

[119]Chapter 5

On Virtues

I

Each of the moral foundations I have established—shame, pity and religious feeling—can be examined from three sides: as a *virtue*, as a *rule* of action, and as the condition of a certain good.

Thus, with respect to shame we distinguish, above all, people who are by nature modest and shameless,¹ approving the first and censuring the second. Consequently, *modesty* is recognized as a good natural² quality, or a virtue. However, it is thereby abstracted from specific cases and³ elevated into a *norm*, or a general rule of action (and, through this, also serves as a basis for the *evaluation* of actions), independently of this virtue's presence or absence in this or that person. If modesty is not something that can be good in one case yet bad in another (as, for example, a loud voice in a public assembly is good but bad in the room of a sleeping patient), i.e.,⁴ if modesty is in itself a moral good, then reason demands that in every case we⁵ act in accordance with it, namely, that we *abstain* from all shameful actions, i.e., those that express the predominance of the lower nature over the higher, and *practice* actions of the opposite character. Behavior conforming to this rule as a result leads to constant self-control, to freedom of the spirit and to the spirit's power over material existence. That is, it leads to a state that gives us a certain higher *satisfaction* and that is a moral good.

E] The original form of this chapter was first published with the subtitle "From my moral philosophy." In the first edition of the compiled work from 1897, Chap. 5 spans pp. 131–164.

¹ C] with respect to ... modest and shameless,] the ability to feel pity is, above all, the basis for distinguishing between modest and shameless people, **AB**.

² C] natural] *Absent in A*.

³ C] thereby abstracted from specific cases and] *Absent in AB*.

⁴ C] If modesty is ... patient), i.e.,] *Absent in AB*.

⁵ C] reason demands that in every case we] we must in every case **AB**.

Therefore, the ability to feel pity or compassion (as opposed to egoism, cruelty and rage) is, [120]in the first place, a good personal quality or virtue. Insofar as it is recognized, or approved of, as such, this ability serves as the norm, for an altruistic action in accordance with the rules of justice and mercy. Such action leads to the moral good of true social life, or solidarity, with others, and finally with all living creatures.

In the same way, a feeling of gratitude to that which is higher, and upon which we depend, is the natural foundation of that virtue called piety.⁶ It, thereby, also gives a rational⁷ rule for religious behavior, and it leads to the moral good of solidarity with the original causes and bearers of existence, viz., with our ancestors, with the deceased in general and with the entire unseen world that from this point of view⁸ conditions our life.

With an inseparable and intrinsic connection between a given virtue, the rules of action corresponding to it and the moral good resulting from this action, there is no need for us to adopt all of these points of view each time we examine⁹ some ethical content more closely. It is enough to limit ourselves to one, viz., the point of view of virtue, since the other two are logically contained in it. As a consequence of this, it is impossible to carry out a sharp demarcation between them. In fact, it is impossible to deny the virtuosity of a person who invariably acts in accordance with the rules of virtue, even if this person possesses the corresponding natural faculty only to a weak degree or even is noted for the opposite faculty. On the other hand, in contrast to virtue what I call a moral good is also a virtue—though not as an originally given, but as an acquired, state. It is *a norm of activity that has been transformed in us into our second nature*.

II

A virtuous person is a person *as he or she ought to be*. In other words, virtue is the normal, or *proper, relation* of a person to everything (because it is impossible to think of unrelated qualities or properties). A proper relation is not a relation of equality. In distinguishing oneself from another, we necessarily¹⁰ posit or determine this other in three ways: either as *lower* (in essence), or as *similar* to us (of the same kind), or as *higher* than us. [121]Obviously, there cannot be a fourth possibility.¹¹ From this, the three-fold character of the proper, or moral, relation *logically* follows. For clearly to treat that which is lower (let's say, an inclination of one's

⁶ C] natural foundation of that virtue called piety.] foundation of that virtue called piety (*pietas*).
AB.

⁷ C] rational] *Absent in AB.*

⁸ C] from this point of view] *Absent in AB.*

⁹ C] examine] review **AB.**

¹⁰ C] necessarily] *Absent in AB.*

¹¹ C] Obviously, there cannot be a fourth possibility.] *Absent in AB.*

material nature) as if it were higher (say, a prescription of the divine will) would by no means be the *proper* relation. It would be precisely contrary to what is proper if we were to treat a being similar to ourselves (say, a human) either as lower (looking at him as a soulless thing)¹² or as higher (seeing him as a deity).

Thus, we have not one, but three proper, or moral, relations, that is, three kinds of virtue, corresponding to the three spheres into which the totality of objects is¹³ necessarily divided in relation to us. This is *necessarily* the case, because we find ourselves to be neither the unconditionally supreme, or highest, being nor the unconditionally subordinate, or lowest. Nor, finally, are we the only one of our kind. We are aware that we are an *intermediate* being, and, besides, *one of many* intermediate beings. From this, the triplicity of our moral relations follows as a direct logical consequence. By virtue of this, one and the same quality or manifestation can have a completely different or even opposite significance, depending on the kind of object it is a matter of. Thus, when it is a matter of objects of greater dignity, belittling oneself or recognizing one's worthlessness is called *humility* and is a virtue, but in relation to worthless objects it is called meanness and is immoral. In precisely the same way, *enthusiasm* is, without doubt, a virtue when it is aroused by the highest principles and ideals. With respect to unimportant objects, however, it is a ridiculous weakness, and when directed to objects of a lower order it becomes a shameful mania. Thus, virtues, in the proper sense, are always and in everyone the same, because in essence they express a quality that is properly determined, or that corresponds to the very sense of one or another of the three possible spheres of relations in life. From these determinate and determining virtues, we must distinguish qualities of the will and types of action that do not have in themselves a moral determination or do not constantly correspond to a certain sphere of duty. This is why they can at one time be virtues, at another indifferent states, and at yet another time [122]even vices. However, the change in moral significance is not always accompanied by a corresponding change in our designation for the given psychological property.¹⁴

It is clear, therefore, that even should we not find in our psychic experience the three fundamental moral feelings of shame, pity and reverence, it would be necessary on the basis of logic alone to divide the full scope of moral relations¹⁵ into three spheres or accept the three fundamental types of virtue as expressive of our proper human relation to what is lower than us, what is similar or like us and what is above us.

