind of reflective example, we may conclude that human beings are predisposed to have a basic knowledge and an awareness of the essence of morality, but a fuller articulation and moral cultivation is both needed and wanted. The notion of individual responsibility that is coupled to a useful conception of morality also provides a means and the freedom to transcend the ignorance as lack of knowledge that keeps people helpless and dependent on authoritarian moral codes and institutions, such as those conferred by church or state. Thus, I would argue that a notion of universalising individual responsibilities is warranted. On reading the United Declaration of Human Rights and finding no corresponding manifesto of responsibilities, I thought the solution was to attempt to write one.

In 1999, while working on my conception of a Universal Declaration of Universal Responsibilities I did not find any corresponding manifesto on the United Nations web site related to the UDHR, or other manifestos of human responsibilities written relating to human rights. Currently, while writing this project manuscript another manifesto of rights was brought to my attention, and I located others. In examining these manifestos I find affirmation for my position that a conception of a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities is valid in relation to the UDHR and other notions and manifestos of civil

and human rights in that there is a broader consensus and support for all those who have identified a similar and compelling need. I find this to be encouraging and positive for all humanity in the context of advancing human concerns and moral consciousness, and find a great deal of contiguity among the various versions in the intent to advocate that people must be responsible in order to support conceptions of rights as moral guides.

As of July 2016 there is no official version that is published on the United Nations web site in direct conjunction with the UDHR, or as an extension or addendum to it.⁴⁷ A version similar to what I have authored is found published on the extended United Nations organization infrastructure on The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) web site and is titled: "Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms."⁴⁸

In comparing this U.N. version with what I have formulated, contiguities are seen in that rights are supported by conceptions of related responsibilities. My conception is distinguished in that my intention is to create a document that refers to a personal responsibility that relates most specifically to the conception of secular morality I am essaying. Further, my conception seeks to provide guides and tests of its own efficacy that is accessible to a global population. Further distinctions are that the UN conception

⁴⁷ United Nations, UDHR. Ibid.

⁴⁸ United Nations. *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Adopted by General Assembly resolution 53/144 of 9 December 1998.* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/Pages/RightandResponsibility.aspx>

of responsibilities includes the establishment of domestic and international laws that support the enforcement of rights, and appears to assume an informed reader and discusses specific matters of state. My conception is intended to be accessible and relevant to all people of all ages as a way to engage thinking about morality and responsibility in novel or unaccustomed ways, and to support the transition in moral consciousness and secular morality I have advocated. Importantly, Article 7 of the UN manifesto of rights and responsibilities confers a codified right of others, such as myself and the others who have composed notions of responsibilities, to create their conceptions where it is stated “Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to develop and discuss new human rights ideas and principles and to advocate their acceptance.”⁴⁹ This statement is an affirming coincidence of creating an explicit right, which relies on the individual responsibility of people to advocate new notions of rights and responsibilities for human growth and advancement.

I am fully aware that *The Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities*⁵⁰ I have written is a tentative work, and I intend it to be an open document subject to scrutiny and revision, and to be tested for its value in explicating and advancing what is proposed in it.⁵¹ My intention for it is also that it functions as a type of heuristic “toolbox” of guides, ideas, tests, and as a means to involve and engage people. Written in the style of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, my formulation of a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities is as follows:

⁴⁹ United Nations. *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals*. Ibid.

⁵⁰ Marshall, Dan. *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities: An Addendum to: The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. November 9, 1999. Unpublished.

⁵¹ The complete work is not included here. The full text contains references that may not be included at this time.

1. All human beings are born free and with full rights to life and all that is necessary to the maintenance of life, and will understand that in sustaining their own life will bear the responsibility of ensuring that they understand that the same force compelling their own life is alive in every person also, and to conduct themselves in respect of that knowledge, and in recognition and respect of the life of every person.

2. All people bear the responsibility to actively seek to recognize the fundamental humanity of all people, in all places, and at all times. All people must understand that such active participation in the interest of humanity ensures their own place, safety, and trust in a social world. Trust, decency, dignity and the desire for safety are rightly the generally universal human experience.

3. For all people in the world to exist in safety from other people requires that in all instances of conflict people are bound by the responsibility to their own, and to every other person's right to life to engage, where possible, in the act of exploring alternative means to resolve the conflicts present, until such time as each conflict is prevented or resolved peacefully to the greatest benefit and satisfaction of all humanity.

4. All people are, and will be responsible for the public trust insofar as that all people have the fundamental human right to exist unmolested, and to that end must exercise the most just solutions to human conflict, ignorance, or suffering whenever and wherever a solution is wanted or needed. It is in this way that humanity will eventually come to learn that no person is above nor exempt from the responsibility for just action, and for the highest forms of justice to prevail in all life.

5. (1) It is the responsibility of all people to provide or to seek as necessary guidance free of ambiguity, free of hypocrisy, and free of any self-serving bias which may harm humanity, or which under scrutiny can be shown to be false or negates life.

5. (2) It is therefore the responsibility of every individual to seek wise guidance, and to actively, honestly, and critically think through the implied consequences of the yield of any such guidance given or received in order to learn to judge for themselves, and thereby ensure a self-determined and autonomous knowledge of what constitutes wisdom and justice, and hence to discern what will or will not be to the benefit of all humanity. Therefore, it is a responsibility to think for oneself.

6. (1) Wise guidance is desirable when the bias is serving one's own healthy self interest in belonging to our greater humanity. In this sense the self-interest is known to be a healthy and positive self-interest wherein all humanity is the beneficiary and it is identical with the interests of humanity at large.

6. (2) It is therefore the responsibility of all people to aspire and adhere to the authority of wisdom and all autonomous and healthy understandings of things human, and to aver from accepting illegitimate authority where there can be negative consequences for humanity either individually or on the whole.

7. (1) It is the responsibility of every person to support and observe just laws where just laws exist for the benefit of humanity, until such time as no laws are deemed necessary.

7. (2) It is the responsibility of every person to refuse and resist unjust laws as they can wherever unjust laws are imposed upon humanity, to the fullest extent of their ability to do so.

8. Every person will, through the responsible striving to understand their own humanity, learn and exercise the higher thrusts of life: hope, compassion, charity, trust, kindness, and Peace in the humane and humanitarian tradition, and will henceforth strive to pass such understanding on to others.

9. Every person will strive to understand that in every case seeking the best for other members of the human species is ultimately in humane terms identical with seeking the best for oneself.

10. (1) Every person will seek education, wherever possible, of a kind which develops their greatest human potentials, insofar as that such education will conform to its precept "to lead out."

10. (2) An understanding of responsibility in regards to any education will require that all persons will engage only in educational pursuits and practices which can clearly be shown to enhance life, healthy emotional development, friendship, and good will to be directed to others. When all humanity is engaged thus, conflict abates amongst individuals and across groups.

11. Every person will recognize that their own fundamental humanity, and by extension, that the fact of the essential fundamental humanity of all humanity, is of greater importance than any particular belief or religion or doctrine. Moreover, by extension, people will understand that the process of creating beliefs, religions, and doctrines is a process and function of humanity common to all humanity, and that the individual beliefs do not admit nor allow any person to disregard the fundamental humanity of any person or group or persons.

12. Every person should carefully examine all communications, directives, and motivations to belief or to action in order to ensure that all the intentions, actions, and outcomes of such compelling efforts will serve the best interest of all humanity, in both the short term and the long term.

13. (1) Every person will engage in or support the responsible and scrupulous evaluation of all existing documents, constitutions, legislation, charters, and other forms of human discourse guiding or regulating human life and action, to ensure that such bodies of work ultimately serve the humane interests of all humanity equally and without distinction.

13. (2) All social constructs guiding or regulating human life and action will be continuously re-evaluated to ensure that the emerging broader global humanitarian social consciousness is reflected in those works. Inclusions which are outdated or are no longer useful or relevant in a contemporary context reflecting a developing humane consciousness will be removed through a due and responsible process, in the interest of all humanity.

14. No person will deny their responsibility to discover, to experience, and to advance any or all of that which can be considered to properly be the responsibility of humanity to humanity. In that each person will strive to assure the best of humanity through responsible action and experience, they are participating in humanity realizing itself in the most enlightened sense.

15. Every person should independently exercise their own powers of critical judgment, just thought, conceptions of unassailable truths, and should ultimately come to their own understanding of how best to understand the concept of responsibility itself in the social context.

16. Every person, if having found any of the foregoing to be sound, practical, and life supporting, will therefore have recognized their own fundamental humanity in some measure, and in that sense will then recognize that they properly belong to the greater human family.

17. Every person is bound by individual responsibility to examine, analyse, and assess all the principles and premises contained in this statement of The Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities to critically test the value for their selves, and for all humanity.

18. Every person, if having found the foregoing Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities to have passed the rigors prescribed within it, must on their own responsibility consider, augment, elucidate, and contribute any of their expanded conceptions and understandings to others, to the benefit of all humanity, for the love of humanity, and for life itself.

In advocating the combining of a basic (or fundamental) set of moral principles with a conception of personal responsibilities, the intention is to create an intelligible and cohesive response to the moral problems facing humanity. The two chief factors involved are to enable people to take responsibility for their own lives by providing a framework that universalises and generalizes to an existence that has a potential of achieving a pragmatic optimism, and to suggest a solution to the identified problems of morality where other conceptions and models are seen to have failed. The second factor is to encourage and enable people to recognize and understand the necessity of forming an intention to facilitate their own growth in order to achieve ways of living that are imaginable, and can be realized. The forming of an intention and the facilitation of

growth is concomitant with a process of psychological and emotional maturation of individuals, and the maturation of civilized societies as part of a natural progression.

In recognizing the necessity of maturity, psychoanalyst Erik Erikson in *Childhood and Society* anticipates the transition from dependency on authority to independence and autonomy. He states that children should undergo a "healthy ego development which results in an autonomous and integrated personality, and an identity formation that seems to support an individual's ego identity as long as he can preserve an element of deliberate tentativeness of autonomous choice."⁵² Erikson's view echoes that of Immanuel Kant in his essay "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" in which he wrote:

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. *Sapere Aude!* [dare to know] "Have courage to use your own understanding!" - that is the motto of enlightenment.⁵³

While Kant suggests a useful ideal, it is arguably the case that if people could have used their own understanding in attaining moral enlightenment they would have. However, given that they did not in everyday life, it is useful to assume that they did not have a method or a substantive knowledge to facilitate growth. And, attaining maturity is not a

⁵² Erikson, Erik. *Childhood and Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1985) 286.

⁵³ Kant, Immanuel. "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" Königsberg in Prussia, 30 September 1784 https://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/cvsp/Documents/reading_selections/CVSP_203/Fall_13-14/What_is_Enlightenment_-_Immanuel_kant.pdf

quantum jump; it is a gradual process of development requiring a combination of information, method, training, education,⁵⁴ and adequate resources of time and opportunity. While conditions will vary for people at different times and in different contexts, and despite individual capacities or limitations of any kind (cognitive, developmental, emotional, etc.), the attitude for responsibility and agency is crucial.

