ASPECTS OF ETHICS:
Views through a new lens

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Aspects of Ethics

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PREFACE

The system of Ethics guiding the discussion, the dialogue, in these pages, is based upon the analysis and clarification of **concepts** -- which I believe is a central concern of Philosophy.   My theory postulates that we each have a **self-concept**. It has three components, so to speak.

They are: first, the actual, **bodily self** that is observable to others and to you (the tangible part). Next, the **Self,** *i.e.,* the S**elf-i**mage: the self-identity, beliefs, and values the individual may hold -- perhaps in her/his state of delusion -- perhaps realistically if s/he has self-awareness. And thirdly,, **the relationship** between the two -- which the author, in constructing the theory, has - for many good reasons - labeled: (the degree of) **Morality**.

Hence in this theory, *morality* refers to *self corresponding to Self.* More specifically, morality means: self increasingly-corresponding to an improving Self-image (also known as a Self-ideal.)

To review, the term "morality" is taken to mean "self increasingly-corresponding to (a growing and improving, a maturing) Self.

Morality varies inversely with hypocrisy: the more hypocrisy the less correspondence of self with Self.

This is all abstract theory based upon set theory and the class-membership relation. It explains that an individual, say

his name is Phil, is a member of the unit-class named "Phil". He is an individual.... a one-of-a-kind. His _self_ is the _extention_ of his class-concept; his _Self_ is the _intention_ of it. Every concept has both: an extention and an intension. These, in the system, when expressed in technical language, are depicted by logical symbols. They are variables.   In this essay we will not burden the reader with Symbolic Logic. Those formalities are available upon request, and are to be found in the early chapters of the treatise entitled ETHICS; A College Course. A link to it is here: http://tinyurl.com/2mj5b3

The test of a theory - at least one of the major tests - is, when the symbols are interpreted in terms of the semi-organized (or even totally disorganized) data. In other words, When the system is applied to the world, can it deliver? Can it order and explain the data - all within its frame-of-reference? Other tests are its simplicity (its use of Occam's famous Razor); its range of relevant application; its employment of Logic, so as to make immediate sense (to those who think very logically). For a humorous blog on conformity, see: http://askedgeworth.typepad.com/askedgeworth/2004/05/dear_edgeworthw.html

Most - if not all - religious systems fail this test: they don't make sense to large sections of the Earth's people. So I and my colleagues are building a secular theory, one amenable to empirical verification of its claims, one that has the potential of possibly gaining universal agreement.

The efforts so far serve as a starting point for unifying the many facets of Ethics, business ethics, academic ethics, bioethics, theory of evolution as it applies to ethics, professional ethics, dilemma-solving, etc. Since I approach the task with a scientific attitude, the system is held very tentatively, ready to be discarded or upgraded at a moment's notice if something better comes along. Can

those with a deep faith in certain religious doctrines say that?

Of course we don't have to make forced either-or choices, but can take the best from all schools of thought, blending them into our new synthesis.

This essay on Ethics is a work in progress. It is an invitation to continue the process of constructing a unified theory which will suggest hypotheses to be empirically tested, employing scientific methods. Eventually this will result in a secular foundation for a universal ethics which will be both objective in its theoretical principles as well as subjective in application. In the course of applying the theory certain principles will emerge.

It has room within the new frame-of-reference to be a synthesis of many, diverse stands of already-known ethical insight from all schools and traditions of ethics. Some day, with your help, and that of other bright minds, it will incorporate the best of Natural rights, Virtue Theory, Mill's Utilitarianism; yes, and even the best concepts from Oriental Philosophy, from Buddhist Philosophy, from Shinto Philosophy, etc.   All suggestions for improvement are most welcome.

The early chapters of this essay take on the task of showing the relation of Ethics to the great motivators: money, power, and influence. Then we discuss the nature of motivation itself and how it influences decisions we make. We indicate what considerations might enter into solving an ethical problem that arises in business and in life in general. We discuss the pressure to conform and how this could result in tyranny.

Then the impact of evolution on Ethics is examined; this includes cultural evolution and the norms that have arisen in global culture. We inquire into whether helping others comes with a cost to the helper. We briefly discuss animal rights and whether animals can be moral. This raises the whole question as to whether there are any natural rights. We ask, do humans have rights, and if so, what are they?

Lastly, we summarize some of the basic Ethical Principles that our research has uncovered. We condense them to a list of ten points for the sake of brevity.

When the intension of a concept is interpreted as the concept's meaning, and the extention of the concept as its application, we were enabled to define "**value**" as a function of meaning: something has value to the degree that it has properties which match (correspond to) its meaning. It then exemplifies its meaning. If it does so fully, we speak of it as "**good**." Based upon the potential sizes which a meaning may have, finite but elastic; countable; and uncountable (the continuum of meaning); we were able to derive three **dimensions of value**. Robert S. Hartman named them Systemic Value; Extrinsic Value; and Intrinsic Value. (**S, E,** and **I.**)

When the **I**-dimension is applied to individuals the result is **Ethics** – a way of considering individuals so that one wants to respect them, or even more than that: One gets involved. When I-Value is practiced the individual is given full attention. A bonding may take place. The valuer is showered with a dense continuum of meaning, and the more s/he looks the more s/he finds.

When what you value becomes that meaningful you tend to identify with it. You can't tell where you leave off and where what you are valuing begins. You are engaged in the process of Intrinsic valuation. Now **Ethics** has now been defined; it is **the I-valuing of the individual**, yourself and other individuals. This is the field of Ethics.

As an example of their usefulness, let us apply the three dimensions, S, E, and I, to: schools of academic moral philosophy. We arrive at the following three definitions:
S: Deontology. **E**: Consequentialism. **I**: Virtue Theory.

The first stresses rights and obligations; the second emphasizes quanta of happiness and the common good ("the greatest good for the greatest number"); the third, VT, puts the stress on character and its development. It teaches "Neither over-do nor under-do. Find the balance", "Pursue virtue and avoid vice. Build a virtuous character."

Fittingness, **matching**, and **balance** provide us with criteria to know when we are on the right track.