¹² C] a soulless thing)] a slave without any rights) **AB**.

¹³ C] the totality of objects is] all the spheres are **AB**.

¹⁴ C] Thus, virtues, in the proper sense ... given psychological property.] *Absent in AB*.

¹⁵ C] full scope of moral relations] entire moral sphere **AB**.

III

In addition to the moral foundations we have recognized, viz., shame, pity and reverence for the higher, if we look over all the other qualities that have been considered virtuous in antiquity and in modernity, not a single one of them would *in itself* deserve this designation. Each of these various qualities can rightfully be considered a virtue only when it accords with the objective norms of a proper relation, expressed in the three kinds of fundamental moral data we mentioned. Thus, *abstinence*, or *moderation*, has the dignity of a virtue only when it refers to *shameful* states and actions, restricting or pushing them aside. Virtue does not require that we be abstinent or moderate *in general*, or in everything, but only that we abstain from what is *below* our human dignity and that would be shameful for us to accept unhindered. However, if someone is moderate in seeking the truth or abstains from showing kindness to his neighbors, no one would consider or call such a person virtuous for doing this. On the contrary, he or she is condemned for lacking generous aspirations. It follows from this that moderation is not in itself, or fundamentally, a virtue but becomes or does not become one depending on its proper or improper application to these or those objects. In the same way, *bravery*, or *courage*, is a virtue only to the extent that it expresses the proper relation, namely of mastery and power, of a rational human being to one's lower material nature, an elevation of the spirit over the [123]animal instinct of self-preservation.¹⁶ Valiant bravery is shown by a person who does not tremble at accidental disasters, who keeps one's self-control in the face of external dangers and boldly risks one's own life and material goods for the sake of higher and more worthy goods. However, the *bravest* expression of outrageous behavior, the *boldest* aggressiveness and the most *intrepid* blaspheming are not praised as virtues, nor is the dread of sin or the fear of God considered shameful cowardice. This means that the property of being virtuous or vicious depends upon a fitting relation to the object, and not on the psychological quality of emotional and volitional states.¹⁷

The third of the so-called cardinal (fundamental) virtues,¹⁸ *wisdom* is the understanding of the best ways and means for attaining set goals and the skills to apply these means properly. It attains the significance of a virtue as a result of this formal capacity for the most expedient action, but that significance also necessarily depends on the worth of these very goals.¹⁹ Wisdom as a virtue is the ability to attain

¹⁶ F] Concerning this virtue, see above, Chap. 2, pp. 48–49. C] *Entire note absent in A.*

¹⁷ C] quality of emotional and volitional states.] subjective quality of the states. **AB.**

¹⁸ F] From the earliest days of the scholastics, the designation “cardinal” or “*philosophic* virtues” (as opposed to the three *theological* ones of faith, hope and charity) has been reserved for the four virtues Plato mentioned in his *Republic*, namely, abstinence, courage, wisdom and justice. By the way, I understand these four virtues in their general sense, independently of the special sense they can have in Plato's theory. C] *Entire note absent in A*] E] abstinence, courage, wisdom and justice.] See Plato 1963b: 669 (4: 427e) and 675 (4.433b).

¹⁹ C] these very goals.] *Footnote added at this point in A alone:* I take these virtues in their general sense, independent of any special definitions that they may have in some philosophical systems.

the *best* goals in the *best* way, or the skill of applying one's mental powers to objects of the greatest worth in the most expedient way. There could be wisdom without this latter condition, but it would not be a virtue. The biblical "serpent" was certainly justified in being called the wisest of earthly creatures by its understanding of the nature of the human psyche and by the skill with which it used this understanding to achieve its goals.²⁰ However, since the goal itself was not a moral good, all of the serpent's superior²¹ wisdom was not recognized as a virtue, but was cursed as the source of evil. The wisest creature has remained the symbol of the immoral, creeping [124]mind, which quibbles only about what is base and unworthy. In everyday life, the worldly wisdom that goes no further than understanding human weaknesses and the skillful organization of personal matters in accordance with egoistic goals is not²² recognized as a virtue.

The concept of *justice* (the fourth fundamental virtue) is taken in four different senses. In its broadest sense, "just" is a synonym for proper, correct, normal, or right in general—not only in the moral sphere (concerning action and the will), but also in the intellectual sphere (concerning cognition and thinking). We say, for example, "You reason *justly*" or "*Cette solution (d'un problème mathématique ou métaphysique) est juste.*" In such a sense, the concept of justice, approaching that of validity,²³ is wider than the concept of virtue and belongs to theoretical more than to practical philosophy. In a second, more specific sense, justice (*aequitas*) corresponds to the fundamental principle of altruism, which demands that we recognize the right to life and well-being for all others as much as we individually recognize it for ourselves. In this sense, justice is not just another *particular* virtue. Rather, it is merely the logical objective expression of the same moral principle that is subjectively, or psychologically, expressed in the fundamental feeling of pity (compassion, sympathy). A third sense of "justice" arises when we distinguish between degrees of altruism (that is, of a moral relation to those similar to us), and, properly speaking, we reserve the designation "justice" (*justitia*) for the first, negative stage ("harm no one"). The second, positive stage, which demands that we "help everyone," is designated by the word "charity" (*caritas, charité*). As we already pointed out earlier (in the third chapter),²⁴ this distinction is only relative.²⁵ It is, in any case, inadequate to isolate justice as a separate virtue. For no one would call a person "just" who decisively refuses to help anyone or refuses to alleviate anyone's suffering, even if he or she does not directly injure one's neighbors through violence. The *moral* motive in both of these latter cases, i.e., in abstaining from injuring and in not rendering assistance, is one and the same, namely, a recognition of the right of others to life and well-being. Additionally, it is impossible to find any moral motive

²⁰ E] See Genesis 3: 1–5.

²¹ C] since the goal itself was not a moral good, all of the serpent's superior] this superior **AB**.

²² C] goals is not] goals and practical materialism is not **AB**.

²³ C], approaching that of validity,] *Absent in AB*.

²⁴ C] (in the third chapter)] *Absent in AB*.