Joseph Rotblat has stated a case for personal responsibility succinctly in the context of science and of scientists who take no moral stance or responsibility for their scientific developments, although his concerns apply to all life:

At the present time, when the distinction between pure and applied science is largely non-existent, such an amoral attitude is unacceptable. Indeed, it is – in my opinion – an immoral attitude, because it eschews personal responsibility for the likely consequences of one's actions.⁵⁵

In advocating moral principles and in making a case for the importance of personal responsibility as a combined model for a direction toward a globalizing moral orientation for humanity, it is important to include a means whereby we seek aiding advancing an integrated universalising secular morality. However, any theory must be put to an empirical test that is suited to its subject and that examines whether the premises are viable, and whether the theory can be shown to work. To that end, a test of the proposed principles and responsibility is undertaken next.

⁵⁴ *Educate* is from the Latin roots "Educo" and "Educere", meaning "to lead out, lead forth, to raise up; to erect." University of British Columbia. *Latin Dictionary*. <http://www.math.ubc.ca/~cass/frivs/latin/latin-dict-full.html#E>

⁵⁵ Rotblat, Joseph. "Science and Human Values." *World Conference on Science in Budapest*. 10 June 1999. 2. <http://britishpugwash.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2003/11/ScienceandHumanValues.pdf>

Chapter 3: Testing Moral Principles

Chapter Summary: This chapter examines whether the proposed conception of moral principles in combination with the notion of universal human responsibilities is a defensible and viable model. Its viability is tested by assessing its criteria against moral exemplars who embody strong evidence of moral understandings and responsibility, and those who do not. A summary of the exemplars is presented at the end of the chapter.

Moral Exemplars

In proposing a set of basic moral principles, and having suggested a conception of individual responsibility to attempt to provide a “backbone” for secular reason and a universalised secular morality, merely suggesting principles and responsibility cannot provide any type of test or evidence that the proposed conceptions are viable. Testing the notions proposed is arguably best facilitated by examining individuals through their experiences and actions as moral exemplars.

That is, examining the moral attitudes and positions of the exemplars helps illustrate the moral principles and responsibilities advocated for in order to attempt to make them more comprehensive and comprehensible. In this context, moral exemplars are compared and contrasted with other individuals of approximately equal stature. For both positive and negative exemplars, individuals were selected based on available empirical evidence that is used to examine and support the claims made about their

moral orientations and actions. Resources will be examined, where available, such as historical records, biographical information, autobiographies, videos, and selected writings by the exemplars accordingly. Through examining the specific actions and evidence of exemplars an attempt will be made to provide evidence for, or to gain insights into the degree to which their morality is linked to their sense of individual responsibility, and their actions can be seen to display the proposed model, or do not.

My interest in moral exemplars arose from attending a talk titled “How to Get Rid of Nuclear Weapons” given by Joseph Rotblat at the University of British Columbia at the Vancouver Institute Public Lectures series in March 1997.⁵⁶ Learning of Dr. Rotblat’s personal history as related to his involvement in the Atomic Bomb, and hearing his intriguing talk on nuclear weapons all appealed to my long-standing personal interests in peace and human conscience, and the failures of them.

Positive Exemplars

Positive moral exemplars are individuals who are seen to embody and display a non-ordinary degree of moral principles, moral responsibility, and ethical action that is deemed desirable as a more commonplace moral conception. Exemplars were chosen as a sample of those who have been distinguished by being recognized through peace or humanitarian awards, or forms of public consensus of exemplary conduct as reflected in the context of the moral principles proposed in the Nietzsche/de Waal conception.

⁵⁶ Rotblat, Joseph “How to get rid of Nuclear Weapons.” *Vancouver Institute. University of British Columbia. UBC Library Open Collections*. March 1, 1997. Video recording. <http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/institute/vaninst9.html>

Dr. Joseph Rotblat

Joseph Rotblat⁵⁷ was a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate,⁵⁸ and was awarded the Nobel in 1995 for his work and contributions to the Pugwash Movement.⁵⁹ He received the prize in conjunction with the Pugwash organization that he was instrumental in founding. The Pugwash movement arose out of Dr. Rotblat's concerns with nuclear weapons disarmament during World War II, in conjunction with the philosopher Bertrand Russell. The "Pugwash Pact"⁶⁰ was the result of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto (1955).⁶¹ The Russell-Einstein Manifesto is a document and instrument confirmed and supported by scientists and others at the time indicating the dangers of nuclear weapons and which called for the peaceful settlement of international conflicts. Joseph Rotblat was among the eleven original signatories.⁶² He was knighted in 1998.

During World War II Dr. Rotblat was involved in the building of the Atomic Bomb in the "Manhattan Project" at Los Alamos New Mexico. When it became evident to him and others that the Germans were no longer proceeding to build an atomic/nuclear weapon, Dr. Rotblat asked to leave the Manhattan Project on the grounds of conscience. In his autobiographical account "Leaving the Bomb Project"⁶³ Dr. Rotblat discussed his

⁵⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Sir Joseph Rotblat: British physicist and philanthropist*. Biography. Updated 1/13/2016. Chicago. <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-Rotblat/>

⁵⁸ Rotblat, Joseph. "Facts." *Peace Prize Laureates: Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1995*. Sweden: Nobel Media AB. 2016
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1995/rotblat-facts.html

⁵⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. <http://pugwash.org/>

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, "Manifesto." <http://pugwash.org/1955/07/09/statement-manifesto/>

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Rotblat, Joseph, Dr. "Leaving the Bomb Project". *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, August 1985. 18.

reasons for leaving the project writing:

Sometimes Bohr stayed on and talked to me about the social and political implications of the discovery of nuclear energy and of his worry about the dire consequences of a nuclear arms race between East and West which he foresaw.

All this, and the growing evidence that the war in Europe would be over before the bomb project was completed, made my participation in it pointless. If it took the Americans such a long time, then my fear of the Germans being first was groundless. When it became evident, toward the end of 1944, that the Germans had abandoned their bomb project, the whole purpose of my being in Los Alamos ceased to be, and I asked for permission to leave and return to Britain. Why did other scientists not make the same decision? Obviously, one would not expect General Groves to wind up the project as soon as Germany was defeated, but there were many scientists for whom the German factor was the main motivation. Why did they not quit when this factor ceased to be?

Several points pertaining to Dr. Rotblat's decision and actions merit mention. First, Dr. Rotblat was the only scientist to leave the Manhattan project on the grounds of conscience. Second, the building of the bomb was a "legal" undertaking, sanctioned by the governments of the U.S. and Britain. Third, the building of the bomb had been deemed morally defensible, a necessity in fact at the time it was undertaken. Lastly, had the bomb not been built when it was believed the enemy was building one of their own it would have been morally indefensible not to, leaving the western powers and European populations vulnerable to attack if the Nazis had succeeded in building their own.

Joseph Rotblat did not claim to be a pacifist or idealist: he had an acute sense of the need for defence against aggression and an understanding of the necessity and duty

to preserve one's own life and the lives of others, and hence the duty not to be complicit in the violence of passivity. When the threat of the Nazis developing an atomic bomb had ended, Dr. Rotblat recognized that all necessity for nuclear weapons development with their inherent destructive capabilities to all life and the environment should end. It was because of his moral convictions that he made his remarkable decision. He wrote:

The groups I have just described - scientists with a social conscience - were a minority in the scientific community. The majority were not bothered by moral scruples; they were quite content to leave it to others to decide how their work would be used. Much the same situation exists now in many countries in relation to work on military projects. But it is the morality issue at a time of war that perplexes and worries me most.⁶⁴

Here Dr. Rotblat acted on moral principles identical to those articulated in the Nietzsche/de Wall conception of a higher order moral principle, and he demonstrated the responsibility of addressing the problems of morality in war, and that could lead to war in the first instance. In the case of the Atomic Bomb, had all the actors/agents involved deliberated and been self-reflectively and responsibly moral in the way Dr. Rotblat was, the bomb would not have been built, and not used, and hence no resulting dire threat of nuclear arms would have resulted.

The decision to end his participation in the bomb project came at a cost to Dr. Rotblat; he wrote that it altered his life and his scientific career. He subsequently spent the remainder of his life working with Pugwash in efforts to reverse the course of what he had participated in creating that was a threat to all life. It was in 1985 when he reflected

⁶⁴ Ibid., 18.

on his actions in “Leaving the Bomb Project” stating:

After 40 years one question keeps nagging me: have we learned enough not to repeat the mistakes we made then? I am not sure even about myself. Not being an absolute pacifist, I cannot guarantee that I would not behave in the same way, should a similar situation arise. Our concepts of morality seem to get thrown overboard once military action starts. It is, therefore, most important not to allow such a situation to develop. Our prime effort must concentrate on the prevention of nuclear war, because in such a war not only morality but the whole fabric of civilization would disappear.⁶⁵

Dr. Rotblat’s fears were well informed and well founded; indeed, his words strengthen the case for advancing a conception of morality that focuses on being life supporting, so that war and all forms of destructive behaviours are avoided. The threat of nuclear weapons remains a grave danger today, perhaps more than ever with people who hold fundamentalist beliefs having access to such weapons. His misgivings compel the finding of a morality that would not permit people to be in conflicts that could lead to war.

Joseph Rotblat displayed a non-ordinary degree of moral awareness and personal responsibility. He did so entirely through an internal locus of morality, which research shows religion was no part. Joseph Rotblat was born and raised in a Jewish family, but he did not follow the teachings or the imperatives of any religion or religious moral code. While it may be the case that his upbringing had an influence on his sense of morality, he did not make any claim to this effect and there is no evidence that can be located in any of his autobiographical or other writings that he attributed his moral

⁶⁵ Ibid., 19.

position or convictions to his upbringing. His only reflection on his early life is that his life was happy. The lack of religious faith or motives external to Dr. Rotblat's own self-reflective and self-responsible sense of morality are notable by their absence in his autobiographical accounts of his actions. This is true not only of his actions evidenced in the paper "Leaving the Bomb Project," but also of his other writings and biographical information.

In a 1986 documentary film about his life titled "The Strangest Dream" his niece recounts a conversation she had with him in which she asked if he was an atheist. He replied "Not an atheist but an agnostic." To which she asked "But why? I call myself an atheist." And he replied, "As a scientist I can never say that something is impossible."⁶⁶

Further evidence that religion did not appear to influence Rotblat's views is found in an exchange with Dr. Daisaku Ikeda in the book *A Quest for Global Peace: Rotblat and Ikeda on War, Ethics, and the Nuclear Threat*⁶⁷ where he states:

When I say I am an optimist, I do not simply believe that world conditions will improve of their own accord. Nothing will change unless we make an effort to make the world a better place. Each person must do whatever he or she can to contribute something to this effort . . . Optimism is the ethic I live by. It is not a religious sentiment, but it may be similar to your religious views. Dr. Ikeda, we start off from different points, but we arrive at the same conclusions.