All three schools, as sets of perspectives, are useful to us as we round out the picture in the quest for an ethical life.
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As in earlier works the format employed is this: We are listening in on a roundtable discussion whose topic is the constructing of a good, coherent theory of Ethics. The writing that follows is a transcript of the participants' remarks. While the roundtable forum is fictional; their topic – Ethics - is very real. Let us join in and listen as they discuss the issues, as they show how the various themes cohere to the framework offered earlier, thus confirming its applicability, its relevance and scope.

MONEY AND INFLUENCE

Nick: Although they may not admit it to a pollster, let us go on the premise that many, if not most, - unless constrained by a deeply-held set of ethical principles – would commit a social transgression, or even a crime, if they thought they could get away with it, and if they thought it would bring them either money or fame, prestige or power.

Joe: Or some need-gratification, including the sexual kind.

Kay: I suggest we go on the premise that babies are born good and that they get corrupted and make serious ethical mistakes due to an ignorant culture, and – rather rarely – due to a defective gene. The evidence I've seen indicates that it's child-rearing practices and bad examples they see practiced in their surrounding culture that mislead children into committing ethically-questionable behavior.

Mary: If there's any truth to the proposition that everyone is a potential criminal then the answer therefore is for everyone to acquire a sense of ethics, a set of deeply-held and strongly believed Ethical principles.

Carl: People today strive for money and power. By "power" I don't mean the effort to interfere with or intercept information before it gets to others; I merely mean influence. People want, if they can get it, *money*   and *influence*.

Herb: There is nothing wrong with money. We need it to buy food to satisfy hunger. We find money useful. It's how it is acquired - and how it may be emphasized as more important than other values – that becomes a concern for

Ethics. Money or credit (or the debit incurred by employing a debit card) is a Systemic Value: in much the same way as numbers are S-values. Numbers are part of some math <u>system</u>. Money and credit are part of some financial system.

Recall that it is a moral fallacy to place **S** above **E** or **I**. The Existential Value Hierarchy (the EVH) counsels against it, as the correct formula is **I > E > S**.   [As you know, the EVH was derived from the Axiom of Value (AV) and from the axioms for Set Theory. The AV is the definition of the term "value"; it says that when an actual x matches our ideal for x we will likely consider x to have *value*, or to be *valuable*. The axioms for Set Theory are widely accepted.]

Frank: There is also nothing wrong with influence as long as it is not the exercise of power over another person. The widespread popularity of social networking is evidence that some want to extend their influence. It is ethical as long as no harm is done. Doing harm to another is immoral. That conclusion follows from the definition of *morality*. The latter term itself is implied by the AV (the Axiom of Value) and by the definition of the term *Ethics*. One can't Intrinsically-value a self and yet do harm to it at the same time. So harming, being cruel to, and/or abusing are immoral.

Ida: Thus we arrive at the conclusion that the desire for money and influence does not make a person immoral. They can be, and often are, corrupting factors, but *per se* they are morally neutral. Have you noticed how new challenges arise almost daily?

Joe: That's true. Doing bad things is to succumb to one's weak mind, The more one behaves immorally, the weaker his mind becomes.   The purpose of life is to enjoy it through

continuously improving oneself. As one does, one becomes continually morally stronger.   Now stronger, the person can overcome any challenge while still enjoying life.

As one overcomes a challenge, employing only ethical means to do so, happiness is achieved. To make that happiness last even longer one has to learn to _enjoy the process_ of overcoming these challenges that life sends along to us.   That is some of what I learned from studying Shinto philosophy.

Nick: **Peter** Demarest and Harvey Schoof, in their recent book, VALUECENTRICS (Philadhia: Heartlead Publishing, 2010), teach that The Axiological Hierarchy of Value helps us decide in a correct manner. They explain that the central question we all should ask ourselves in each situation is: **What choice can I make, and actions can I take, in this moment, to create the greatest net value?** This, they teach, is _life's central question._

With regard to some of the major human motivators, they write: "What value is money if you have no one you love to share it with? What value is fame if your children despise you? What value is power if you're powerless to be with a loved one in their time of greatest need?"

Alan: Ethics recommends that we decide to be morally-_good persons,_ and make a decision to aim for that goal. Managers, or the owners of a business, make decisions all the time.   What does it mean to make a <u>decision</u>? Can anyone here explain it?

DECISIONS AND MOTIVATION

George: Value Theory, Formal Axiology, explains it. Making a decision is an evaluative act; so what we know about valuation applies here. Decisions occur when there is a **match** between the *emotional state* of the individual doing the deciding and a cognitive calculation made, *a cognition*. The cognition can be fairly rapid – even made in the blink of any eye. Just reflecting on some decision you'd like to make is not enough. One has to have an emotion or sentiment behind it to motivate action.

Kay: So if I learn that it is in the best interest of human beings to aim for goodness, and to learn how to be an *efficacious person*, in Bandura's sense of the term, I must also say to myself, "I'm a human being and I intend to be good!! I want with all my heart to be effective. I **will** aim for excellence; I **will** aim to be an ideal person *and I mean it*."

George: You have the idea, Kay. Thanks for that good question, Alan.

Frank: You mention Dr. Bandura, Kay. I concur. Everything Alfred Bandura, of Stanford University, has to say about self-regulation is relevant to the *morality* concept, and to the topic of *success*. Here is a link: http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/BanEncy.html

In another place[1] he writes:

> **A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high**

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1) Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In H. Friedman [Ed.], *Encyclopedia of mental health*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1998).

assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided.

Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure.

They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression.

In that paper he explains how self-efficacy is developed and maintained, and how it serves to motivate one to action.

Max: If I may sum up the guidance that one may infer from what Bandura's research found, if one wants to experience **success,** and make sound decisions, it is best to have a firm commitment to the goals one sets for himself.

He is saying that if I want to succeed I must believe in my own capabilities. I must remain task-oriented, no matter what the setbacks. I have to be determined to succeed. It is preferable that I firmly believe that I can plough through failures and famine, and come out to success and maybe even to feast. It helps if I believe that I have personal **efficacy**. I know I will have to expend effort on the task to get it done, to master it. I will persist at reaching my worthwhile, self-selected goals. I will not procrastinate; I won't put things off, but every day I will do a little, until it's done.