²⁵ C] is only relative.] *Footnote here only in A*: cf. "Pity and altruism," (*Knizhki nedelja*, March 1895).

that [125] would force someone to stop precisely *here* at this halfway point and be satisfied with merely the negative side of this moral demand. For these reasons, it is clear that such a break, or limitation, cannot in any way correspond to any particular virtue, but merely expresses a *lesser degree* of the general altruistic virtue (namely, the feeling of sympathy). Here, there is no generally obligatory and constant measure for the greater or the lesser. Rather, in each case our evaluation depends on concrete conditions. When the moral awareness of a community reaches a certain level of development, conscience directly condemns the refusal to *help* a person as *wrong*, even if the person is a complete stranger or even an enemy. This is quite logical. For, in general, if I *ought* to help my neighbor, then by not helping him or her I thereby wrong this person. Even at the lower stage of moral awareness, a refusal to help, within certain limits, is equivalent to a wrong and a crime—for example, within a family, a tribe, a military detachment. Among barbarian peoples, where everything is permissible towards enemies in such a way that the very idea of wrong is inapplicable to them, a peaceful traveler or guest has a *right* to the most active help and generous gifts.²⁶ However, if justice prescribes charity or demands mercy (among barbarians only towards some, and with the progress of morality towards all), it is clear that such justice is not a separate virtue, distinct from mercy, but only the direct expression of the general moral principle of altruism, which has different degrees and applicable forms, but which always contains the idea of justice.

Finally, the word “justice” is used in yet a fourth sense. Supposing that *laws* (both governmental and of the church) objectively express moral truth, unswerving adherence to these laws also imposes an absolute moral obligation, and a corresponding inclination to adhere rigorously to laws of all types is regarded as a virtue identical with that of justice. Such a view is applicable only within the limits of our assumption, that is, it is applicable only to laws that proceed from Divine perfection and therefore express the highest truth. To all others, it is applicable only insofar as they agree with this truth. For it is proper that we should listen to God more than to people. Therefore, justice in this sense, i.e., as an aspiration [126] for *legality*, is not in itself a virtue. It may or may not be a virtue depending on the nature and the origin of the laws that demand obedience. For the source of human laws is vague. The transparent stream of moral truth is hardly visible in it under the deposits²⁷ of other, purely historical elements, which express only the factual correlation of forces and interests at one moment or another. This is why justice as a virtue by no means always coincides with legality, or judicial right, and sometimes directly contradicts it, as jurists themselves are aware:²⁸ *summum jus—summa injuria*.²⁹ However, fully recognizing the difference and the possible conflict between inner moral truth and the law, many suppose that such a conflict should always be settled in favor of

²⁶ C] and generous gifts.] help and generous gifts (a classical example—Odysseus in Phaeacia). **AB.**

²⁷ C] deposits] mass **A.**

²⁸ C] it, as jurists themselves are aware:] it. Jurists themselves know well the thesis: **AB.**

²⁹ E] *summum jus—summa injuria*] Latin: “the more Justice, the more injustice”. (That is, laws strictly interpreted yield the height of injustice.) Cicero 1991: 14 (*De officiis*, I, X, 33).

legality, that in every case justice demands submission to the law, even if that law is unjust. In support of such an opinion, they refer to the authority and example of the righteous Socrates from antiquity, who considered it inadmissible to flee from the lawful, albeit unjust, verdict of the Athenian judges against him. However, this famous example, in fact, says something quite different.

As far as we know from Xenophon and Plato, it was chiefly two different motives that led Socrates to his decision. In the first place, he held it would be a shameful act of cowardice to flee and thereby save the small remainder of the life that he, as a 70-year-old man, could expect, particularly since he believed in the immortality of the soul and taught that true wisdom is a continual *dying* (to the material world). In the second place, Socrates held that *for the sake of filial piety* a citizen should sacrifice *his personal welfare* to the laws of his fatherland, even if they are unjust. This is why asceticism and piety as moral motivations, and certainly not some unconditional significance of legality, which he never recognized, guided Socrates. In his case, there was no conflict between the two obligations, but only a conflict between a personal *right* and a civic *obligation*. In principle, we can accept that right must yield. No one is obliged to defend *one's* material life. It is merely one's right, and to sacrifice it is always permissible and sometimes commendable. However, it is a different matter when [127]the civic duty of obedience to law conflicts not with a personal right, but with a moral obligation. For example, there is the famous classical example of Antigone, who had to choose between a religio-moral obligation to give her brother an honorable funeral and her civic obligation to obey a dishonorable and inhuman prohibition to give him one. Since the prohibition stemmed from the legitimate authority of her native city, it was legally just. Here, the rule comes into effect: We should obey God more than men. It clearly turns out that justice, in the sense of legality, i.e., formally legitimate behavior, is not in itself a virtue, but can become such, or not such, depending on the circumstances. This is why the heroism of Socrates, who yielded to an unjust law, and the heroism of Antigone, who violated such a law, are equally commendable. Both cases are commendable not just because there was a sacrifice of life in both, but from the very nature of the concern. Socrates yielded *his* material right for the sake of the higher *ideas*³⁰ of human dignity and patriotic duty. Antigone, however, affirmed *another's* right and thereby fulfilled her obligation, for her brother's funeral was *his* right. She viewed the funeral as an obligation, whereas Socrates was in no way obligated to escape his prison. In general, *pietas erga patriam*,³¹ as well as *pietas erga parentes*,³² can oblige us only to sacrifice a right of our own, but in no way that of another. For example, let us assume that filial piety, carried to the point of heroism, prompts someone not to oppose one's father, who intends to kill him or her. The moral value of such heroism can be disputed, but it would never occur to anyone to justify or consider heroic a person who considers oneself duty-bound to obey one's father and kill one's brother or sister. Precisely the same thing applies to unjust and inhuman

³⁰ C] *ideas*] *considerations* A.

³¹ E] Latin: love for one's fatherland.

³² E] Latin: love for one's parents.

laws. It follows from this that justice in the sense of obedience to laws, as such, according to the motto *fiat justitia, pereat mundas*,³³ is still not a virtue.