⁶⁶ Bednarsky, Eric. *The Strangest Dream*. National Film Board of Canada. 2008. https://www.nfb.ca/film/strangest_dream/ Chapter 21. Time 1:20:35

⁶⁷ Rotblat, Joseph. & Ikeda, Daisaku. *A Quest for Global Peace: Rotblat and Ikeda on War, Ethics, and the Nuclear Threat*. (London: I. B. Tauris, c2007) 104.

Here, it is clearly evident that Dr. Rotblat both understood and advocated the notion of individual responsibility for moral thought and ethical action. This is not a naïve view; it is an observation that indifference or passivity will not suffice to improve the moral standing of humanity, and it is an expression of an intention to anticipate effecting change for the future. Nor is his a view that reflects the mistaken utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham who advocated a moral view that people should advance the “Greatest good for the greatest number” which necessarily implies questionable implications for the unfortunate few.⁶⁸ Joseph Rotblat’s optimism suggests that all people should actively work toward the greatest good for all: precisely what the moral conception from Nietzsche and de Wall anticipates. His optimism is an ethical intention of responsibility.

Claims have been made that some individuals who were self-professed atheists or agnostics, or antitheists recanted their position at or near the end of their lives and claimed to have accepted God, or Jesus Christ, or any religion. Capitulation of long held atheistic or agnostic (or other non-theocentric) positions may bring the moral behaviour and moral convictions of some individuals into serious doubt. Claims could be made that such people always had an underlying theistic belief or motive for their moral position and that their moral stance had not been an authentically self-reflective and personally responsible one. For example, such claims were made about the philosopher Antony Flew, a lifelong atheist who was said to have abandoned his avowed atheism to become a deist as he neared the end of his life.⁶⁹ This claim was used to attempt to discredit

⁶⁸ Crimmins, James E., "Jeremy Bentham", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta ed. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/bentham/>

⁶⁹ Grimes, William. "Obituary: Antony Flew, Philosopher and Ex-Atheist, Dies at 87." New York: The New York Times Company. Published April 16, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/17/arts/17flew.html?_r=0/ Web.

some of his life's work, or to claim his life and work were related to God.⁷⁰

Controversial claims like these that have been levelled against Antony Flew are problematic when the individual in question cannot be queried personally, and the claims about them hence cannot be fully credited or disputed. However, they can cast a plausible doubt on the moral position and motives of individuals. Claims of this type might bring into question whether people such as Joseph Rotblat would truly have represented a non-ordinary and self-responsible morality of the kind advocated for here. Claims that he reverted to any type theocentric belief system or metaphysical worldviews that informed his moral conceptions cannot be made about Joseph Rotblat, who died on August 31, 2005 at the age of 96.⁷¹ Any claim to this effect can be disabused based on first-person accounts from people who knew him personally.

At a symposium hosted at Simon Fraser University in 2014 titled "Peace and the Environment: A Symposium Exploring the Legacy and Insights of Six Nobel Peace Prize Laureates" I had the opportunity to meet Professor John Finney, a participant at the symposium who presented on Joseph Rotblat. Prof. Finney was a colleague of Joseph Rotblat in the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs organization and is an Executive Committee member as trustee of British Pugwash Trust.⁷² He was also a personal friend of Dr. Rotblat until the time of Rotblat's death. I inquired of Professor Finney whether he knew if Dr. Rotblat recanted his agnostic position, or made any

⁷⁰ Strobel, Lee. *Antony Flew on God and Atheism*. Video Interview. California: San Bruno. Youtube Inc. Feb 11, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHUtMEru4pQ/>

⁷¹ Jones. G.O. "Joseph Rotblat Obituary." Aug 31, 2005. *The Guardian News*. Sept. 2, 2005. Guardian News and Media Limited. 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2005/sep/02/obituaries.obituaries>

⁷² British Pugwash Trust. <http://britishpugwash.org/what-is-pugwash/british-pugwash-trust/>

reference or claim to have taken any personal view, or attributed any of his actions or life's work to the existence of God or religion as a source of his ethical actions, either at the time he quit the bomb project, or at any time later in his life. Professor Finney stated that "I got the impression that he was neutral to religion and that it did not play a significant part in defining his ethical stance."⁷³

In later correspondence Professor Finney also informed me that he asked my question of Professor Robert Hinde (Executive Committee member of British Pugwash) who worked closely with Joseph Rotblat and coauthored a book with him.⁷⁴ Professor Hinde replied to Professor Finney that he "could not remember him ever raising religion in a significant way." Professor Finney also graciously shared a contact for Professor Christopher (Kit) Hill, who authored a book⁷⁵ about Joseph Rotblat and was a close personal friend, and who knew him from 1960 up until the time of his death. Professor Hill responded stating that "I never got a hint that his decisions and way of life were specifically tied in to a particular formal religion."

Further confirmation came from Dr. Tom Milne (Trustee, British Pugwash Trust) who worked as Joseph Rotblat's personal assistant in the 1990's and early 2000's. Dr. Milne worked closely with him and was a personal friend. Dr. Milne has shared that "as far as I know he did not hold any religious beliefs, either at the time of the Manhattan project or later in life." There is also confirmation from Sally Milne (Executive Committee, PeaceJam, British Pugwash). Sally is Tom Milne's mother and who took over as

⁷³ Personal email correspondence(s). Feb/Mar. 2014. Cited with permission June 2016.

⁷⁴ Hinde, Robert A, and Rotblat, Joseph. *War No More: Eliminating Conflict in the Nuclear Age*. (London and Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press. 2003)

⁷⁵ Hill, Kit. *Professor Pugwash: The Man Who Fought Nukes*. (U.K.: Ryelands Publishing. 2008)

Professor Rotblat's personal assistant at Pugwash when Tom left after completing his PhD to work in education. Sally Milne remained Joseph Rotblat's assistant and his close personal friend up to the time of his death. Mrs. Milne affirmed that Joseph Rotblat described himself as an agnostic and a humanist up to the end of his life. She added that "his morality was always a very personal one, not based on any religion or particular teaching, but based on trying to do good in the world and make it a better place."

Considering the autobiographical information that Joseph Rotblat gave about himself in the movie "The Strangest Dream," along with his personal history and writings, and combined with the consensus of the many people who knew him professionally and personally, it is evident that his non-ordinary moral stance can be aligned with the conception of self-reflective moral principles in the Nietzsche/de Waal concept, and his actions were compelled by his sense of personal responsibility as reflected in the Declaration of Human Responsibilities. His lifelong engagement with nuclear disarmament and the eradication of nuclear weapons shows that his moral stance and reasoning were, and remain unimpeachable.

From the magnitude and far-reaching implications of his actions throughout his life for all humanity, it can be argued that Joseph Rotblat possessed a level of moral maturity and integrity that is exemplary. While his example is perhaps anomalous, it shows that a normative secular morality can exist and is attainable. Sally Milne summed up his moral stance and life philosophy succinctly when she wrote of Joseph Rotblat that "One of his dearest quotes when faced with difficulties was, "Remember your humanity and forget the rest." Joseph Rotblat stands as a pre-eminent moral exemplar. I will now continue my "case studies" of exemplars with Fridtjof Nansen.

Fridtjof Nansen

Fridtjof Nansen is distinguished as a positive moral exemplar having received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922.⁷⁶ Nansen was a Polar Explorer,⁷⁷ adventurer, and a humanitarian with many remarkable achievements to his credit. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for

. . . his work in the repatriation of prisoners of war, his work for the Russian refugees, his work in aiding the millions in Russia struggling against famine, and now his work for the refugees in Asia Minor and Thrace. Although this activity has been in progress for only a few years, its extent and significance are such that the Nobel Committee has felt it worthy of the great distinction of the Nobel Peace Prize.⁷⁸

The Nobel Committee credited Nansen for five great humanitarian efforts that he undertook at the behest of the International Red Cross, the League of Nations, the Government of Greece, and the United Nations.⁷⁹ Information in his biography states that “[h]is father, a prosperous lawyer, was a religious man with a clear conception of personal duty and moral principle. . .”⁸⁰ He was influenced by his father’s worldview, but did not share his father’s religious beliefs. Nansen affirmed his father’s influence when

⁷⁶ Nansen, Fridtjof. “Biography.” *Peace Prize Laureates. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1922*. Sweden: Nobel Media AB 2016
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1922/nansen-bio.html

⁷⁷ Greve, Marit. *Fridtjof Nansen*. Margaret Ellson Davies., trans. Oslo: Aschehoug.1994. Cited in *Nansen, Fridtjof. Polar Explorers*. Fram Museum, Oslo, Norway.
<http://www.frammuseum.no/Polar-Heroes/Main-Heroes/Fridtjof-Nansen.aspx/>

⁷⁸ Nansen, Fridtjof. “Press Release.” *Peace Prize Laureates. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1922*. Sweden: Nobel Media AB 2016
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1922/press.html/

⁷⁹ Nansen, “Biography.” *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

he said: "By nature I am weak, what character I have stems from my strict upbringing." ⁸¹

In researching Nansen to discover his motives, I found no documented evidence that his motives or actions were for any reason other than to succour the suffering of humanity; in particular of humanly caused suffering as the result of wars, displacements, and famines related to war. He had no religious motives of his own: Nansen was a self-declared lifelong agnostic who eschewed theocentric worldviews. He quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson⁸² in a speech titled "Science and the purpose of life," in which he said, ". . . the religion of one age is, as a rule, the literary entertainment of the next. . . ." ⁸³

Nansen also eschewed commonly held notions typified in theocentric world views:

In his younger years he dismissed the metaphysical concept of the soul. Almost as a point of defiance he had, through his choice of theme for this doctorate when a student of zoology, studied the central nervous system of lower animals. He wanted to see whether there was any place where a "soul" could exist . . . [Later] he thought that man had both intellect and intelligence and that man had spirit. . . . [he] drew attention to this presence of spirit and conscience as one of the most powerful forces in the human condition." . . . Fridtjof Nansen was an agnostic.⁸⁴

Organizations and governments often called upon him to assist with difficult problems as a man capable of doing the most challenging of humanitarian work ably and

⁸¹ Christophersen, Chr. A. R. "Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930) A Life in the Service of Science and Humanity." *Nansen Dialogue Network*. Norway: Lillehammer. 2015.<http://www.nansen-dialogue.net/index.php/en/who-are-we/who-is-fridtjof-nansen/>

⁸² Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Spiritual Emerson: Essential Writings*. Robinson, David M. ed. Boston: Beacon Press. 2004) 250.

⁸³ Nansen, Fridtjof. "Science and the Purpose of Life." Speech published by the *Rationalist Press Association*, 1909, cited in *A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists*. <https://ffrf.org/news/day/dayitems/item/14590-fridtjof-nansen>.