Ida: George spoke of *emotions* as being a vital factor in decision-making. While on the topic of emotion, let me differentiate between two emotions which appear alike on the surface but which are distinctly different. I refer to grief and to depression. Grief – which is a normal state- with its devastating sadness, is something which everyone has experienced or will experience when the loss of a very close – or beloved – person occurs.

Grief is <u>not</u> to be confused with Depression which is a clinical disease having to do with changes in the brain (along with the presence of a gene shared by schizophrenics as well) and which includes a deadening sense of extreme hopelessness and loss of interest in life.

Serotonin (a neuro-transmitter) affects mood management. During grief one may still have motivation to live. Yet if one is truly depressed, internally – to the one suffering from it – it makes no difference whether one lives or dies; and many suicides are a result of depression.

A person's mood has a direct effect on their decision-making (which is a form of valuation), and upon their motivation to succeed, to be happy, to do excellent work, to have their work be their play. Furthermore a person's mood directly affects their resolution and determination to be morally good. We need to stay optimistic.

Jerry: In an interview discussing his book, HOW WE DECIDE, Jonah Lehrer said: "The secret, of course, is knowing when to use different styles of thought--when to trust feelings and when to exercise reason.   … The first step to making the right decision, then, is accurately diagnosing the problem and figuring out should we trust our intuition or calculate the probabilities?"

We need to think about whether this specific situation requires a little more reason than feeling, or whether it requires that we "go with our gut" intuition. Some situations call for the one, and some call for the other. Experts rely on a wealth of judgment they have built up over time. Understanding how an expert thinks is quite different from being able to think like an expert!

Frank: When this is applied to business, Daniel H. Pink's research [see Bibliography] reveals that people would prefer activities where they can pursue three things: Autonomy: People want to have maximum control over their work-life; Mastery: People want to get better at what they do; Purpose: People want to be part of something that is bigger than they are. Empathy by fellow workers helps too.

Kay: Empathy toward a person shows some sensitivity, respect, caring. It is a way of I-valuing that individual. Kindness and compassion are two other ways of I-valuing.

Mary: Let me add a word on empathy and report some empirical observations. If you frown at a little child it becomes likely that it will frown too. If you see someone in pain, feeling unpleasant, you feel the same biological unpleasant feelings. This is an attunement without conscious intent. If you see someone acting problematic, someone in stress, you start feeling problematic also.

For example, if someone is angry in front of you, you may feel defensive and act as if you yourself are under stress – unless you have undergone emotional education, or stress-management – although not everyone needs it. If someone starts to act in a competitive way in your presence, you

may be tempted to out-compete them, especially if they throw out a challenge, if they dare you.

Carl: *Yes, people want to win. Almost everyone loves to win, even if it's achieved by manipulation of others and through lies. Doesn't a competitive win always come at the cost of others? Even if you do it in a good way, someone must lose. Isn't competition a good thing? With winning comes power, Can you win and be a good guy at the same time? If you win you make someone else look bad.*

COMPETITION

Bill: If you find winning the most important thing in the world,, your ambition may cause you to succumb to a form of moral corruption. Life is not about winning or losing, its about learning. It's about setting ethical goals and going after them. It's not the destination that counts, it's the journey. How someone else reacts to your accomplishment, in the face of their failure, is not your consideration. That is their choice. You can be competitive and show kindness at the same time.

Frank: The important thing in every competition in which one engages is to leave it knowing that she did her best. Those who make winning their goal don't have a perspective on what's most important in life.

George: Yes, I agree. In any competition, both sides should be better off at the end than they were at the start. For it's not the end result that matters, but the process by which that result was arrived.

Let's make sure that the means used to win a game are moral and ethical. No matter what the ends at which we aim in life, we ought to use moral means to get there.

Dan: it's almost never black and white. It depends on the person who has lost, It's how fast he or she can get up after a defeat. The best student is the one who trips, but never falls. A person doesn't have to win all - or win none. There are plenty of degrees in between zero percent and one hundred percent. In many a race, or a marathon, there is only one winner, but I wouldn't say all the other participants are "losers." Still, we hear on all sides that competitiveness is a good quality to have, and that competition sharpens us up to do better.

I'll grant though that to win just for the sake of winning is a wrong attitude. If you have your millions of dollars, your Ferrari, your mansion, your beautiful "arm candy" wife, some people are still not satisfied and want more. It's a never-ending story. They even identify themselves with the things they have and they feel all the more empty inside. The things you own, own you. In every commercial you 're urged to buy stuff, or to be perfect. Winning is overrated.

Toby: Joy and fulfillment comes from within. It's true that winning can result in fame and fortune, and that as you come close to achieving a goal you may feel very happy. But there is an old Latin saying whose translation is: "How quickly the glory of the world passes away". My principles are not dictated by popular trends, but then again ... that's just me.

Burt: If you win fair and square you have proven to yourself that your training was sufficient and you did well. It

could teach the other competitors – if they are ready to learn - it will show they need to stop slacking and improve themselves, or they could call for a rematch in a different sort of game, in which they are better. If they knew they were not a master in the game chosen, they might agree that a defeat does not have to ruin them.

I see value in losing: A defeat every once in a while keeps people modest, There's nothing wrong with an honest loss. Cheating, however, can be a very self-defeating activity. It can become a habit; and it's a character defect.

Herb: my research into the aspects of ethics revealed to me that competition is fine, since it may serve to motivate us to do our best; yet the ethical kind of competition - and thus the one to recommend to everyone - is a friendly contest designed to maximize value for all concerned; in contrast with a rivalry where "anything goes" which will entail behaving immorally, i.e., contributing in some way to harm the competitor(s). (We know harm when we see it.)

Ethics directs us to show respect to every individual and to lift him or her up when we have the opportunity; it teaches us to enhance value.

Jim: If you win a game and share the benefits among the losers then you are engaging in a nonzero-sum game where everybody is happy – both winner and losers. You have the satisfaction of winning and the losers have the gratification of sharing the profits.

Nick: An individual with an advanced, highly-evolved self-concept, hence one who is authentic, responsible, and empathic, will - when it comes to competing - seek to

maximize the net value in each situation. S/he will behave, perhaps, like the two owner/operators of Chinese restaurants situated within a couple of blocks of each other.