IV

The three so-called theological virtues recognized in patristic ethics (that of the Church Fathers) and in scholasticism, viz., faith, [128]hope, and love,³⁴ also have in themselves no unconditional moral worth, but depend on other facts. Not all *faith* is a virtue for theologians. A faith that either has a nonexistent or unworthy object or that treats what is worthy as unworthy is not a virtue. So, in the first case, if someone firmly believes in the philosopher's stone, i.e., in a powder, liquid or gas that transforms all metals into gold, such a faith in an object that by the nature of things is nonexistent is not held to be a virtue, but a self-delusion.³⁵ For a second case, let us assume someone not just recognizes—with good reason—the existence of the power of evil as a fact, but with confidence and devotion makes this power the object of faith and entering into an agreement sells his foul³⁶ soul, etc. Referring to an object that, although it exists, is unworthy and pernicious, such faith is justly considered a terrible moral degradation. Finally, in the third case the faith of the devils themselves, of whom the apostle says that they believe (in God) and tremble,³⁷ is not considered a virtue. For although it refers to an object that exists and that is absolutely worthy, this faith refers to its object in an unworthy manner (instead of joy with horror, and instead of desire with disgust). Thus, only *a faith in a higher being* that regards this being in *a worthy manner*, namely, with free filial piety, can be considered a virtue. Such a faith fully coincides with the religious feeling that we find as one of the three original bases of morality.³⁸

The second theological virtue, *hope*, essentially amounts to the same thing. It is not a virtue when someone relies on his own strength or wisdom, or “on princes, or on the son of man,”³⁹ or on God when it is in the expectation of obtaining material goods from Him. Hope is considered a virtue only if it regards God as the source of

³³ E] Latin: Let justice be done, though the world be destroyed. This motto is commonly ascribed to Ferdinand I (1503–1564), Holy Roman Emperor, King of Bohemia and Hungary.

³⁴ F] On the basis of a well-known text by St. Paul, in which, by the way, the term “virtue” does not occur. E] Cf. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”—1 Corinthians 13: 13. Note that in the King James version, quoted here, the Greek word *ἀγάπη* is translated “charity,” whereas most more recent versions of the Bible render it as “love.”

³⁵ C] self-delusion.] folly. **AB.**

³⁶ C] foul] *Absent in A.*

³⁷ F] James 2: 19.

³⁸ C] bases of morality.] *Footnote here only in A:* cf. “Religious principle of morality,” *Knizhki nedelja*, April 1895.

³⁹ E] Cf. “in princes, nor in the son of man”—Psalm 146: 3.

the true good to come. This is the same basic religious attitude,⁴⁰ though modified by an idea of the future and a feeling of expectation.

[129] Finally, the moral significance of the third and greatest theological virtue—*love*—depends solely on the given objective determinations. Love in itself, or love in general, is not a virtue, for otherwise all creatures without exception would be virtuous, since all of them necessarily love something⁴¹ and live by their love. However, egoistic love for oneself and for one's own possessions, as well as passionate love for nature and for unnatural pleasures, love for drink and love for horse racing, are not regarded as virtuous.

"*Il faut en ce bas monde aimer beaucoup de choses*,"⁴² suggests a neo-pagan poet. Such "love" was earlier rejected by the apostle of love:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.⁴³

This is the first, negative part of the commandment of love, and we should not forget about it, as is usually the case. It is nothing other than the expression of the basic principle of asceticism: Protect oneself from one's lower nature and counteract its clutches. For, as we clearly see from the context, the apostle took the world to be neither the collection of our fellow human beings nor the totality of the works that herald the glory of God, but precisely only the dark and nonsensical basis of material nature that escapes its proper, passive and potential state and unlawfully invades the sphere of the human spirit. It is bluntly said here that everything in⁴⁴ the world is a *lust of the flesh*,⁴⁵ i.e., a desire for immeasurable sensuality, *lust of the eyes*⁴⁶, i.e., greed, or self-interest, and *pride of life*, i.e., vanity and ambition.

Biblical ethics adds to the negative prescription, *love not the world*, two positive ones, *love God with all your heart* and *love your neighbor as you love yourself*.⁴⁷ These two loves are correctly distinguished, for the particular nature of the objects necessarily conditions the particular nature of our proper moral relation to them. Love for our neighbors is rooted in pity, whereas our love for God is rooted in reverence. To love one's neighbor as one loves oneself really means to pity him or her just as one does oneself, and love for God with all of one's heart means to be entirely devoted to Him, the complete [130]unification of one's will with the Divine will, i.e., the perfection of the filial, or religious, feeling and relation.

⁴⁰ C] attitude] feeling **AB**.

⁴¹ C] something] *Absent in AB*.

⁴² E] French: "Here below, it is necessary to love many things"—from a sonnet entitled "A. M. V. H." by Alfred de Musset (1810–1857). Solov'ëv's citation is somewhat faulty. The line should read: "Il faut, dans ce bas monde, aimer beaucoup de choses." See de Musset 1867: 129.

⁴³ F] 1 John 2: 15.

⁴⁴ C] everything in] *Absent in A*.

⁴⁵ E] 1 John 2: 15.

⁴⁶ E] 1 John 2: 16.

⁴⁷ E] Cf. Mathew 22: 37–39.

Therefore, the commandment of love is not connected with any individual virtue, but is the ultimate expression of all the fundamental demands of morality in the three necessary spheres: our relations to that which is lower, our relations to that which is higher, and our relations to that which is on the same level.

V

Having shown that the four “cardinal” as well as the three “theological” virtues in one way or another amount to the three original bases of⁴⁸ morality mentioned earlier and do not represent independent sources of moral activity, I can let the morally good will and quick wits of the reader continue the investigation into the use of the other so-called virtues. A generally recognized list of such virtues does not exist, and, by means of scholastic distinctions, their number could be augmented indefinitely. Merely as a sort of “supplementary” addition to the preceding, I would like to say a few words about the five virtues in which a certain interest has been shown in this or that respect, namely, about *magnanimity*, *unselfishness*, *generosity*, *patience* and *truthfulness*.

Magnanimous is what we call a person who finds it *beneath one’s dignity*, or is ashamed, to insist on one’s material rights to the detriment of others, or whose will is decided by *lower* worldly interests (for example, vanity), which he or she, without difficulty, sacrifices for the sake of higher considerations. Magnanimous is also what we call a person who is unperturbed by repeatedly enduring worldly troubles and disasters, because one finds it *shameful* to have the tranquility of one’s spirit depend on material contingencies. The emphasized words point to the fact that this virtue is merely a special expression, or manifested form, of our first moral foundation, viz., the self-assertion of the human spirit against the lower, material side of our being. The entire point here is the feeling of human dignity, which is originally expressed in the simple feeling of shame.