⁸⁴ Greve, *Fridtjof Nansen*. Ibid.

successfully. Nansen was an academic, scientist, explorer and adventurer. It is arguably the case that humanitarian endeavours commandeered his time, of which he gave abundantly and for no apparent reasons other than to succour human need and suffering. His empathy and compassion were borne in his actions. His moral intelligence appears to have had no reserve. Nansen was a positive moral exemplar who embodied and reflected the moral principles and individual responsibility aligned with the conception advanced here. Another case study is Wangari Maathai.

Wangari Maathai

Wangari Muta Maathai is the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate⁸⁵ “for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace.”⁸⁶ and for her humanitarian work. She is distinguished as the first woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Maathai started a grass-roots movement to counter deforestation in her native country of Kenya through encouraging women to plant trees in what came to be called the “Green Belt Movement” (GBM), for which she was awarded the Nobel Prize. Her GBM initiative spread to numerous African countries, and it is estimated that approximately twenty million trees have been planted on farms, school, and church lands by women.⁸⁷

Maathai’s work encompasses and encourages democracy, human rights (for

⁸⁵ Maathai, Wangari “Facts.” *Peace Prize Laureates. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2004*. Nobel Media AB 2014. 12 Jan 2016.
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2004/maathai-facts.html

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Maathai, Wangari. “Biographical.” *Peace Prize Laureates. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2004*. Nobel Media AB 2014. 12 Jan 2016.
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2004/maathai-bio.html

women in particular but for all people generally), and environmental conservation. Responding to what she viewed as a depletion of the resources of earth that carried devastating consequences, of which people are part, the right moral action in her view was to capitalize on and spend her accomplishments and lifetime in the restoration of a more life-sustaining and natural balance between humans and the environment. Maathai acted in a way that is and was life supporting, species supporting, and reflected the moral dimensions as described by Nietzsche/de Waal which anticipates the needs of not only of humans, but of all species in a way that recognizes the essential dependencies and mutuality necessary to life.

Maathai's views and actions are not esoteric. They are pragmatic in that they are properly understood to assert the essential connection to nature underlying and supporting all life. The interconnectedness of moral and ethical values in relation to nature as a means of survival and furthering life was the source of her actions. Maathai is clear about her understanding of these concerns and the importance of them when she states:

I came to realize that the work of the GBM was driven by certain intangible values. These values were: love for the environment; a gratitude and respect for Earth's resources; a capacity to empower and better oneself; and a spirit of service and volunteerism. Together, these values encapsulate the intangible, subtle, nonmaterialistic aspects of the GBM (Green Belt Movement) as an organization. They enabled us to continue working, even through the difficult times. Of course, I'm aware that such values are not unique to the Green Belt Movement. They are universal; they can't be touched or seen. We cannot place a monetary value on them: in effect, they are priceless. These values are not contained within certain religious traditions. Neither does one have to

profess a faith in a divine being to live by them. However, they do seem to be part of the our human nature and I'm convinced that we are better people because we hold them, and that humankind is better off with them than without them. Where these values are ignored, they are replaced by vices such as selfishness, corruption, greed, and exploitation.⁸⁸

In attempting to apply a term other than the word “moral” to Maathai’s sentiments and pragmatic aims, the word “wholesome” is apt, where the word has the meaning: “promoting or indicating physical, mental, or moral health.”⁸⁹ Maathai did not derive her morality from God or any theocentric views. She appears to have responded to the vicissitudes of life on a deeper and more fundamental level connected to the earth and to life, much as Joseph Rotblat and Fridtjof Nansen did, and from an internal locus. Her motives are clear when she reflected that she had undertaken her actions based on an inner drive, without making any attributions when she asserted: “However, I never differentiated between activities that might be called ‘spiritual’ and those that might be termed ‘secular.’”⁹⁰

Here Maathai demonstrates support for the principle that true morality in all cases must seek the greatest good for all, and the greatest good that universalises to all life and all that which we term nature - all species and the environment. She also demonstrates the thoughtful and reflective sense of responsibility that was evident through her actions, and particularly in her concern for nature and the desire to enable life to flourish. In what may be seen and considered a holistic approach to secular

⁸⁸ Maathai, Wangari. *Replenishing The Earth: Spiritual Values For Healing Ourselves And The World*. (Random House Inc., 2010) 13-14.

⁸⁹ “Wholesome.” *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Ibid.

⁹⁰ Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth*. Ibid.

morality and to life, Maathai's actions and leadership affirm her as a positive moral exemplar. She strongly displays the moral principles and sense of personal responsibility found in a comprehensive conception of secular morality. Secular morality is also exemplified through the experiences of philosopher Alphonso Lingis.

The Anonymous Exemplar

The philosopher Alphonso Lingis in *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* relates a personal account of events that happened to him during his travels in India, and of being taken into the care of a man who saved his life. His experience had a profound effect on his views of morality and typical moral constructs that, in fact, transcended his existing moral understanding as he recounts his story:

One night, sick for weeks in a hut in Mahabalipuram in the south of India, I woke out of the fevered stupor of days to find that the paralysis that had incapacitated my arms was working its way into my chest. I stumbled out into the starless darkness of the heavy night. On the shore, gasping for air, I felt he was naked, save for a threadbare loincloth, and all I could understand was that he was from Nepal. How he had come here, to the far south of the Indian subcontinent - farther by far than I who, equipped with credit card, could come here from my home in a day by jet plane - I had no way of learning from him.

He seemed to have nothing, sleeping on the sands, alone. He engaged in a long conversation, unintelligible to me, with a fisherman awakened from a hut at the edge of the jungle and finally loaded me in an outrigger canoe to take me, I knew without understanding any of his words, through the monsoon seas to the hospital in Madras sixty-five miles away. My fevered eyes contemplated his silent and expressionless face, from time to time illuminated by the distant flashes of lightning as he labored in the canoe,

and it was completely clear to me that should the storm become violent, he would not hesitate to save me, at the risk of his own life.

We disembarked at a fishing port, where he put me first on a rickshaw and then on a bus for Madras, and then he disappeared without a word or glance at me. He surely had no address but the sands; I would never see him again. I shall not cease seeing what it means to come to be bound with a bond that can never be broken or forgotten, what it means to become a brother. How indecent to speak of such things in the anonymous irresponsibility of a writing he cannot read and a tongue he cannot understand! We know ourselves in our mortality.⁹¹

Lingis argues that there is a universal "brotherhood" of man and humanity that is an expression of a "natural" morality that exists in all people and is communicated and experienced as a phenomenon independent of language, status, possessions, or beliefs such as religions. It resides in our most fundamental existence and for Lingis, relates to our common mortality or a "community of death" as he terms it.⁹² He notes that we all face death eventually, and in recognition of this fact, he argues that we must all respect our own life and the lives of others at the deepest level of existence so that we can make the best of our lives while we may.

Thus, we are linked by our common humanity as a part of nature as the strongest common bond to life – that we seek life before it is no more for us. Through recognition of this deepest urge to live well, Lingis argues that we find a commonality of good that can emerge when it is not inhibited. In this Lingis is arguably referring to a notion

⁹¹ Lingis, Alphonso. *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis. Indian University Press. 1994) 158 - 159.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 159.

suggested by Jean-Jacques Rousseau that humankind is good by nature but is corrupted by society.⁹³ German psychiatrist Friedrich Perls refers to this “good” as “actualization” by which he means that all living things will naturally grow to fulfill their natural imperative to become moral beings provided their environment supports this, and they are not interfered with in their development – “corrupted” if we accept Rousseau.⁹⁴

The anonymous exemplar may either not be corrupted by society, or perhaps had refused to be affected by any corrupting forces. It may also be the case that he had no influences brought to bear on him at all, and that he was simply a man who was in tune with nature, and understood intuitively that all living things deserve dignity and wish to survive and to thrive. Alternately, he may have had religious convictions, or not, or perhaps a tribal or indigenous spirituality. It is impossible to know with any certainty. It is arguably true that the principles advocated in this work were operative in this man, and it is certain that his sense of personal responsibility was operative insofar as it is indicated by the extraordinary efforts he humbly undertook on behalf of Lingis.

No other inferences or attributions can be made about the anonymous man; nothing is known of whether there was anything to compel him except empathy and compassion for a person suffering and in need. This is evident in view of the fact he did so at risk to himself during a storm, and with the additional responsibility of using the presumably borrowed canoe of the fisherman. Notable, too, is the second anonymous

⁹³ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract and Discourses*. trans. G.D.H. Cole. (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1923) 203.

⁹⁴ Perls, Friedrich S., M.D., Ph.D. *In and Out The Garbage Pail*. (Lafayette, California: Real People Press. 1969) No Page Numbers.

man who, according to Lingis, unhesitatingly and unselfishly lent his canoe, if it was his - his lifeblood presumably - to the anonymous man to use to save Lingis's life.⁹⁵

While the locus of motives of these men cannot be known precisely, their actions suggest that they were in accord with the moral principles advocated, of which Lingis was recipient. The profound effect that being the beneficiary of morality of this kind had on Lingis is evident in his description of the impression it left on him, to have had the experience of his fundamental humanity recognized and to feel himself a "brother of man." Moreover, Lingis, through the acknowledgement he gave his benefactor when he refers to the indecency of writing of a man he "knows cannot read or understand," displayed a profound sense of respect and responsibility for the acts of kindness received. It is precisely this sort of mutual respect (reciprocity) and empathy for the life of another that is articulated and affirmed by the moral principles in the Nietzsche/de Waal and personal responsibility constellation. I will now turn to negative exemplars to illustrate cases where morality is seen to have failed.

Negative Exemplars

Negative exemplars are individuals who have demonstrated lack of ideal types of moral insight and understandings such as compassion, reciprocity, mercy, and a lack of insights, awareness, motives, or courage in their ethical conduct. Exemplars are examined to discover whether evidence of theocentric morality is present or absent, and whether the moral principles and responsibilities can be shown to have been absent.

⁹⁵ Lingis cannot make this clear as in his own words he did not know. From the context it seems more probable than not, but there is no certainty.

J. Robert Oppenheimer

J. Robert Oppenheimer was a theoretical Physicist born in the U.S. His parents were of Jewish descent, but did not actively follow Judaism. Robert Oppenheimer did not receive a Nobel Prize as the positive exemplars did; however, he received nominations for a Nobel Prize for Physics three times; in 1945, 1951 and 1967.⁹⁶ Oppenheimer was the scientific director for the Manhattan Project overseeing the efforts of the vast scientific community working at Los Alamos to build the Atomic Bomb.

On any account Oppenheimer was an intellectually brilliant man with reasoning capabilities beyond those of most people, demonstrated by his list of accomplishments working within science and in conjunction with research and teaching at Universities.⁹⁷ Unlike Joseph Rotblat, Oppenheimer remained with the Manhattan project as did all the other scientific staff once it was known that the Nazis had abandoned their efforts to build an atomic weapon. He was at the same dinner party as Joseph Rotblat when a conversation took place. Dr. Rotblat relates the occasion:

General Leslie Groves, when visiting Los Alamos, frequently came to the Chadwicks for dinner and relaxed palaver. During one such conversation Groves said that, of course, the real purpose in making the bomb was to subdue the Soviets. (Whatever his exact words, his real meaning was clear.)⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Cassidy, David. *J. Robert Oppenheimer and the American Century*. (New York: Pi Press. 2005) 178.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

⁹⁸ Rotblat, "Leaving the Bomb Project." *Ibid.*, 18.