One day one of them invited the other to lunch, and proposed a challenge: each would manage the other's place for three weeks with the aim of attaining the greatest customer satisfaction. That one would then win the prize as "The Best Manager" of a Chinese eating establishment. He would have something to brag about in his future commercials and promotions. They both enthusiastically took up the challenge.

The beauty of this arrangement, this contest, is that while it was ongoing the loser would gain the most in earnings, would profit financially; while the other would win a Prize. So both won: one of them won the title "Best Manager", the other won a bit of profit. One gained prestige, the other gained some money.

Joe: Yes! That sort of contest was a creative concept. This is what true competition can be. **Ethical competition is true competition.** It is the expression of moral goodness and moral health.

Carl: I see now that competition just for the sake of proving that you are better than another, or for the sake of pride, has one result alone; the depletion of another's sense of self worth and confidence in their abilities.

I am not saying that competition is completely immoral. But when it becomes a means of how we judge each other, based on how well we perform in a competition, then it's likely that we also judge those who do not compete well as "*incompetent*."

There are some individuals who do not take to competition as a

friendly means of enhancing each other's abilities. Instead, they see it rather as a means of imposing their abilities upon someone else. The importance to them is winning and beating another participant. It is these types who take friendly competition to levels where it becomes more like a power struggle and bullying field, than a game of skill and development. It is all about them and their egos.

The little boy, for example, who is forced to play baseball because his parents think that is the 'social' thing to do. They believe that it would be good for his esteem; it would teach him to be able to cope with tough situations. And what often results is a little boy who is not as skillful as other boys who are good at the game. They ridicule him. It tends to destroy his self-confidence. We don't all have the same abilities as others.

The point I'm making is that competition should not be done with unenlightened self interest at the forefront, but instead with the best interest of one's opponents as the goal. We've learned, thanks to Herb, to distinguish a rivalry from a contest. And we're aware now that a good contest is an ethical way to compete while a rivalry is to be avoided, since it can corrupt us.

 What I'd like to know, though, is can we be creative in resolving any kind of moral issue that may come up?

ETHICAL PROBLEM SOLVING

George: **When trying to resolve a moral issue this Unified Theory [http://tinyurl.com/yzvojzu] would indicate that once we have ascertained the facts, we should ask ourselves five questions. The first three are the applications of I, E, and S, the dimensions of value:**

·   **Which course of action develops moral character?**

·   **What benefits and what harms will each course of action produce, and which alternative will lead to the best overall consequences?**

· **What moral rights do the affected parties have, and which course of action best respects those rights?**

· **Which course of action *does not* show favoritism or discrimination?**

· **Which course of action advances certain general conditions that are to everyone's advantage? Which advance the common good?** [Examples of 'common goods' are public health measures, infrastructures such as roads and bridges, pollution cleanup and avoidance, and other ecological considerations, city lights, first-responder personnel and equipment, police and fire departments, public libraries and public universities, etc.]

Harry: **You're right , George. The Unified Theory of Ethics proposed here recommends that we focus on ensuring that the social policies, social systems, institutions, and environments on which we depend are beneficial to all. Those were good examples you offered. They include effective public safety, peace among nations, a just legal system, affordable health care, and an unpolluted environment.**

Bill: **That's true what you said, George and Harry. It makes sense for us to view ourselves as members of the same community, reflecting on broad questions concerning the kind of society we want to become and how we are to achieve that society.**

While respecting and valuing the freedom of individuals to pursue their own goals, it is preferable that we recognize and further those goals we – all over the planet - share in common. This is <u>not</u> to imply that there is anything wrong with identification with a group such as personal choices that favor family, neighborhoods, religious groups, professional groups, political factions, and so forth.

Ida: We have the right to pursue happiness in our own unique way; yet still be aware of what helps the entire world community win. The idea that we can make our group prosperous at the expense of making another group poor is an ethical fallacy. It violates the Social Ethics principle that we stand or fall together. I realize that *what helps you, helps me* – provided it really does help you.

Carl;   As an individual, I don't participate in determining the final outcome. I participate by empowering groups that I identify with. That is how emergent systems work. That is how progress is made. Are you guys suggesting that we chuck our American identity in favor of world citizenship?

I do agree emphatically that. Ethics guides how aggressively we can promote our group, by respecting the inalienable rights of others, and by elevating our compassionate nature.

Harry: Social ethics is a study which includes interpersonal relations and group membership. I can't fathom what you mean, Carl, when you talk about "chucking our American identity in favor of world citizenship?" Why do we need to chuck that identity? Why can't we comfortably be both at once? There is no reason why not. These identities don't have to conflict.

When you come down to it, the interests and needs you have as an individual are the same basically as those which other persons on this planet have: we want safety, recognition, a sense of achievement, of belonging, romance, adventure, some 'mountain-top experiences' (lifetime memories that make us glow with

over-flowing happiness). We all want to make a life for ourselves. We all [with a few exceptions] need food, clothing and shelter. Do you disagree?

Carl: No, I don't. I was just making the point that every group has the right to pursue their own collective happiness, and the right balance 'emerges' from the interactions of these groups.

Dan: As a systems-theory student, Carl, you are aware of the concept of "holon." It refers to a hierarchy of wholes -- e.g., your family contains an individual person, who contains an organ, which contains a cell, which contains a molecule, which has within it an atom, which has a set of quarks, etc., etc. Now view that from the quark outward: one may <u>eventually</u> find unity with several families; even with a community; even with a town; or a nation; and why not with the Organization of American States; with the human family; with the planet Earth (Gaia); with the Solar System, the Milky Way, the Universe, etc., etc.

It all depends upon your perception, your "radius of ethical identification," your stage of moral development.

The fact is, that as we evolve thru the cycles of life, as we mature, if we experience deeply, we differentiate ourselves. Our Self-system gets larger (another way of saying we reach out to larger holons); Why? Because whenever the environment impinges upon us, whenever a stimulus -- or a new concept, a new paradigm -- comes in from outside, our mind needs to readjust to it, to incorporate the new experience into ourselves, to make it a part of our new Self-system. We move from

stability to chaos; and once we have integrated this new idea, or impingement -- then we move back to stability. This process is repeated throughout our lives. Each time it occurs, our Self grows, we grow morally.