Unselfishness is the spiritual freedom from any attachment to a special [131]sort of material goods, viz., those termed possessions. It is clear that this is a particular expression of that same feeling of human dignity. Corresponding to it, we have the vices of stinginess and greed, which are its opposite and which are recognized as *shameful*.

In its external manifestations, *generosity* coincides with magnanimity and unselfishness but has another, inner foundation—an altruistic one. A virtuous, generous person is one who out of *justice or love for other human beings* shares his or her possessions with others (because, insofar as one does this out of vanity or arrogance it is not a virtue). However, such a person can also be attached to the possession he or she gives away to the point of stinginess. In that case, it is impossible, strictly speaking, to call him or her disinterested. Therefore, we should say simply that in him the altruistic virtue of generosity prevails over the vice of selfishness.

⁴⁸ C] bases of] bases (elements) of A.

Patience (as a virtue) is merely the passive side of the mental quality that in its active manifestation is called magnanimity, or spiritual courage. The distinction between them lies almost entirely in subjective nuances, which cannot be firmly demarcated. One and the same person who calmly endures troubles and suffering may be called by some magnanimous, by others patient, by yet another group courageous, and by yet a fourth group an example of a special virtue—tranquility (*αταραξία*), etc. A dispute over the comparative worth of these definitions can only be of lexical but not ethical interest. On the other hand, the identity of the external attributes here can also conceal (as it did in the previous case with generosity) essential differences in the ethical content. Owing to a low nervous sensitivity, a dull mind and an apathetic temperament, a person can patiently bear physical and mental suffering. In such a case, patience is not a virtue. In another case, owing to an inner spiritual force that does not succumb to external influences, patience is an ascetic virtue (reducible to our first moral foundation). In still yet another case, owing to a gentleness and love for one's neighbor (*caritas*), which does not wish to reward evil with evil and an offense with another offense, patience is an altruistic virtue (reducible to the second foundation, viz., pity, which extends here even to one's enemies and offenders). Finally, patience can arise from [132]obedience to the higher will, on which depends all that takes place. In this case, it is a pietistic, or religious, virtue (reducible to the third foundation).

A special variety of patience is the quality bearing in the Russian language the grammatically incorrect designation “*terpimost*”—tolerance—(*passivum pro activo*).⁴⁹ This term designates the admission of the other person's freedom, even though it is assumed that it leads to theoretical and practical errors. This attribute and attitude is in itself neither a virtue nor a vice but can in various cases be one or the other, depending upon the object. (For example, an exultant crime of the powerful over the weak should not be tolerated. This is why “tolerance” of it is not virtuous, but immoral.) However, it chiefly depends upon inner motives which here can be either magnanimity or cowardice, either respect for the rights of others or disregard for the good of others, either profound confidence in the conquering power of the higher truth or an indifference to this truth.⁵⁰

VI

Among the derivative, or secondary, virtues *truthfulness* should be recognized as the most important, both because of its specifically human character (for, in the precise sense, it is possible only for linguistic beings)⁵¹ and because of its significance

⁴⁹ E] Latin: passive instead of active.

⁵⁰ F] For a more detailed discussion of this cf. the beginning of my article “*Spor o spravedlivosti*” E] See SS, vol. 6: 442–455.

⁵¹ F] Animals can be naive or cunning, but only a person can be truthful or untruthful.

for social morality. At the same time, this virtue has served and is still serving as the subject of particular disputes between moralists of different directions.

Words are an instrument of reason for expressing what is, what can be, and what should be, i.e., for the expression of the real, the formal and the ideal truth. The possession of such an instrument is a part of higher human nature. Therefore, when a person misuses it by expressing something that is not true for the sake of lower, material goods, he does something contrary to human dignity, something that is *shameful*. At the same time, words are the expression of human solidarity. [133] They are the most important means of intercourse between people, but this holds only with respect to truthful words. This is why the use of words by an individual to express an untruth for the sake of egoistic goals (not only individually egoistic, but also collectively egoistic, e.g., concerning solely a particular family, class or party, etc.), is a violation of the rights of others (since words are communal property) and harms the community. A falsehood, therefore, is shameful for the liar and at the same time injurious and harmful to the one who is deceived. Thus, the demand for truthfulness has a dual moral foundation. First, it is based on the human *dignity* of the very subject, and, secondly, on *injustice*, i.e., on the recognition of the rights of others not to be deceived by me to the extent that I myself cannot wish to be deceived by them.

All of this is rationally deduced, and there is nothing doubtful about it. However, scholastic philosophy has abstracted the demand for truthfulness from its moral foundations and converted it into a *special* virtue that, taken *separately*, has an unconditional significance. It has, thereby, created contradictions and bewilderment, which are not an essential part of the matter. If a falsehood is understood to be a contradiction of the truth in the full sense of the word, i.e., not only of real and formal truth, but principally also of the ideal, or purely moral, truth (of what *should* be), then it would be perfectly correct and indisputable to attach unconditional significance to the principle “Do not say something false” such that no exceptions are allowed under any circumstances. For clearly truth ceases to be truth if there is even one case in which a departure from it is permitted. No questions could arise here—at least none between people who understand that $A=A$ and $2 \times 2=4$. However, the fact is that the philosophers who, in particular, insist that the principle “Do not say something false” admits of no exception are themselves guilty of hypocrisy by arbitrarily limiting the significance of truth (in each given case) to the real alone, or, more precisely, to the factual, aspect of the matter, i.e., *taken in isolation*. Adhering to this point of view, they come to the following absurd dilemma (I adduce the following commonly cited example as the simplest and clearest): Let us assume someone with no other means to hinder a murderer in pursuit of an innocent victim hides this intended victim in his house. When the murderer asks whether the intended victim is there, the person gives a negative answer or, to sound more [134]convincing, “throws him off” by pointing to a quite different location. Two possibilities exist here: In lying in this manner, the person acts either in accordance with moral duty or contrary to it. If we take the first possibility seriously, then breaking the moral commandment *not to lie* is permissible and morality is thereby stripped of its unconditional significance. A door is open to justify every kind of evil. If we take the second possibility seriously, i.e., that the person, by saying something false,

has sinned,⁵² then it appears that the moral duty to tell the truth has obliged him in fact to become an undisputable accessory to the murder, which is equally contrary to both reason and our sense of morality. In such a situation, there can be no middle course of action. To refuse to answer the murder or to give an evasive answer would, of course, merely confirm the murder's suspicion and would ultimately give away the victim.⁵³