Oppenheimer would have been fully aware that the bomb was not needed to end the war, and might have anticipated the consequences of continuing to supervise building the bomb having scientifically based knowledge of its destructive potential, and evidence from preliminary tests. Rotblat also relates that Niels Bohr, a senior scientist and contemporary of Oppenheimer, was aware of and concerned with the continuation of building the bomb and the multifaceted threats and its consequences. Dr. Rotblat stated: "Sometimes Bohr stayed on and talked to me about the social and political implications of the discovery of nuclear energy and of his worry about the dire consequences of a nuclear arms race between East and West which he foresaw."⁹⁹

It is impossible to credit that a man of Oppenheimer's intellect and position of responsibility, along with his close working relationship with Groves, did not understand the implications and the critical nature of the problems that would result from completing the bomb – and that he either suggested that the project end or be limited, rather than share responsibility for actions that could not be redeemed. Oppenheimer did not display evidence of any of the concerns and wisdom seen with Rotblat and Bohr. Alternately, it might have been that he had objections but did not feel he was in a position to make any assertions about the possibility of terminating the project, or leaving his position at the project; however, there is no evidence that this was the case at that time. He appears to have been single-minded in his desire to succeed with the bomb, despite the changing motivations for building it. One possible reason he did not leave might have been that he was aware of the agenda to subdue the Russians from the outset. In this case, learning that the Nazis were not building one would have no bearing.

⁹⁹ Rotblat, *Ibid.*, 18.

Before joining the Manhattan project, Oppenheimer had religious leanings toward Hinduism. He learned Sanskrit, read the Bhagavad Gita in that language, and claimed it was what most shaped his philosophy in life.¹⁰⁰ It is interesting that he had religious leanings and followed the Hindu Holy Scriptures, given the position he was in, but that his religiosity and the morality inherent in the Gita (Dharma) seem to have not influenced his actions. With a full awareness and anticipation of the destructive power of the bomb he had great responsibility in creating, he appears to suffer some sort of moral confusion, or at least a foreboding of the wrong he was precipitating when he cited a verse from the Bhagavad Gita two days before the test:

In battle, in the forest, at the precipice in the mountains, On the dark great sea, in the midst of javelins and arrows, In sleep, in confusion, in the depths of shame, The good deeds a man has done before defend him.¹⁰¹

Oppenheimer arguably appears to be attempting to pre-empt or assuage his conscience and his own pending moral fall by defending himself on the basis that any good deeds he had done before would balance or excuse what would follow. The day of the first test of the Atomic bomb at the site named the “Trinity Site” he claimed to have thought of a verse from the Bhagavad Gita (XI, 12): “If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be like the splendor of the mighty one. . . .”¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Hijjiya, James A "The Gita of Robert Oppenheimer" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. . (June 2000.) 144 (2). Archived from *the original* on May 15, 2013. Retrieved December 16, 2013. <https://amphilsoc.org/sites/default/files/proceedings/Hijjiya.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Hollinger, David A. "Afterward". In Carson, Cathryn; Hollinger, David A. *Reappraising Oppenheimer: Centennial Studies and Reflections*. (Berkeley, California: Office for History of Science and Technology, Univ. of California. 2005) 385–390.

¹⁰² Jungk, Robert. *Brighter than a Thousand Suns: A Personal History of the Atomic Scientists*. (New York: Harcourt Brace. 1958) 201.

From this evidence it appears there was a moral confusion by which he seemed to be implying that he was of a mind that the terrible effects of the bomb were splendid and somehow related to a Godly divinity. Yet he had explicit knowledge of the intention of the bomb which was designed to kill large populations of people in Japan, and to exercise control over millions of others in Russia (i.e., Soviet Union) if Groves was to be believed. It is difficult to know in retrospect with accuracy whether he was justifying a terrible instrument of destruction as splendid, or was elated in enjoying the fruits of his labour in seeing the magnitude of the results, or both.

Oppenheimer's sense of jubilation was noticed by physicist and Nobel winner Isidor Rabi, who wrote "I'll never forget his walk; I'll never forget the way he stepped out of the car . . . his walk was like *High Noon* . . . this kind of strut. He had done it." ¹⁰³ We may not know what his true moral stance was, or how he perceived of himself as an agent of such destructive power once he had witnessed it. Following the tests of the bomb, there was an abundance of evidence about its terrible destructive capacity.

When Groves had stated that the political purpose of the bomb was to subdue the Soviets, Oppenheimer would have been able to surmise that the bomb would have to be used against populations in order to make apparent the threat that the U.S. wanted to pose to the Soviets. That would require a demonstration of its destructive capacity and killing potential. Therefore, Oppenheimer had to have known the bomb would be used against a population to "prove" its power, and it was, with horrific consequences.

¹⁰³ Monk, Ray. *Robert Oppenheimer: A Life Inside the Center*. (New York; Toronto: Doubleday. 2012) 456–457.

Years later, after much personal turmoil in his life, in 1965 he appeared on a television broadcast and cited another verse from the Gita, in which he appears to be deeply remorseful for his actions and part in creating the bomb:

We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried. Most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*; Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and, to impress him, takes on his multi-armed form and says, 'Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.' I suppose we all thought that, one way or another.¹⁰⁴

Despite what appears to be his later moral misgivings, there is evidence that reason alone cannot reliably provide a strong moral grounding or guarantee moral agency and ethical actions. While it may be the case that for many reasons he felt he could not leave the bomb project, or he had to remain for political or other reasons that may not be evident, there is evidence that Oppenheimer did not always think in any strong moral terms or exercise his moral autonomy or responsibility. Joseph Rotblat, in his essay "Leaving the Bomb Project" shows that Oppenheimer was prepared to commit crimes against humanity of kinds that were not strictly related to the bomb project, or using the bomb. Instead, he proposed something sinister of his own design. Rotblat wrote:

Recently I came across a document released under the Freedom of Information Act. It is a letter, dated May 25, 1943, from Robert Oppenheimer to Enrico Fermi, on the military use of radioactive materials, specifically, the poisoning of food with radioactive strontium. The Smyth

¹⁰⁴ Oppenheimer, Robert J. "Now I am become death." Television Broadcast. 1965. *The Decision to Drop the Bomb. National Science Digital Library*. 2015. San Diego: AJ Software & Multimedia. <http://www.atomicarchive.com/Movies/Movie8.shtml/>

Report mentions such use as a possible German threat, but Oppenheimer apparently thought the idea worthy of consideration, and asked Fermi whether he could produce the strontium without letting too many people into the secret.

He went on: "I think we should not attempt a plan unless we can poison food sufficient to kill a half a million men." I am sure that in peacetime these same scientists would have viewed such a plan as barbaric; they would not have contemplated it even for a moment. Yet during the war it was considered quite seriously and, I presume, abandoned only because it was technically infeasible.¹⁰⁵

This letter compels a question whether Oppenheimer had considered the long-term consequences of using radioactive weapons of this sort, or what the implications would be to people and to the environment at large. The crucial question is how such moral shortcomings could exist in man as intellectually gifted as Oppenheimer was.

Robert Oppenheimer is seen to have been morally confused and morally irresponsible; he appears to have intentionally ignored morality evidenced through his own actions and words, yet he appears variously to have had deep misgivings about the morality of his actions and what was being done, and his direct responsibility for it, while in contrast citing his religious allegiance in what appears to be a glorification of the bomb in likening it to divinity. The morality he interpreted or derived - or perhaps misinterpreted - from the Bhagavad Gita contravenes the moral principles that hold that morality should be life-supporting, life preserving, and life enhancing. With the war emergency no longer imminent, Oppenheimer could have made the same choice as Rotblat, but he did not.

¹⁰⁵ Rotblat, "Leaving the Bomb Project." Ibid., 18.

Oppenheimer's actions associated with the building of the bomb aside, which are deeply problematic, and his willingness to abandon his humanity to seek ways of killing people by radioactive poisoning and only abandoning the plan due to its infeasibility, are clearly immoral and perhaps amoral in the context of the moral principles defined in this work. There is no evidence of motives that relate to Nietzsche's cornerstone of morality, and he showed no empathy or compassion except in a retrospect. Robert Oppenheimer's words and his citing of the Bhagavad Gita at critical times suggest that he had some level of consciousness of a moral awareness, though neither his religious beliefs nor his personal responsibility compelled him to make different choices. I now turn to another case study of a negative moral exemplar, Richard Feynman.

Richard Feynman

Richard P. Feynman was an American theoretical physicist and Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics in 1965.¹⁰⁶ His parents were non-religious and non-practising Ashkenazi Jewish people from Russia and Poland¹⁰⁷ and he declared himself an atheist from an early age.¹⁰⁸ Feynman was widely regarded as a genius, with an extensive number of achievements and accolades in science and teaching to his credit including the Albert Einstein Award (1954, Princeton); the Einstein Award (Albert Einstein Award

¹⁰⁶ Feynman, Richard. "Facts." *Peace Prize Laureates. Nobel Peace Prize. 1965.* Nobel Media AB. 2016. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1965/feynman-facts.html

¹⁰⁷ Gleick, James. *Genius: The Life and Science of Richard Feynman.* (New York: Vintage. 1993) 25. cited in http://www.nobel-winners.com/Physics/richard_phillips_feynman.html

¹⁰⁸ Feynman, Richard P., Ralph Leighton, ed. "*What Do You Care What Other People Think?*": *Further Adventures of a Curious Character.* (W. W. Norton & Co. 1988) 25.

College of Medicine) and the Lawrence Award (1962).¹⁰⁹ Feynman joined the Manhattan Project in 1943 at the request of the U.S. government, and worked with other scientists in building the bomb. Richard Feynman is a unique exemplar since in 1981 he described his actions succinctly and transparently for his moral failings in a taped interview aired on the British Broadcasting Corporation Television “Horizons” series.¹¹⁰

In the interview he confers his experience of his morality that related to his work on the bomb, and his delayed reaction to the realization of the questions and concerns of individual responsibility and morality after the bombs were dropped on Japan. In his own words, he acted immorally and shirked any moral responsibility despite having an acute awareness of the destructive capacity of the bomb and its portent for the future. Feynman explicated his moral orientation most exactly and forcefully from his assessment of his actions in retrospect:

There was also the problem, of course, of any moral thing involving war. I wouldn't have much to do with that, but it kinda scared me when I realized what the weapon would be, and that since it might be possible, it must be possible. There was nothing that I knew that indicated that if we could do it they couldn't do it, and therefore it was very important to try to cooperate.