Jen: Yes, Dan. I would add that those who have gone through great tragedy, such as the death at an early age of a beloved child, and have built character as a result of processing the experience well, they have especially grown.

By the way, Carl, what or who in heaven is requiring you to "chuck your American identity"?

I agree with you about the necessity to elevate our compassionate nature, but I don't know why you think along the lines of "promote our prosperity over the prosperity of others....." I thought by now you understood the Win-Win solution concept. To me, "Prosperity" by definition (in contrast with "Abundance") means "Having enough to share," It is more than mere abundance.

Kay: When we do share, miracles happen --- the potluck block party idea: a few people bring a few modest dishes, and *Shazam!* there is more than enough for everybody. It works the same way on the national and the world level.

Carl: Allow me to explain: I participate by empowering groups I identify with. It's a personal choice I make. Eventually these groups may coalesce as they agree on some   policy or principle. A balance emerges. That's how the concept of 'emergence' works in Systems Theory. I don't know in advance what will emerge.

Dan: John Rawls contributed to the development of better theory in Social Ethics, which includes interpersonal relations and group membership. He supported, with cogent argumentation and solid reasoning, what is now referred to as the "common good" concept. This concept can apply to one's own family, to the entire human race, or to any region or grouping in between. It refers to air and water quality, to climate control, to public sanitation, to social stability and conditions of peace among nations, to promoting the general welfare.

Jim: As we all know, that phrase, "to promote the general welfare" is inscribed in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America.

Jenny: If we didn't know it before we know it now.

Remember this: unless the rest of the inhabitants on Spaceship Earth become prosperous enough to emerge from desperate poverty to a decent minimum standard of life, **our** local prosperity - such as it is - is only an illusion because our security is extremely fragile. Right now, the miserably poor, and the unemployed idlers, are recruitable material by the fanatics willing to wantonly kill civilians *en masse*.

In Iraq, and in Afghanistan, as any good reporter there can tell you, we have attained just the opposite result from our aims: we have manufactured the next generation of terrorists who will come after us relentlessly. The nationalist insurgents are daily becoming more Taliban-like – as they listen to, and are convinced by, the siren song of the jihadees, the killer Islamists. (I am aware, though, the violent jihadists are

**only a very tiny minority among those of Islamic faith.)
When Alan and I were discussing *that* topic I found out
that he has a healthy curiosity about Ethics in general.
I understand, Alan, that you have some questions for
us. Feel free to ask them. Now is a good time.**

ALAN's QUESTIONS

Alan: The concern here is Ethics. Well I've been studying
Hobbes, who - along with Nietzsche - stresses **self-
interest**. The question arises: What's the higher priority,
self-interest or interest in others? Should we look after
ourselves first, and then being stronger have more to offer
others -- **or** do we get stronger by helping others?

Ed: The best answer to that dilemma is: Both.

Don't see the world as 'black or white' – a Systemic value
perspective - but rather see the shades of gray and other
colors.

It helps if we live by this principle of Social Ethics: *I'm better
off if you're better off.   For we stand or fall together!*

Ida: When we help others we ARE helping ourselves.
There is no conflict between the two.

We should not carry this to the point of martyrdom, where
we personally care for, say, a parent, and it becomes a
sacrifice, rather than a joy. It's perfectly okay to farm some
of the responsibility out to a nice, clean, uncrowded, high-
standards retirement home (or a nursing home) that offers
lots of interesting activities such as arts and crafts: As long
as you arrange to visit often that can be a caring thing to do.

George: Give an elderly neighbor a hand! Often just the attention shown alone is so very helpful.

If we take care of ourselves and stay healthy we are in a stronger position to help others who may be in need.

Bill: You're right, George. It makes sense to prepare yourself for being useful rather than rushing in and being one of those needing rescuing.

Alan: I heard that to a wife of an aboriginal in the outback somewhere where cannibalism was still practiced , it was both moral and ethical to eat the brain of her dead husband to keep his essence within herself I am aiming to find if there is an innate, ingrained universal morality, which no human should step over? Is a bar constantly being raised due to circumstances of the day? These differences in morals might account for most of the suffering in human history.

Bruce: It could be wise here to differentiate between two concepts: cultural **mores**; and **morality**. What practices certain tribal customs dictate - the **mores** - will not help us much to arrive at a good answer to your quest, Alan.   There are some illogical, wasteful, and even abominable customs and traditions being practiced in this world. These are **mores**, and eventually with proper education, widely disseminated, people will grow out of them, and may thus increase their **moralit**y scores. If *they* don't shed these superstitions traditions it is realistic to expect their children or grandchildren will – once we become effective in dispelling ignorance about Ethics and the self-enhancement which the discipline has to offer. It helps us flourish..

What will help you find answers, though, Alan, is a concern with **character**; and with the role **reason** plays in Ethics.

Jerry: Also it helps to have an awareness of the role passion, mood, and sentiment plays in our motivation to live our Ethics. There may eventually be a set of universal moral principles to which a majority agree, but please don't speak of it as 'a universal morality', for we reserve the word "morality" as a technical term in this new paradigm for Ethics which we are working on, to construct.

George: Investigating those concerns Bruce and Jerry mention *will* help you find an answer, Alan. You may also want to study moral growth and development, as Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg have.

And are you aware that there is a frame-of-reference, a paradigm, a model-of-models that will **order** and **explain** - and, when time is added as a variable, hopefully predict - **the data of Ethics. We are here working to expand it. Such a model ought to be derived from an axiom** (which is what Kant referred to as a synthetic *a priori* concept*, i.e.,* one that is part empirical and part theoretical), one that has within it the seeds of an entire discipline of thought. The paradigm would have formulas; and have variables, so as to cover a wide range of data..

Alan: What are the data of Ethics?

Frank: They include cases of altruism; of conscience-being-one's-guide; of how individuals become more serene, more joyful, more at peace with themselves - in other words, studies in self-improvement (which includes **self-knowledge**.) The Oracle at Delphi told Socrates: KNOW

YOURSELF.