As is well known, such great moralists as Kant and Fichte insisted on the unconditional and formal character of moral prescriptions thinking that even in such circumstances telling a lie is impermissible, and that, as a consequence, the interrogated person is dutifully obliged to tell the truth without considering the consequences, which (supposedly) are not one's responsibility. Other moralists—those who reduce all of morality to the feeling of sympathy or the principle of altruism—think telling a lie is permissible and is in general even obligatory in order⁵⁴ to save others and for the sake of their well-being. Such a principle, though, is too broad and indefinite. It opens the door to all sorts of abuse.⁵⁵

How are we, however, to answer the question: Should or should not this unfortunate person say something that is false? When the two horns of some dilemma equally lead to an absurdity, it means that the very formulation of the dilemma contains something wrong. In the problem before us, what is wrong is our reliance on the ambiguity of the word “falsehood” (“false, “to lie”), which is taken here as though it had only one sense or as though one of the senses necessarily also contains the other, something which in fact is not the case. Therefore, the main term is *falsely* understood at the very start of the argument, and this is why no conclusions, except false ones, can come from it.

Let us analyze this in detail, and let the reader not complain about a certain punctiliousness in our investigation: The very question before us [135]arose only because of the scholastic pedantry of abstract moralists.

According to its formal definition, a falsehood is a contradiction between someone's assertions⁵⁶ concerning some fact and the actual existence, or manner of existence, of this fact. However, this formal conception of a falsehood has no direct bearing on morality. Sometimes an assertion that contradicts reality is merely *erroneous*, and in that case its falsehood is, in fact, limited merely to the objective (or, more precisely, the phenomenal) sphere, without in the least affecting the moral

⁵² C] , by saying something false, has sinned] had to tell the truth **AB**.

⁵³ E] See Kant 1996b: 612–613.

⁵⁴ C] obligatory in order] obligatory in this and similar cases, i.e., in order **AB**.

⁵⁵ C] Such a principle . . . sorts of abuse.] Such a principle falls under the broad banner of morality on which Orientals inscribe “divinely inspired craftiness” and Westerners “*ad majorem Dei gloriam*.” Instead, these moralists propose merely the practical variant, “*ad majus proximi bonum*.” **AB** E] *ad majorem Dei gloriam*] Latin: for the greater glory of God—Latin motto of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits).

⁵⁶ F] This general definition, obviously, must include both affirmations and denials. This is why I had to resort to the seldom used Russian word for “assertion” (*iz'javlenie*), which encompasses both. The words “*judgment*” and “*proposition*” have nuances that are unacceptable in the present case.

aspect of the subject. Here, in other words, there is no lie in the moral sense: To make a mistake is not an attempt at deceit. Let us start with an extreme case. There is no cessation of truthfulness when⁵⁷ a person, through absent-mindedness, tells a cock-and-bull story or, as in the well-known anecdote about a German who, instead of saying that he prepared a cup of tea, confuses English words with German and says instead “I became a cup of tea.”⁵⁸ However,⁵⁹ aside from linguistic errors, the same should also be said about errors of thought, or mistakes.

Many people have claimed (and are now claiming), both in speech and in letters, things just as *false* (in the objective sense) as the transformation of a person into a cup of tea. However, they did and do this consciously—with the intention of saying precisely what they do say. If they, thereby, sincerely accept a falsehood for the truth, no one will call them liars or see anything immoral in their mistake. So, neither the contradiction between their words and reality nor the contradiction between their thoughts and reality constitutes a lie, a falsehood in the moral sense. Does it consist of a contradiction between the will and reality, as such, i.e., a simple intention to lie? However, we will never find such a simple intention. People (or at least those who can bear moral responsibility) lie for some reason or for something. Some lie to satisfy their vanity, some to announce themselves, to attract attention to themselves, or to be recognized; others, for the sake of some material consideration, deceive someone in order to reap a gain for [136]themselves. These two kinds of lying, the first of which is called boasting and the second cheating,⁶⁰ are subject to moral judging and condemnation, being⁶¹ shameful for the liar himself, and offensive and harmful to others. However, in addition to a vain lie or boast, a selfish lie or cheating,⁶² there is a more subtle sort of lie that has no obvious base goal and yet is subject to moral condemnation as being offensive to one’s neighbors, viz., lying out of contempt for humanity, beginning with the everyday “I am not home” and ending with complex, political, religious, and literary hoaxes. Strictly speaking, there is nothing shameful, in the narrow sense of the word, in such lying (of course, provided such a hoax is not done for material gain). However, it is immoral from the altruistic point of view as a violation of the rights of the deceived. The person who plays the hoax, obviously, does not like to be deceived and would consider a hoax played against him or her as an offensive violation of one’s own human rights. Consequently, one should respect the same right in others.

The example of a person who deceives the murderer in order to prevent a murder, obviously does not fall into the first types of immoral lying (i.e., it is neither a case

⁵⁷ C] There is no cessation of truthfulness when] This happens, for example, when **A**.

⁵⁸ E] “I became a cup of tea.”] *In English in the original.*

⁵⁹ C] However,] Objectively, such a claim should be seen as indubitably false in the highest degree, for it contradicts not only an individual fact about reality, but also the very nature of things. Nevertheless, no one would think to find here the slightest hint of a moral lie. However, **AB**.

⁶⁰ C] cheating] dishonest **A**.

⁶¹ C] condemnation, being] condemnation, as contrary to the demand to be truthful, being **AB**.