[In early 1943 Feynman joined Oppenheimer's team at Los Alamos.] With regard to moral questions, I do have something I would like to say about

¹⁰⁹ Feynman, Richard. “Biography.” *Peace Prize Laureates. Nobel Peace Prize 1965*. Nobel Media AB 2016. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1965/feynman-bio.html/

¹¹⁰ Feynman, Richard. *The Pleasure of Finding things out. The best short works of Richard P. Feynman*. Video. British Broadcasting Corporation. Horizon Program. 1981 -1982 Min:16:00 to 20:48 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p018dvvg>

it. The original reason to start the project, which was that the Germans were a danger, started me off on a process of action which was to try to develop this first system at Princeton and then at Los Alamos, to try to make the bomb work. All kinds of attempts were made to redesign it to make it a worse bomb and so on. It was a project on which we all worked very, very hard, all co-operating together. And with any project like that you continue to work trying to get success, having decided to do it. But what I did - immorally I would say - was to not remember the reason that I said I was doing it, so that when the reason changed, because Germany was defeated, not the slightest thought came to my mind at all about that, that that meant now that I have to reconsider why I am continuing to do this. I simply didn't think, okay?

[On 6 August 1945 the atomic bomb was exploded over Hiroshima.] The only reaction that I remember - perhaps I was blinded by my own reaction - was a very considerable elation and excitement, and there were parties and people got drunk and it would make a tremendously interesting contrast, what was going on in Los Alamos at the same time as what was going on in Hiroshima. I was involved with this happy thing and also drinking and drunk and playing drums sitting on the hood of - the bonnet of - a Jeep and playing drums with excitement running all over Los Alamos at the same time as people were dying and struggling in Hiroshima.¹¹¹

Here Feynman makes all the observations relevant to this analysis of moral principles and personal responsibility. First, he stated that he wanted and took no responsibility for any moral aspect of his part in the bomb or the war despite clearly recognizing the exquisite danger of this particular weapon. He then states there was a further moral problem – he notes this when he mentions that they wanted to make a “worse” (more

¹¹¹ Feynman, Richard. *The Pleasure of Finding things out. The best short works of Richard P. Feynman*. Jeffrey Robins, ed. (Cambridge: Helix Books – Perseus Books. 1999) 9-11.

destructive) bomb. Then, he plainly stated that he acted immorally when they knew the Germans were no longer building a bomb, and he did nothing to change his course of action or moral direction claiming that despite this knowledge he “simply didn’t think.”

Lastly, Feynman seemed to come to a belated realization of the profound depth of the immorality of his own behaviour where he stated he was elated, excited, drunk and happy at the result of the effects and devastation of the bomb, until it dawned on him the extent of the death and terrible suffering it had caused to civilian populations in Hiroshima. His comment that it “was an interesting contrast” could be a lack of empathy, or at least an un-empathetic way to state it. He continued in the interview to discuss his strong reaction and depression in response to his part in creating the bomb, and the terrible and persistent threat that it posed to humanity thereafter; the fact that the total annihilation of life was possible with weapons such as these:

I had a very strong reaction after the war of a peculiar nature - it may be from just the bomb itself and it may be for some other psychological reasons, I'd just lost my wife or something, but I remember being in New York with my mother in a restaurant, immediately after [Hiroshima], and thinking about New York, and I knew how big the bomb in Hiroshima was, how big an area it covered and so on, and I realized from where we were - I don't know, 59th Street - that to drop one on 34th Street, it would spread all the way out here and all these people would be killed and all the things would be killed and there wasn't only one bomb available, but it was easy to continue to make them, and therefore that things were sort of doomed because already it appeared to me—very early, earlier than to others who were more optimistic - that international relations and the way people were behaving were no different than they had ever been before and that it was just going to go on the same way as any other thing and I was sure that it was going, therefore, to be used very soon. So I felt very

uncomfortable and thought, really believed, that it was silly: I would see people building a bridge and I would say "they don't understand." I really believed that it was senseless to make anything because it would all be destroyed very soon anyway, but they didn't understand that and I had this very strange view of any construction that I would see, I would always think how foolish they are to try to make something. So I was really in a kind of depressive condition.¹¹²

The question arises: How can an intellectual genius abdicate his moral responsibility, or not be able to "think" about the consequences of his actions despite the evidence that he did in fact possess a moral center which he realized belatedly? A related question would be to ask how it is that intellectual intelligence can be divorced from moral intelligence in the way that I have indicated as a chief cause of the failure of secular reason to become a source of morality. His candour is compelling, yet many questions remain about how it was possible that he allowed himself to continue on a path that was so perilous, which he recognized at the time when he stated he was scared when he realized "what the weapon would be."¹¹³

Further, it is arguably true that he felt a deep compulsion to discuss his morality and moral failings from the time he was involved with the bomb given the context of being interviewed so many years later. Without being questioned by the interviewer, he volunteered his entire story of his own free accord suggesting he had a deep and long held remorse. His voluntary expurgation might arguably have been a kind of confession.

It is notable by its absence that he was not offering his discussion as a caution

¹¹² Feynman, *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

specifically to other people, or specifically to other scientists, or to politicians: he was explicitly concerned with his own actions and reactions and culpability. If he possessed a sound moral center, how is it that his moral center was ignored at the time he and all humanity needed it most?

The greater wisdom and morality would have suggested that once the imminent threat that was the cause for building a bomb had ceased, that the much greater threat to humanity and all species should cease as well. Insofar as that Feynman has related his moral failings, he has indicated that the moral principles and personal responsibility which I have argued for in this work were absent at the time they were needed. A question arises as to what might have occurred if more of the scientists had chosen as Joseph Rotblat did, and acted ethically rather than being complicit in building the bomb.

An interesting postscript is that Feynman stated plainly that he “didn’t have much patience with what’s called the humanities even though in the university there were humanities that you had to take.”¹¹⁴ The question arises as to what moral influences might have been brought to bear if he had studied history and ethics and other subjects in the arts and humanities before committing himself to an irrevocable act of history and a lifetime of regret for his part in building the bomb.¹¹⁵ I now turn to the study of a political figure whose moral compass is problematic.

¹¹⁴ Feynman, *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹¹⁵ While beyond the scope of this work, the question as to what use or good are the humanities in Universities may reveal or conceal some compelling information about the human condition and the essential value of the humanities. What if Feynman had studied the humanities?

Robert McNamara

Robert McNamara was an American business executive who aspired to politics and served as Secretary of Defence to the United States Government under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson from 1961 to 1968. He was a follower of the Presbyterian faith. During his tenure he was responsible for increasing the role of the U.S. in the Vietnam War. He had served in the U.S. Army Air Forces from 1943 to 1946 during which time he attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. His main task was to do statistical analysis of the efficiency of fighting the war with the use of chemical defoliants Agent Orange and other “Rainbow” chemicals, bombs, and cannon.¹¹⁶ During his time as Secretary of Defence, he was responsible for increasing the number of U.S. advisers from 900 to 16,000, and troops to almost 535,000 by June 30, 1968 in Vietnam.¹¹⁷

Death totals of military personnel from the Vietnam war, which the US entered on November 1, 1955, and ended on April 30, 1975, were 58,202 Americans including those missing in action (MIA), 220,357 South Vietnamese, 851,000 North Vietnamese and Vietcong, 4,407 Korean, 469 Australian and New Zealand (allies), 252 Thailand, and it is estimated that Vietnamese civilian deaths were in the millions and continue to rise, owing to the long term effects of the defoliants.¹¹⁸

The terrible legacy of chemical warfare and the use of a defoliant named “Agent Orange” which contained a deadly toxin, affected U.S. military and civilian personnel,

¹¹⁶ Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam, a History*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1997) 271.

¹¹⁷ Hanna, Peggy. *Patriotism, Peace and Vietnam: A Memoir*. (Ohio: Springfield. Left to Write. 2007) 113-115.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

Allied military and civilian personnel, and the native peoples of North and South Vietnam. Agent Orange continues to affect populations and the environment 41 years after the end of the Vietnam War: Its contaminant, dioxin - now regarded as one of the most toxic chemicals known to man - remains in Vietnam's ecosystem in the soil and the food supply. Nearly 4.8 million Vietnamese people have been exposed, causing 400,000 deaths. The associated illnesses include cancers, birth defects, skin disorders, autoimmune diseases, liver disorders, psychosocial effects, neurological defects and gastrointestinal diseases. According to the Red Cross of Vietnam, up to one million people are currently disabled or have health problems due to Agent Orange, 100,000 of which are children.¹¹⁹ The United States National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine; the Institute of Medicine (IOM) continues to monitor and study the effects of Agent Orange reporting in the most recent "Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 2010"¹²⁰ and recognizes the long term effects due to the use of such deadly chemicals.

In Errol Morris's 2003 documentary *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*,¹²¹ McNamara explained that the moral problems which arose from engaging in an "unwinnable war" were the result of grave errors of judgment:

Okay. Any military commander who is honest with himself, or with those he's speaking to, will admit that he has made mistakes in the application

¹¹⁹ Center for Research on Globalization. "Vietnam's Horrific Legacy: The Children of Agent Orange" Global Research News. May 26, 2015 <http://www.globalresearch.ca/vietnams-horrific-legacy-the-children-of-agent-orange/5451862/>

¹²⁰ United States National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, The Institute of Medicine (IOM.) *Report: Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 2010*. September 29, 2011. Last Updated: 8/19/2015. <http://iom.nationalacademies.org/reports/2011/veterans-and-agent-orange-update-2010.aspx/>

¹²¹ Morris, Errol. *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*. Documentary. December 19, 2003 http://www.errolmorris.com/film/fow_transcript.html

of military power. He's killed people unnecessarily - his own troops or other troops - through mistakes, through errors of judgment. A hundred, or thousands, or tens of thousands, maybe even a hundred thousand. But, he hasn't destroyed nations.¹²²

McNamara also went on to state that he had been a statistical analyst working for General Curtis LeMay of the U.S. Army Air Force, the arm of the military that firebombed civilian populations in Japan and later the dropping of the Atomic Bomb during World War II. In what seems an almost cold and confused recollection of events, he related a conversation he had with Curtis LeMay:

We burned to death 100,000 Japanese civilians in Tokyo — men, women and children, Mr. McNamara recalled; some 900,000 Japanese civilians died in all. “LeMay said, ‘If we’d lost the war, we’d all have been prosecuted as war criminals.’ “And I think he’s right. He - and I’d say I - were behaving as war criminals.” “What makes it immoral if you lose and not immoral if you win?” he [McNamara] asked. He found the question impossible to answer.¹²³

Here several of McNamara’s moral confusions are noteworthy: one is that McNamara did not seem interested or capable of undertaking a statistical analysis of the moral dimensions of the war or his significant part in it prior to commencing his fateful acts. His chief regret, by all accounts, is that he failed at winning an “unwinnable” war in Vietnam. From his comments, it appears that he remained under the impression so many years

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ McNamara, Robert S. *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*. New York: Vintage Books. 1996. Print. Cited in Morris, Errol. *The Fog of War*. Documentary. December 19, 2003/. Weiner, Tim. *Robert S. McNamara, Architect of a Futile War, Dies at 93* Cited in New York Times Newspaper. The New York Times Company. July 6, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/07/us/07mcnamara.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

later that the war would have been “not immoral” provided they had won.