Ida: Once we do that, we come to know our heritage and thus our interdependence with other organisms, other life forms, and other people. We get acquainted with Social Ethics. We become aware that "What helps you helps me ...if it really helps you." We become aware that <u>morality</u> consists in Being <u>true to our own true self</u> and that, at the core, *we are all connected*. My interest is your interest, and vice versa. We need to cooperate, to share, to be empathic toward one another.

Harry: When we are doing that we are seeing each other as treasures of value, and thus worthy of a minimum (or more) of respect.

George: As R. S. Hartman would state it in a more formal way, *we are to Intrinsically-value each other*. When we view others - as well as ourselves - from that perspective, we are in the field of Ethics. That is what defines the boundaries of this area of study.

[By this definition, Ethics arises when we look at an individual from the perspective of Intrinsic Value. And Social Ethics, or Political Science, arises when we regard a group of two or more individuals as Intrinsic values.] Therefore everything we know about value, and especially about that specific kind of value, **I**-value, becomes true of ethics. Value theory serves as the meta-language for ethics. And everything then falls into place. We then have the boundaries and limits for which you were seeking, Alan.

Where to draw the line between Ethics and mores will become ever more clear as you learn more about this

discipline known as Ethics. And I hope this has been responsive to your concern, Alan, and serves at least to partially answer the questions you pose.

Bill: For more details, and to see how the term "morality" relates to the other terms of Ethics, refer to these two documents, the second being a popularization of the first. The first link, the Course, is more difficult reading and is designed for philosophers. **To find ETHICS- A College Course, use this link:** http://tinyurl.com/2mj5b3
To find **Living the Good Life**, click: http://tinyurl.com/24swmd

Ida: **The concept Nick raised, at the start of our discussion, the Hobbesian view that many of us (if not most) are capable of crimes – if we thought we could get away with them – is motivation enough for a group of concerned citizens to construct a sound theory of Ethics that has wide applications, and to work for it to become part of the prevailing ethos.**

Frank: **Jerry earlier brought up what is going on today in Afghanistan,   Let's discuss war and tyranny for a moment. Herb, did you have something you wanted to say on those themes?**

ORIGINS OF WAR AND TYRANNY

Herb: In the first decade of the 20th-Century, a patriarchal, authoritarian society was the sort of society that seemed ordinary at that time throughout the world.

Alluding to the origins of Nazism, Roger Ebert writes:

"When the prevention of evil becomes more important than the preservation of freedom, authoritarianism grows. If we are to prevent evil, someone must be in charge. The job naturally goes to those concerned with enforcing order. Therefore, all disorder is evil and must be prevented, and that's how the interests of the state become more important than the interests of the people."

He is observing that **S**-value is made more important than **I**-value. As we are aware by now, that commits an ethical fallacy. The EHV formula shows that to think unclearly like that is a violation, a case of moral confusion.

He further notes: "We grow so disturbed by danger that we will surrender freedom -- even demand to. Do we feel more secure in an orderly state? Many do."

Kay: Research concludes that it is much easier to hurt people we don't have to see – as occurs in modern warfare, as compared with older forms of warfare.   <u>War</u> itself is an absurd situation. It's best definition is: <u>Organized mass-murder in the name of a good cause</u>. Many students of philosophy struggle over the dilemma: What if a member of the International Red Cross gives first-aid to a wounded enemy soldier? Is that ethical?

Whether a non-profit service organization administers first-aid to the enemy - or it doesn't - makes no difference ethically, for the whole state of affairs, the context, is itself mad, utterly mad. Since war is crazy, anything goes.

Joe: I agree. Whether the Red Cross serves the Taliban in Afghanistan, or whether it doesn't, the entire context is ethically muddled. **War is unethical** by the standards of the Unified Theory of Ethics.

Now let's talk about how evolution fits in with our unified theory. Do you have any insight on this, Frank?

EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS

Frank: According to the views of Edward O. Wilson, the "father" of sociobiology, morality would be interpreted as a useful adaptation that increases the fitness of its holders by providing a selective advantage.   He argues that natural selection has instilled human beings with a moral sense, a disposition to be good. Do you have something to add, Nick?

Nick: Earlier, Bruce, responding to Alan, spoke of cultural mores. It is commonly accepted that the function of virtually all prevailing moral standards found in today's cultures is to increase the benefits of living within groups. They also increase cooperation benefits. What do I mean by that?

The benefits of cooperation can be almost anything the cooperative group chooses in terms of material goods and positive emotions and they do not necessarily include reproductive fitness. Furthermore, selfish behavior cannot be considered moral. Acts that are unselfish may be re-enforced by cultural moral standards. Often we see implied or real threats of retaliation for violators who show selfishness. Among our moral emotions are empathy, guilt, righteous indignation, and our sense of fairness

Anthropology, Moral Psychology, and studies of cultural evolution reveal that those are two underlying characteristics of all moral systems practiced over generations by at least thousands of people. The first-mentioned characteristic is perhaps the most important characteristic of a society's ethics. I call it the core function of moral behavior. It is to increase the benefits of cooperation, and to encourage it among the members of the social group. The second of the two is the observation that behavior must be unselfish in order to be considered moral. Science, using its available tools, is also fully capable of defining particular moral standards that can be expected to increase the benefits of cooperation in groups in the long term, by which I mean over many generations. Those tools include game theory and psychology. Game Theorists have researched kin altruism and different kinds of reciprocity. The theory provides strategies for eliciting cooperative behavior.

Mark: S. E. Bromberg, in his book, The Evolution of Ethics: An Introduction to Cybernetic Ethics, takes this a step further and proposes that Cybernetics can provide a model for ethical reasoning, and for the derivation of sound ethical principles. That discipline already has a mathematics under-girding it.

An example of applied cybernetics that he offers is the following. "The new perspective asks **"what is to say an action is right or wrong,"** defined by inherent limitations of the physical and psychological worlds that make it impractical or imprudent to pursue certain behaviors, attitudes, or methods of reasoning regarding personal circumstances.

Some of these limitations are illustrated in the evolution of traffic laws, street signs and stop lights which show how a system of law which came into being to minimize pain, suffering and death and to maximize societal efficiency, harmony and prosperity."