⁶² C] cheating,] dishonesty, **A**.

of boasting nor of selfish deceit).⁶³ Is there any chance of ascribing it to the last type, i.e., to an immoral hoax in the sense of seeing it as an offense against one's neighbors?⁶⁴ Are we not faced with a case of despising humanity in the person of the murderer, who, after all, is a person and should not be stripped of any⁶⁵ human rights? However, a right of the murderer to my complicity in the carrying out of a murder cannot be counted among these human rights. It is precisely such complicity and *it alone* that the murderer has in mind when asking about the whereabouts of his victim. Is it permissible for a moral person to create deliberate fabrications, particularly when it is matter of a person's life?⁶⁶ It would be nothing other than a deliberate fabrication⁶⁷ to suppose that with this question the murderer is at all concerned with the truth, that he is interested in knowing the truth and that, consequently, he *has a right*, like any other person, to a correct answer from those who know the truth. *In fact, the murderer's inquiry is surely nothing of the kind.* This inquiry does⁶⁸ not exist as a separate and independent act, expressing his curiosity concerning the factual whereabouts of his victim. It is merely an inseparable moment within a whole series of acts [137] that, as a whole, form an attempt to murder. An affirmative answer would⁶⁹ not be a fulfillment of a general obligation to tell the truth, but only a case of criminal *complicity*, thanks to which the attempt would be converted into an actual murder.

If our concern is truthfulness, then truthfulness demands, above all, that we take each case *as it is*, in its real integrity and its proper intrinsic sense. However, in our example, the words and actions of the murderer are combined, and they obtain their actual sense only from his intention to kill this person. Consequently, it is only in connection with this intention that we can truthfully appraise both his words and actions, as well as the relation of another person to them. Since we know the criminal intention, we have neither a theoretical basis nor any moral right to separate this person's question (and, consequently, our answer to it) from the object to which it *actually* refers.⁷⁰ This is *the uniquely truthful* point of view, and from it the murderer's question simply means: *Help me accomplish the murder.* If we disregard the real meaning of the question and attach to it—despite the evidence to the contrary—some relation to the truth, the precise answer would in fact simply be *false* from a theoretical perspective, and from the practical perspective it would mean *fulfilling the criminal demand*. “Throwing him off the scent” is the only possible way to *refuse* this demand. It is morally obligatory not only with respect to the victim, whose life it saves, but also with respect to the criminal, since it gives time for him to change his mind and give

⁶³ C] of immoral lying (i.e., ... of selfish deceit).] of lying. **A.**

⁶⁴ C] i.e., to an immoral ... one's neighbors?] *Absent in A.*

⁶⁵ C] any] all **AB.**

⁶⁶ C] Is it permissible ... a person's life?] Our conscience does not permit us to create a deliberate fiction (invention), particularly when it is a matter of a person's life. **AB.**

⁶⁷ C] fabrication] fiction **AB.**

⁶⁸ C] inquiry does] inquiry directed at me does **AB.**

⁶⁹ C] answer would] answer to his inquiry would **AB.**

⁷⁰ C] Since we know ... *actually* refers.] *Absent in A.*

up his criminal intention. We can speak even less here about a violation of rights. It would be too crude a mistake to confuse the request for criminal complicity with the right to hear the truth from someone who knows. It would be equally mistaken to insist that a person who, owing to moral obligation, prevented a murder by the only means possible, nevertheless lied and consequently acted wrongly. This would be to confuse the two senses of saying a “falsehood”—the formal and the moral—the essential distinction between which we indicated⁷¹ above.

Supporters of a pseudo-moral rigorism can still find a supposed shelter on a religious basis. Although no human right is violated by putting the murderer on the wrong track, is a divine right violated by doing this? If there exists a commandment [138] given from above “Do not tell falsehoods,” we are unconditionally obliged to obey it, leaving the consequences to the will of God. However, the fact is that the word of God contains no abstract commandment that forbids telling a falsehood in general or in the formal sense,⁷² whereas it undoubtedly does contain and does demand obedience to the commandment to sacrifice our own soul for our neighbor—and not just that our words be formally true. Is it possible, however, (from a mystical point of view) to find a means to obey the chief commandment to love, while avoiding a formal falsehood? Having surrendered the victim to the murderer, is it truly impossible then to turn to God with a prayer that He prevent the murder through some miraculous means? Although, contrary to all human probability, there are well-known cases of prayer producing just such a desired effect, this has happened only in extreme cases where no natural means remained. However, it would be a *profanity* of the highest degree to demand a miracle from God when you yourself can, by a simple and *harmless* means, prevent a disaster. It would be a different matter if the only human course of action left were immoral, but to mention here the immoral nature of telling a formal falsehood, as such would be to suppose precisely what must be proven and which logically cannot be proven. For such a supposition is again based on a confusion of two completely different concepts: a *falsehood* and a *lie*.⁷³ In the example before us, the answer to the murderer’s question is, undoubtedly, false. Nevertheless, we do not condemn it as a lie, since the fact that certain words *by themselves* formally express a *falsehood* is something that has nothing to do with morality and cannot be condemned by it. On the other hand, a lie can be morally condemned as the expression of an, in some sense, *immoral* intention. After all, how else could we distinguish it from a simple falsehood? In any case, in the present example, it is impossible to find any immoral intention, *in any sense*, and consequently,⁷⁴ any lie whatever.⁷⁵

⁷¹ C] indicated] have shown **AB**.

⁷² F] The commandment not to bear false witness against another, i.e., not to slander, does not concern us here, since it does not forbid telling falsehoods in general, but only an entirely definite type of lying that is always immoral. C] always] indisputably **AB**.

⁷³ C] is again based ... and a *lie*.] is again based on a confusion of concepts. **A**] is again based on a confusion of two completely different concepts: a *falsehood* in the formal sense and a *lie* in the moral sense. **B**.

⁷⁴ C] and consequently,] *Absent in B*.

⁷⁵ C] In the example ... any lie whatever.] *Absent in A*.

To conclude in a concise fashion, we can express our long argumentation in the following form. A formally false declaration, i.e., one that contradicts the facts pertaining to it, is not always a falsehood, in the moral sense, i.e., a lie,⁷⁶ [139]but becomes one only when it arises from an evil will that intentionally *misuses* words for its own ends. The evil nature of the will lies in its contradiction not with some fact, but with *what should be*. What should be is necessarily and fully determined in three respects: in relation to what is below us, what is similar to us, and what is above us. And it amounts to three demands: to subordinate our lower nature to the spirit, to respect the rights of those similar to us, and to be totally devoted to the Highest principle of the world. An expression of our will can be evil or immoral *only* when it violates one of these three obligations, i.e., when the will affirms or accepts something shameful (the first relation), something offensive (the second relation), or something profane (the third relation). However, the will of the person who puts the murderer off the track of his intended victim does not violate any of these three obligations. There is nothing shameful, offensive or profane in such a will. Thus, there is no falsehood here in the moral sense, no lie, no transgression of any commandment. In allowing evil to be prevented by such a means, we make no exceptions to the moral rule. For the reasons mentioned, we deny that the given case falls under the moral rule under which, contrary to the evidence, some want to subordinate it.