While McNamara appears to have experienced guilt or regret in his public contrition over losing the war, and for lives lost immediate to the war that he was greatly responsible for, there seems to be little or no concern for the longer term effects of the emotional impact from death and destruction to the spheres of family and loved ones of all the people that were killed or injured and who were irrevocably impacted. Also at issue is the concern of the effects to people in service in the U.S. Military and the general population of the U.S. and its allies. This includes civilian populations of Vietnam and the enemy, and it appears there was little regard, if any at all, for the fauna or the environment of Vietnam. McNamara’s logic seems to be that had the U.S. won the war that these losses, and the grief and destruction would have been statistically acceptable or unworthy of notice or concern - and moral in his terms - or at least, not immoral.

Robert McNamara is iconic of the negative exemplars: In his asking the question what makes it immoral if a war is lost, and not immoral if it is won, there is a unique opportunity for an insight into what is responsible for the failure of morality: Two factors are especially noteworthy: one is that McNamara’s moral conceptions do not include what is explicitly moral; instead he is only concerned with what qualifies as immoral (to lose) or “not” immoral (to win.) There is no evidence of personal responsibility for one’s moral thoughts and decisions, except in the negative – what is immoral and why. The question of what is properly “moral” or constitutes ethical action is neither considered nor apparent in McNamara’s thinking. The second and arguably most critical of points is that McNamara, based on his own language and statements, does not realize that winning or losing war is not the proper criterion: he misses the fact that war itself is a crime against

life, and is itself immoral, and thus raises the question as to whether war can ever be moral or ever truly necessary or just, or justifiable.

Whatever the stated purpose of war, it is aggression and violence, and in the context of Nietzsche/de Waal/Einstein, abnegates the moral principles argued for in this paper. In terms of morality there is no “Just war” there is only a “Just defense” according to the dictates of nature, and the natural desire to “avoid pain and annihilation and to survive and to thrive.” Here, a lack of awareness is plainly visible not only of the correct moral dimensions of war for McNamara, but of his own failure to be able to reason morally in a way that leads to the only life-supporting conclusions available or possible. Any war is the complete failure of humanity to find or create solutions to the problems that are the cause of wars. And with prodigious intellects like that of McNamara, the question arises why and how such demonstrably powerful intellects fail to make these connections, or have any awareness of the broader problems and moral concerns or human suffering. Despite the moral confusion he experienced by his own admission and from his own testimony, McNamara also clearly abrogated morality derived from his professed Christian faith. He thus demonstrates a lack of fundamental moral principles and of personal responsibility by taking refuge behind the impersonal in his appointed role of Secretary of Defense during the war.

Summary Discussion of Exemplars

Examining the actions and the moral stance of positive exemplars shows there are shared traits that are tested against the moral principles advanced from Nietzsche, de Waal, and Einstein, and the ideal of self-reflective and self-responsible thought and actions that are clearly operative. Each positive exemplar displays a high degree of

personal responsibility and the wisdom of a depth of concern for their own humanity, the humanity of others, of other species, and the environment. None professed motives from theocentric imperatives, and none displayed indications of failures of reason viewed in the context of the moral principles, or at all.

In examining each of the positive exemplars, the principles and notion of responsibility have been shown to be universal to them - indicating that what is proposed does in fact work, and may be operative on a wider scale – making it both a viable and defensible proposition. In the case of the anonymous exemplar that saved Lingis, the individualistic and personal nature and scope of his actions indicates the profound effect the moral actions of one person may have on the life of another. The greatness shown in this example of the intimacy of a moral action between two people is as significant as the greatness of the other positive exemplars, and indicates and supports the case for the importance that all people can be individually responsible for their own morality.

Negative exemplars in contrast, by their own actions and declarations shown in evidence did not demonstrate the moral principles or personal responsibility advocated for in this work, and they evidently did not exercise the self-reflective choice of personal ethical orientations or behaviours, which resulted in their immoral actions. Shared traits of negative exemplars are the immoral intentions and actions they refused to recognise, or the refusal of personal responsibility at times it was imperative to forestall immoral actions. In all cases negative exemplars acted contrary to the moral principles by which they were assessed and some acted contrary to their religious backgrounds or religious beliefs, and the moral imperatives from those authorities.

In Robert Oppenheimer's case, he appeared to be in conflict by a strong tension of opposites between his moral center and his actions, and his religious/spiritual beliefs. If he had no moral compass or moral center of his own, he may have been confused by the conflicted dictates of his spiritual views, or his interpretations or misinterpretations of them. However, the fact that he was arguably morally conflicted means, it seems, that one pole of his psychological moral struggle was to act morally, which would have required that he take responsibility for it, which he did not.

Richard Feynman articulated how his dispossession of responsibility for his actions and his active thinking processes resulted in his later strong reaction to the consequences and his moral abnegation of the nuclear weapon he had helped create. In viewing the video interview and seeing his discomfiture, it is arguably true that not taking responsibility for one's moral and ethical actions had a very high cost for him, although not as high as for the victims of the atomic bomb, or humanity at large.

For Robert McNamara, there is evidence of a professed disconnection among the character traits that include his intellect and drive for success, an exclusion of his religious grounding, his lack of moral intelligence showing difficulties with comprehension of morality at a profound level that is beyond the scope of this work to discuss.

This analysis is not intended as personal condemnation of any of the negative exemplars in any sense. Rather, it is a condemnation of their actions or inactions, and of the societies and cultures of belief that can arguably be seen to have contributed to the compromise of their moral compasses, or prevented them in other ways from realizing

their full moral potentials. The intention is only to attempt to examine and support the moral propositions advanced here as part of a critical process in order to investigate whether the principles and responsibility were present or absent. Furthermore, they are indices of the potential viability and usefulness of what is proposed if it may be disseminated. Indeed, the loss of moral capacities is a heavy burden for all humanity. Here, we seek to learn from historical errors and either to inform people of their morality, or seek to use these tragic examples as a form of moral exhortation.

Discussion of Viability

The proposed model of morality/ethics is one that is demonstrated to anticipate and facilitate the transition from metaphysical and authoritarian sources of morality, to morality and ethical actions with an internal locus. The model can provide a missing essence for secular reason if the tenets of the UDHR, and the Nietzsche/de Waal and Einstein/ethical axiom constructs are observed and enacted as individual personal responsibilities. The integrity of this secular conception of morality compels me to the conclusion that it is both viable and defensible based on the demonstrated evidence of all the principles and sense of personal responsibility found in the positive exemplars. With the empirical evidence of the positive exemplars, it is shown to provide an alternative means of establishing new normative moral values, complete with the reasons and method to attain it provided people can be educated in the necessity of it.

Its strength will come from the intention intrinsic to it: that people may challenge and destabilize current moral views that are argued to have failed, and see the advantage in becoming more fully human and humane, and decent. It can arguably help

create a world where people's best interests are known to be identical with those of all humanity by learning that there is an alternative worldview that has the potential of reducing conflict, and enhancing human relations independent of varying belief systems. The conception of morality posited in this essay can be argued to be operative at a level below that of individual or shared beliefs: It can be demonstrated to be effective through reason and application, and requires no beliefs at all except knowledge of the necessity to mature and become responsible. Here, necessity refers to the indispensability of the natural imperative in the context of survival for people to become responsible in life. If all means of psychological, ideological or material support were removed, many people would not be able to stand on their own, independently, and survive and thrive. This is a position of weakness, and dependency - not one of maturity and self-reliance.

The principles have the feature and advantage of being an integral conception that does not require or admit of being dependent on moral commands from external authority, but does not necessarily exclude moral knowledge from an external referent such as a positive moral exemplar understood as a wise guide. This conception of morality provides a self-test, combining rational and emotive criteria by which to deliberate what is truly moral. It provides a method that confirms the outcomes of the test, and encourages the intrinsic and internal self-referential locus of authority and responsibility in order to effect the best moral judgments and actions.

Insofar as responsibility is operative from an internal locus of a personal moral compass, it emphasizes responsibility over accountability, although both are important to morality. Thus responsibility for moral or immoral acts cannot be externalized to any real or imagined authority. It is intended to complement current moral codes to aid in the

transition and evolution toward secular morality, as well as retain whatever necessary protections are derived from the existing codifications of theocentric or legalistic morality while the transition occurs.

A further indication of the viability of this model is anticipated in the potential longitudinal project of encouraging the moral and responsible growth and maturity of individuals of all ages, effecting trans-generational change. Patricia Churchland, in her work “The Neurobiological Platform for Moral Values” states: “How do we get from familial caring to broader community-wide values such as honesty, loyalty, and courage? The answer has two inter-twined parts: learning by the young, and problem solving by everyone.”¹²⁴ Here, the suggestion is that people of any age or disposition may learn.

Interestingly, each of the negative exemplars displayed a tendency for delayed moral awareness, or a kind of latent morality perhaps. This suggests the possibility that people do have innate tendencies for morality, which either remain undeveloped, occluded, or become corrupted (cf. Rousseau.) Further, there is an intuitive sense that people who may have a “latent” moral compass or sense at any age may benefit from being exposed to the moral model proposed in order to develop or reveal their moral being. If this is arguably true, there is an indication that exposing individuals to training and education of an essential understanding of the “processes” of morality understood as insights and understanding, as differentiated from, and opposed to teaching it as a “product” as rules/commands, may yield positive results. Educating people to this model

¹²⁴ Churchland, P.S. “The Neurobiological Platform for Moral Values.” *Behavior* 151. (p.291) (2014) 283 – 296. Cited in de Waal, Frans, ed. *Evolved Morality: The Biology and Philosophy of Human Conscience*. Leiden, NLD: BRILL, 2014.

at an early age may aid in a more integrated moral development preventing confusing and corrupting influences from interfering with people's natural tendency to be moral or have "natural morality" during the formative years. It is arguably true that the best way for the young to grow is by being in the company of, and through the examples of moral exemplars.

However, in suggesting moral principles and individual responsibility as the internal locus of morality I am seeking to imagine how to reverse a long historical pattern and tendency for attachment to external loci of authority and the power of, and submission to authority. As such, adult age or self-aware and self-responsible positive exemplars for children are in short supply in mainstream populations to provide the "environment" children need, as evidenced by the vast social/moral problems in the 21st Century. Thus, it is arguably true that people of all ages must be learners, and the general population needs to engage in ethical problem solving.

One criticism and limitation of the proposed model of secular morality is that while this specific model is shown to be efficacious through examination of exceptional positive exemplars, there are no empirical studies specifically relating to what is proposed as a developmental or remedial model, and hence no data or longitudinal effects have been collected or observed formally. With any soft evolution of human consciousness, there is no expectation of rapid or revolutionary results. There has been little change in moral codes and moral authority for approximately three millennia since the emergence of the Old Testament Bible/Genesis in the Western world. Long held methods and beliefs that provide homeostasis are often not relinquished, or change accepted with facility, posing a further challenge.