In that passage he shows us what his values are and what he believe the concerns of Ethics are, namely, survival, safety needs, practicality, prudence, minimizing suffering and pain, maximizing efficiency, societal harmony and prosperity.

Enrico: My reading of the relevant literature is that a scientific consensus is forming that indignation, and cultural moral standards such as the Golden Rule, are biological and cultural adaptations that were selected because they increased the benefits of cooperation. This growing consensus is largely based on the spontaneous emergence of moral behaviors like altruism. Science can design the best strategies, standards, and social inventions to increase cooperation and explain the ensuing benefits.

Frank: All this fits right in well with the Unified Theory of Ethics, since if we treasure and honor the individual – as Ethics directs us to – then of course we will absolutely want to arrange conditions so that the suffering and pain of an individual is minimized, and the person is surrounded with an environment and a culture that enhances social harmony and the prosperity of each and all. I am here defining "prosperity" broadly as including at least a minimum level of comfort along with the maximum opportunity to express one's gifts that constructively add value to situations.

To Bromberg "action" is a central concept of ethics; but the Unified Theory does not stress action; rather it emphasizes

character and its development. Also it encourages the designing of social inventions that serve to further that goal The goal is to provide the good life for the good person. It spells out the advantages of one's choosing to be a good person, and shows the implications that result.

Some of these implications are a society filled with kindnesses, double-wins (or gain/gain relationships), added value, gift-giving - and appreciation for the gifts as the basic economic attitude - responsibility, a sense of excellence in one's performance, effectiveness as a human being. Cybernetics in this context means informational feedback in dynamic systems that sustains or redirects a behavior.

Bromberg would have us examine "the cultural and biological feedback system that inspires the evolution of social rules. In theory, at the heart of developing ethical systems is a cybernetic process that arises between the interaction of biology and culture using the informational feedback between the two to further human adaptation and survival."

He further adds this thought:: "When morality is described in dynamic terms of cybernetics, it becomes a calculus that reduces the enormous complexity of morality to simpler terms. Calculus did for engineering what cybernetics will do for ethical analysis. Moral science, thus becomes social engineering. For instance, a large building has constantly shifting loads requires calculus to pin down exactly how much pressure is on a beam at any given moment. A structural engineer calls this load calculation its "moment". Likewise, a moral scientist might determine the "ethical moment" of a given action or behavior. The language of conventional morality is too simple to deal with complex and ever changing moral conditions." We agree with him on this last observation.

THE COST OF HELPING

Ken: Thank you for that review, gentlemen. Speaking of research into a scientific basis for Ethics, are you aware of what Dacher Keltner, a researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, reports? Especially relevant is a 10-page paper he wrote in May, 2004, available at this site**:** http://www.altruists.org/downloads/ :

He informs us that "Recent studies in psychology suggest that …what makes us happy, what matters in the end, is the quality of our romantic and family bonds, our connection to our friends, and doing things for others." Then he adds:

> **Other empirical findings lead to a similar conclusion …. When relationship partners focus on … whether they are getting what they deserve, their relationships suffer. The connection we feel to our family and friends strengthens our immune system and makes us more resistant to disease and less likely to experience depression, anxiety, and antisocial tendencies. And in one study when participants were asked to maximize their personal happiness while enjoying a piece of music, they enjoyed that experience less than individuals who did not prioritize their own pleasure. … Consider the work of Daniel Kahneman [which] elegantly shows time and time again that we are not necessarily rational, nor do we always act in [a selfish] fashion. People will sacrifice personal gain in the name of fairness. Or consider the traveler who tips in restaurants, although certain not to be seen again.**
>
> **From an evolutionist perspective, nicely articulated by Elliot Sober and Robert Frank, three conditions must be met for compassion to evolve, for the emergence of human action that enhances the welfare of others."**

George: One factor is the cost of helping. He writes further: "When these costs exceed the benefits of giving, we hold back. For compassion to emerge, there must be some mechanism that … puts our own desire,

pleasures, and pains on the back burner so to speak, and that prioritizes the needs of others. This process must transform others' gains into one's own and endow the act of helping with intrinsic pleasure. "

John: That factor, that "mechanism" he is looking for, is, of course, the Intrinsic valuation of individuals; in other words, the Ethical perspective. When we take Ethics seriously, when we do Intrinsically value other human beings we prioritize their needs, and are at the same time keenly aware that it is not at the expense of our own needs but rather for the benefit of our true self.

Deb: You're right, gentlemen. The basic principle of Social Ethics, as you recall, is 'What really helps you helps me; and *vice versa*.' The central question of life, as Demerest and Schoof remind us, is "What choice can I make, and action can I take, in this moment, to create the greatest net value?"

Ken: Yes. We ought not forget those principles. In that article that I was telling about, Keltner continues:

> The evolution of compassion is further enabled by the *principle of contagious cooperation*... Kind individuals are able to evoke goodness in others [when they] ... pursue cooperative strategies in ...cooperative contexts. To the extent that compassion evokes beneficent responses in others, it should flourish.
>
> In a related vein, compassion is more likely to emerge when people can reliably identify good-natured people – the *principle of reliable identification*. Good-natured people fare better (and are more likely to pass on their genes) when they can find other good-natured individuals. This hinges on the ability to identify goodness in others, and, by implication, that compassion

(and other virtues) will have reliable physical signs detectable by the ordinary eye

Bob: There's an element of self-interest involved in altruism. True altruism is an extremely rare thing and even then self-interest is involved on a subconscious level. It's a fact that it's more natural to be self-interested than to be selfless. It's easier for people to make a decision if they know what's in it for them rather than to make them do it for some kind of abstract value they don't understand and can't really relate to.

It takes a very specific kind of conditioning to make a person do a totally selfless act. I'm still not ruling out the possibility that there may not be "selfless" acts since I believe you can't remove the element of self-interest involved in all our decisions. The most efficient way to encourage people to do "good" - to contribute, to be of help to others - is if it is made clear to them how this can benefit them directly. If this can be *shown by example*, many won't have a problem in taking part because they'll grasp that it's beneficial to everybody, it's a win-win situation. That's the only way to make and ensure peace, in my opinion.