One of the sides in this dispute asserts that *since* what we have here is a falsehood, we should not use this *evil* means *even though* it would save someone's life. The other side replies that *although* we do have a falsehood here, the obligation to save another person's life is more important than that to tell the truth. Consequently, it is permissible to employ this means, albeit evil, to save a life. Both of these false solutions are equally eliminated by a third truth: *Since it is not here a matter of a falsehood* (in the moral sense), i.e., a lie, the use of this *innocent* means, which is necessary in order to prevent the murder, is, in the given example, *fully*⁷⁷ *obligatorily*.⁷⁸

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Thus, the erection of truthfulness into a special formal virtue involves an internal contradiction and is rationally unacceptable.⁷⁹ Like all other "virtues," the moral quality of truthfulness is not contained within itself, but, rather, is obtained from its

⁷⁶ C] i.e., a lie] *Absent in AB.*

⁷⁷ C] fully] *unconditionally AB.*

⁷⁸ F] Although in examining this question Kant sides with the rigorists, his stance is inconsistent with his own principle, which demands that an act be capable of being raised to the level of a universal rule in order for its moral worth to be recognized. Clearly, in deceiving a murderer as to the location of the intended victim I can intelligently and honestly affirm my manner of action as a universal rule: Everyone should always hide in this way a murderer from his intended victim, and, putting myself in the murderer's shoes, I, as a moral being, can only wish that I be prevented in this way from committing murder.

⁷⁹ C] Thus, the erection ... rationally unacceptable.] *Absent in A.*

agreement with the fundamental norms of morality. Separated from them, a pseudo-truthfulness can be the source of falsehood, i.e., of false evaluations. It can stop with the demand that our words merely be an exact reflection of the external reality of individual facts, but that leads to patent absurdities.⁸⁰ From this point of view, a priest who tells exactly what was said in confession would satisfy the demand to be truthful. However, a genuine truthfulness demands that our words correspond to the inner *truth*, or sense, of a given situation, to which our will applies moral norms.

An analysis of the so-called virtues shows us that all of them have moral significance only to the extent that they are determined by the three norms of what should be. Although they themselves *rest psychologically* on the respective primary feelings of shame, pity and reverence, these norms do not have their ultimate factual⁸¹ foundation in these feelings, but are developed logically from the idea of *what should be*, or *truth* (in the broad sense). Such truth, moral truth, demands that we treat our lower nature as lower, i.e., that we subordinate it to our rational goals. If, on the contrary, we subordinate ourselves to our lower nature, we recognize it not as it is, in fact, but as something higher. In other words, we distort the true order of things. We violate the moral truth and treat this lower sphere improperly, i.e., immorally. In the same way, moral truth demands that we treat those similar to ourselves in the same fashion, namely, that we recognize their equality with us, that we place ourselves in their shoes. If, in recognizing ourselves as individuals with equal rights, we see others only as empty masks, then obviously we step back from the truth and our relationship is not [141]what it should be. Finally, if we are aware of a higher universal principle than ourselves, then moral truth demands that we treat it as higher, i.e., with religious respect. Any other attitude would contradict the true order of things and, consequently, would not be as it should.

Such an awareness of moral truth, or of what should be, certainly could not arise if the feelings of shame, pity, and reverence, which immediately determine our correct attitude to the three basic conditions of life, were not already inherent in human nature. However, after reason has deduced from these natural data their intrinsic ethical content and affirmed⁸² this content as *that which should be*, it becomes a principle of moral activity on its own, independent of its psychological bases.⁸³ One can picture to oneself a person who by nature has only a very poorly developed sense of modesty but who is rationally convinced that one's duty is to oppose the clutches of one's lower nature and conscientiously fulfill one's duty. In fact, such a person turns out, in this respect, to be more moral than the person who is modest by nature but whose mind is defenseless against the sensuous temptations that prevail over his or her modesty. The same is true concerning natural compassionateness (on which Kant dwelled) and natural religious feeling. Without a consciousness of duty, all natural inducements to moral action are precarious and lack decisive significance in the conflict between opposing motives.

⁸⁰ C] , but that leads to patent absurdities] *Absent in A.*

⁸¹ C] factual] *Absent in AB.*

⁸² C] affirmed] *decreed A.*

⁸³ F] Cf. *Critique of Abstract Principles*, p. 70. E] See PSS, vol. 3: 69.

However, does an awareness of what should be, i.e., of moral truth, have such a decisive power? If righteousness from natural inclinations is a *precarious* phenomenon, then righteousness from rational duty is the *rarest* of phenomena.⁸⁴ Therefore, the idea of *what should be* turns out, in the factual⁸⁵ sense, to lack the attributes of universality and necessity. The vital interest of moral philosophy, as well as the formal demand of reason, cannot be reconciled with this fact, and from this a new task for reason arises. This task is to find a practical principle that is not only something that should be, but is also something *desirable* to the highest degree both in itself and for everyone. It⁸⁶ would have in its essence the power [142]to determine human behavior with necessity, independently both of the natural⁸⁷ inclinations of the soul and of the degree of one's spiritual development—a principle that all people equally have and is understandable to and real for everyone.

When reason dwells exclusively or primarily on this aspect of the matter, then the moral good is understood as the highest good⁸⁸ (*summum bonum*), and the question takes the following form: Does the highest good exist, and what is involved in it, i.e., the one to which, as the absolute standard (criterion) of the *desirable in general*, all other goods are necessarily subordinate?

⁸⁴ C] If righteousness from ... of phenomena.] In fact, it does not. The dutifully righteous perhaps even less so than those naturally inclined towards righteousness. A] In fact, it does not. If righteousness from ... of phenomena. **B.**

⁸⁵ C] factual] real A] certain **B.**

⁸⁶ C] is not only something ... for everyone. It] *Absent in A.*

⁸⁷ C] the natural] the various natural **A.**

⁸⁸ C] understood as the highest good] understood not as what unconditionally ought to be, but as what unconditionally is desired or as the highest good **A.**