Transitions of moral consciousness can reasonably be conjectured to take decades or centuries to show significant change. Another concern could be the resistance to the notion of personal responsibility for those who would have difficulty (emotionally or practically) for taking responsibility and who would experience it perhaps as an imposition or a burden. Further, there may be resistance imposed from institutional concerns (e.g., theocracies that do not want to relinquish their notions or authority), and the unwillingness of people to abandon their allegiance to such types of organization. However, I believe that if the appeal is broad enough, this will abate.

The interest of this work has been to engage the “problems of morality” and the question of a missing element in secular reason that responded to my concerns of authoritarian forms of morality and their diminution, and the claims that secular reason had failed in its expectations. In responding to this question and concerns, I have brought together related kinds of information from various discourses, disciplines, and agencies and amalgamated them to essay a notion of universalising secular morality. I have also attempted to respond to the need, intangibly expressed, of humanity in transition and to meet the needs of a rapidly and perhaps radically changing and globalizing world, and the needs of people who are required to adapt to changing consciousness.

The question and challenge for secular reason has been in what way to envision a missing element, and how to understand what underlies the process of enabling people to become independent moral agents that are self-aware, and have the capacity to be self-reflective in order to attain moral maturity and ethical agency. Throughout this work I have attempted to propose a workable conception of morality and an ethic that

seeks to provide a coherent and integral model of morality. In concluding, it may be useful to reiterate the essence and elements of it here to bring the various aspects and the intentions that compelled it together. In what may be termed a universal secular morality, for lack of a better, it is as follows:

A universal secular morality binds reason to the dignity and intrinsic value of people in an absolutist way that reflects the tenets of the UDHR. It is life supporting, life-furthering, life-preserving, species-preserving, and perhaps species-rearing in a way that is universally true for all people and never contingently true. Integral to it is that it necessarily holds the two pillars of morality and our capacities for reciprocity-fairness (Golden Rule) and empathy-compassion paramount as our inviolable emotional referents. It stands in recognition of the ethical axiom that all humanity at its existential core is fundamentally the same. It is realized in the knowledge that all people should exercise their individual responsibility to affirm all these foundations, be self-reflective on them, and deliberate their ethical actions as responsible moral agents.

Morality is a complex subject: no single treatment can provide a substantive account of all aspects of what may constitute morality or all that is contingent upon it. Having recognized that, it is arguably true that proposing a set of basic principles can provide a referent in the quest for a post post-secular morality that reduces violence and humanly caused suffering in the short term, and promotes human unity and peace in the longer term.

To suggest that people accept the moral principles and responsibilities cannot transfer morality from one type of authority to another. Instead, it is intended to merely

recognize a fundamental truth of nature: That we are all responsible for our own lives, and our morality is essential to our ability to survive and to flourish, extending to recognizing that the most efficacious way to live is benignly and in truth. The morality proposed does not represent a system of rules; rather, it is a mode of consciousness and way of thinking about oneself and others, and the world we all live in. To inform people that they must be responsible is itself an act of responsibility in working to provide people with life skills and knowledge that can enhance and preserve their lives more efficaciously. In this sense it is arguably a human good that if all people would observe and practice creates a better world for all in a way that is an expression of our best capacities and the highest thrusts of life, tempered by intelligence and wisdom.

Through reflecting on the broad historical tendencies of humanity to better our condition, a notion of rights aids in establishing both a foundation for secular reason, and also provides a means to connecting the constellation together in what purports to be a universal conception of morality for humanity that is secular, but can also be adopted by religions of any kind. In binding fundamental human good to a secularized morality that universalises, we may arguably operate on deeper psychological and emotional levels that promote or allow people to flourish, which we desire. It remains to be seen.

Here, I am hoping that articulating fundamentals of an alternative conception of morality will serve to provide a basis for examination and discussion, and the minutiae of details and of ethics as the study of morality will follow on that. Moreover, I wish to emphasize that the foundations of morality I have tried to present be understood and shared as a process and part of life, as differentiated from a “project” of heroic proportions. Rather, it is intended to relate to, and appeal to the dignity and decency of

people in a manner that resonates with them on many levels as knowledge that is hopefully recognised as fundamentally “right” for all humanity. As well, it cannot go unmentioned that people should also be unfailingly moral to themselves, as it is arguably the case that many people unwittingly inflict pain and suffering on themselves. This proposed conception of morality applies to all people. There can be no exceptions. No people were born to exist to suffer, and should not.

In commending a conception of a universalising consensual secular morality and a shift in moral paradigms, I would provide one final example and test of what is proposed. If readers were to have their life judged for any reason, and were faced with severe consequences or annihilation, and it appeared there was no absolution - which conception of morality would they prefer to be judged by? Competing versions of internally inconsistent theocentric morality? Or a legalistic morality that may have unjust laws or could be instrumentalized by reason of a kind that may lack a full measure of humanity? Or would readers prefer this secular and universalising conception anchored to reason and the value and dignity of people found in human rights, to a life supporting cornerstone of moral pillars, and an inarguable and irreducible ethical axiom combined with individual responsibility that sees all people thinking and acting as moral and ethical agents? For some this may be a difficult and challenging choice, for others, perhaps not. Joseph Rotblat was fond of saying: “Remember your humanity and forget the rest.”¹²⁵ To this we can now add: “Remember everyone’s humanity and forget the rest.”

¹²⁵ Milne, Sally. Personal correspondence. Ibid.

Epilogue

Transitions

Articulating a universalising theory of secular morality intended to address 21st Century moral concerns with growing populations, increased migration, greater inter-cultural and social exposure, technological developments, and changing global consciousness requires that the universalising morality be brought to people's awareness. It must be disseminated in age and culturally sensitive and appropriate ways, and tested for its value by the response to it as broadly as possible. My initial intention would be to plant a "seed" of new knowledge and hope for its uptake. Here, the intention is not to "advance" a conception of a universalising morality as an authoritative program. Instead, the shift of the paradigm is intended to occur by putting it on offer, and if people recognize for themselves any intrinsic value it may have, they may hence accept and adopt it of their own accord. With this important caveat noted, it does require that the information be presented for people to have knowledge of it. In a globalized and networked world, there are many possible ways to present the information.

One initiative and method would be to publish the principles and Declaration of Responsibilities (the "universal secular morality" in toto) on the Internet (World Wide Web and social media venues) to offer the information, and provide a feedback mechanism that could be accurately or usefully assessed (insofar as any study in "social sciences" can be.) As a research and delivery platform the Internet provides a relatively low cost outreach to make the information accessible around the world to individuals

who use this type of resource, and to get reactions, criticisms, or responses to it.

It could be published in a downloadable and redistributable form that introduces the notion and explains its purpose in language that is accessible to all people, and then to create and offer companion “instruction” guides that explicate how to access and understand the material, and inform people how to implement it in understandable and practical ways. Each principle and article of the declaration of responsibilities could be examined and explained in plain language, with concrete examples as to how to interpret, understand, and enact them.

Training and education would require two components: theoretical, and practical. The theoretical would focus on the abstract elements and concepts of what is life, and thence what is understood as life supporting, life enhancing, empathy, and compassion, and so forth. The practical would seek to define useful examples to develop skills of judgment of moral values and issues, life skills to assess conflict situations, negotiation of moral deliberation, and synthesis of moral knowledge, etc., for a few examples. Here it is important to note that this is intended as an experiential “learning-by-doing” model that actively engages people in various learning models (e.g., moral literacy, engagement/enactment exercises, and real-world experience.)

A second means to advancing and testing the proposal would be to design educational materials and introduce them in educational settings: for example, secular public schools, private elementary and senior secondary schools, colleges, universities, and technical training institutes that have course content that might have moral dimensions. Initial research efforts via public outreach or in educational institutions

would anticipate offering the information at the highest level of generality, and if interest was seen to develop, it could become more detailed and specific according to audience preferences and feedback, and demographic and financial considerations.

For any endeavour to compile empirical evidence there would be challenges in assessing the qualitative results of audiences as measures of the appeal or success. Quantitative results of numbers of participants, response surveys and opinion polls, their ages and geo-locations etc., would be useful as measures of interest that would provide data as to how best deliver the content according to the needs of varying populations. As what purports to be a novel approach to understanding and teaching about morality, my proposed research will provide information on best practices in content delivery (pedagogy) in a range of classroom curriculum design, computer games, print or digital media, educational software, social networking, and public forums or keynote speaking to name a few. What is presented here is a tentative listing of possibilities, and I cannot anticipate all the ways and means that people might be engaged by it, and with it.

Future Research and Interests

Beyond the completion of this work, I desire to continue engaging and creating novel ideas and ways of investigating human concerns as these hold a great and compelling appeal. My special interest in Peace remains a chief priority as that relates to all other interests. Other endeavours would include continuing with advanced studies in the humanities seeking to further develop new works that are in progress at the present, pursuing research opportunities, or attempting to create new knowledge and original works within the academic environment. Another possibility is to pursue other interests in

the humanities privately and perhaps to attempt to write books to market publicly that have been on hold, and other projects such as productised information web sites.

I have several specific research and writing interests (that I have commenced) that may admit of alternative approaches, methods, and understandings of human consciousness. For example, one research interest is investigating and revealing ways in which people from all parts of the world, and of differing beliefs and cultures can all respond to abstract universal truths about their humanity, contingent on the type of language that is used to convey them. This thesis assumes there is knowledge of a kind that has the ability to bypass the cognitive structures and mental filters of mind, and makes a direct appeal to deeper, central, and universal human capacities and knowing. Initial informal investigations suggest an innate capacity for recognition of “universal” forms of knowledge despite language barriers (with accurate translations), ideation, levels of education, levels of intelligence, or other factors assumed to limit or restrict access to fundamental human goods and knowledge.

I have a further interest in investigating the intriguing question “What is the meaning of life”? A theory attendant to this question is that it is putatively the wrong question in relation to what the question is intended to appeal to. A wrong question may never result in a correct or satisfying answer, and it is possible that this has not been investigated fruitfully. An alternative question and approach may provide the answer, though obliquely, or from a different perspective and understanding.

Through investigating novel approaches to these enduring questions and concerns, it may be possible to articulate a substantive justification for the arts and

humanities, which may serve to strengthen their presence in societies increasingly focused on money, production, and technologies, but which eschew the spiritual and emotional needs of humanity at large. It is arguably true that the arts and humanities remain an important need for people with the exponential increases in populations, diaspora and cultural diffusion, technological advances, and the uncertainties of the future. We have to ask what the future might be like if we ignore the spiritual for the material, and whether there is a price to bear for ignoring this important aspect of our humanity. It is surely worth examining and essaying this type of knowledge, and there is no desire to turn away from doing so. There is nothing more interesting than the human mind and consciousness.

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