John: Helping others and contributing to the world has a direct benefit for the individual who helps, since s/he is then going to live in a better world. An example is set which could be passed along, or copied by someone who observed the kindness, and examples 'speak louder than mere words' since examples are extrinsic and intrinsic, while words are usually only systemic.

Frank: Recall the words of Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth is created by the community. It should be given back to the community. He who dies rich dies a failure." He helped by

founding so many public libraries, giving funds that endowed Carnegie-Melon University in Pittsburgh as well as many other centers of learning and self-improvement. Among his many accomplishments he sponsored and inspired foundations for international peace, He held that knowledge is a **right,** not a privilege. When Enrico returns from his lunch break we will learn something about human rights that perhaps we didn't know before.

MORALITY IN ANIMALS

Deb: **The Unified Theory of Ethics (UTE) does not necessarily give moral status to humans who are not self-aware, who don't have the ability to reason, or be altruistic, or who lack other moral characteristics and capacities. They likely will not score high in morality. An example of a marginal case would be a human who is comatose, whose brain has nearly stopped functioning, and who has a low probability of reawakening.**

Jim: Human beings, in contrast with other non-human primates, such as a chimpanzee, have the potential to create greater utility for the world – even if the chimp is one who is minding his own business and who does not cause trouble for anyone. So although I believe in animal rights if I **had to** choose between them, which I don't usually have to do, I would choose the human.

Bill: **Yes, An imperative implied by our definition of Ethics, as a field of study, is this: Honor and respect every individual. It follows that it is not justified to enslave, to mistreat, to abuse, or to commit violence, or other harm, upon an individual. We agree here, don't**

we, that everyone has certain inalienable rights. I believe we do concur on this.

Dan: Did you know that animals can tell right from wrong according to recent research? Here (from the U. K. Telegraph of 23 May 2009 – wildlife feed) is a link to the evidence:http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/wildlife/5373379/Animals-can-tell-right-from-wrong.html

Jen: Yes. I've seen that research. I believe morality can exist in other animals. We humans, though,, because of our superior intellects, are able to circumvent morality with convincing rationalizations.   I note that Enrico has now arrived in our midst. Welcome, friend. He will share with us today some ideas he found while searching the literature.

I'd like to ask you, Enrico, can human rights be derived from our basic premises?

ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Enrico: If one I-values [Intrinsically-values] an individual – which is what Ethic directs us to do, by its very definition – then one has self-respect and respect for others. One honors another's human rights.

What does that mean? I offer for your consideration this passage from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. It well expresses my views:

> **Human rights are international norms that help to protect all people everywhere from severe political, legal, and**

social abuses. Examples of human rights are the right to freedom of religion, the right to a fair trial when charged with a crime, the right not to be tortured, and the right to engage in political activity.

These rights exist in morality and in law at the national and international levels. They are addressed primarily to governments, requiring compliance and enforcement. The main sources of the contemporary conception of human rights are the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (United Nations, 1948b) and the many human rights documents and treaties that followed in international organizations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States, and the African Union. See also: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/natural-law-ethics/#NatGoo

Deb: The right to live, the right to work, the "pursuit of happiness," the right to self-development are sometimes considered natural rights. No matter what is written into the law, these rights rise above those statutes. They are considered to be laws of nature – in this case, of human nature.

Bill: The Stoics taught that human law and human action should conform to the constitution of the world, to the laws of nature. When we exercise right reason, as they put it, we will so arrange things.

Nick: Let's not forget that rights vary directly with responsibilities. Along with rights come responsibilities, and the more responsibility you take on the more rights to which you are entitled. For example, "the leader of the free world" – who has more responsibility assigned to him (or, someday, her) - gets more privileges than you or I.   A principle that emerges from this correlation is this: *No rights or entitlements without responsibility !*

Mary: Rights come with the understanding that they will be enjoyed along with common sense; they will be exercised with sensitivity and respect for the feelings of others. Often we have a legal right to do something, or to say something, but we ought to consider first if its effect with be like that of shouting "Fire!" in a crowded theatre. However, civil rights marches were (and are) ethical provided they are nonviolent even though a majority of the onlookers may disapprove. There are times when we should not hold back even if some will be offended.

Carl: That gives us a lot to think about!

George: If I may change the subject for a moment, being moralistic – which I am against – is an attempt to place a judgment of goodness or badness upon a given thing or event. The problem with this is that there are no fixed points or static positions in the flux of reality. We can't nail down valuation rigidly in a universe where everything is in flux – which the evidence of Physical Science shows us is indeed the case.

Every judgment should be dated and indexed to indicate that it is just a momentary snapshot, subject to later revision. Moral decisions apply in particular situations.

Jim: However we should keep in mind that there are ethical principles that exert force within that flux that you speak of, George, because they are so logical, and thus reasonable to believe – at least as hypotheses to be tested. The more they are tested in practice, they

receive confirmation if they hold to be true. So let's not in the name of universal flux discard our ethical principles. I think we can all agree on that.

George: One normative principle, stated as an imperative, we can infer from the new paradigm is: <u>**Live life to the fullest and help others to do so.**</u>

John: One serves oneself by serving others. It is the best way to do so. Why? There is something to be gained by helping others; the more you help people the more likely it is that they will help you. Society functions via mutual collaboration, by people working together. They help each other get a project done. Let's all Intrinsically value ourselves and other individuals, and then we shall see the kind of world that results. I predict we will flourish.

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A SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

1) Honor and respect every individual.

2) Everyone is doing the best s/he knows how. If we knew any better we would do better. It's mainly due to ignorance why we behave badly.

3) We are all in this together. We're all just trying to make a life.

4) Work for mutually-beneficial relationships. What really helps you, helps me; and *vice versa.*

5) Strive for excellence in performance !   Aim to be a good person. Intrinsically value yourself and others.

6) Be authentic ! Don't be a phony; be true to your true self.

7) In every situation in life the Central Question is: What choice can I make, and action can I take, in this moment, to create the greatest net value?
[With thanks to P. Demarest & H. Schoof.]

8) Provide everyone the full opportunity to express their creativity.

9) Empower the individual to express more of his full potential.

10) Look to creative design to solve problems.

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