

The Ten New Commandments

by
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Ndala

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Preface

This book began in the middle of the '90s, as most books probably do: with a couple of idle jottings. I was peeved at the hypocrisy of those who kept telling Conservatives to stop trying to foist their morals on everyone, and were at the same time agitating for things like environmentalist and anti-smoking legislation. I wondered if I could list ten new commandments of the Left, and found I had no trouble doing so.

In the 1997-1998 school year, the idea looked promising enough to write it up into an article, as a kind of satire; but as I worked on it, I saw the connection with Darwin's Theory of Evolution, and it took on a more serious cast. The article turned out to be too long for publication, but too short and superficial for anything like a monograph; so I didn't know what to do with it.

I read it to my class, however, who seemed to think there was something there, and someone, I don't remem-

ber who, suggested the connection with Bill Clinton, whose troubles were beginning to surface. That looked promising, because, as the Lewinsky scandal began to explode, he seemed every day to verify one or another aspect of the New Morality.

But that would have made the book a kind of political screed against him first and foremost, and as it took shape, it seemed to really be a critique of the hidden moral code that was at war with traditional morality. So I took Clinton out as the book's primary emphasis (though he still appears as the main example of a New Moralist), and added "interludes" after each of the New Commandments, giving a positive alternative. It isn't hard to find fault; but if you're going to, I think you have an obligation to show how you think things can be better. That's what I tried to do.

George Blair

The Ten New Commandments

Introduction

People of a conservative bent are apt to look back at the Clinton era with its lying, dissembling, and especially its sexual escapades and wonder, “How can he live with himself?” And when they see with astonishment all the people who supported him—and still support him—they say, “Our country is in moral decay! We have lost all standards!” This is reinforced for them by some of the reasons these people give: “Hey, it was only about sex. Well, so it involved lying about sex, so what? Everybody lies about sex; you’re *expected* to lie about sex.” Only people completely bereft of any moral sense, they think, can say such things.

But what traditionalists find really appalling is that the Clinton defenders do not simply *excuse* him; they positively *admire* him and to this day speak of him as if he were a good and noble person, who

did what is best for our country, especially in trying to save it from the hypocrisy of the Religious Right. Only people who have absolutely no morals at all, they think, can hold someone like Bill Clinton up as a model of *virtue*, for heaven's sake. Yet to hear some of them talk, that's what they're doing.

But what this book is about is that the traditionalists have missed the point. There *isn't* a decline or decay of moral standards, with amorality taking its place; there's been, in our culture (and increasingly in the world culture, especially among the educated), a shift to a *different set* of moral standards—but a set of standards which is just as strict, just as absolute, and just as evangelically promoted as the traditional standards ever were. It was once called the New Morality; and I see no reason for not using the term, because it *is* new, and it *is* a real moral code.

The reason that it seems like no morality at all to the traditionalist is that things which in the tradition are forbidden are considered perfectly all right according to the new standards. But oh, yes, there are things that are forbidden in the New Morality; and forbidden absolutely for anyone. These are not *called* "immoral," however, and so there seem to be no morals at all among the elites of our society.

But think, for instance, about discrimination. Nobody—especially among the elite—really says that it is *immoral* to discriminate, because according to the New Morality's idea of "morality," that would make it a purely personal matter whether you discriminated or not, and therefore no one should try to impose anti-discrimination on the unwilling.

But they nevertheless believe with fully as much fervor as Billy Graham that you *can't* discriminate. You *mustn't*. You can't treat people as unequal, because they *aren't* unequal. It's just sick to do it.

Precisely. When the New Morality confronts what it considers immoral, it calls it "sick," not "immoral." And there's a reason for this. "Immoral" looks at the situation explicitly from the point of

view of a moral code, and this automatically (according to the New Morality) makes it personal, not objective, while “sick” makes it something that people abhor because there’s something objectively abhorrent about it.

Nevertheless, if you look at what anti-discriminators do, aren’t they doing the same thing that they decry in the traditionalists who “want to impose their own personal moral standards on everyone?” Jimmy the Greek was actually fired for saying that black people were good athletes because their ancestors were bred for strength. Whether it was factually true or not was irrelevant; he had discriminated, and he must suffer for it. The authors of *The Bell Curve* found to their dismay that they were pariahs for publishing what they gave objective evidence for.

But when you say that someone must be punished for doing something that you don’t agree with, aren’t you making him suffer for not abiding by your standards of conduct? Especially in the case when he adduces facts to support his statements. Neither Jimmy the Greek nor the authors of the *Bell Curve* were trying to say that black people should be denied opportunities, or that they should be “put in their place and kept there”; they were simply uttering what the facts seemed to indicate were differences between the races. The intellectual response to this is to show where the reasoning was faulty, not to ostracize them for uttering their views, still less to impose some penalty on them. If this were an intellectual disagreement, what happened would have been a debate, not punishment.

But you see, the implications of this were detrimental to black people—and that’s discrimination, and discrimination must not be allowed. Why? Because it’s false. But these people say that the differences are there. They’re wrong. But they say they have evidence that they’re right. Well, they don’t. How do you know? Because they’re wrong, that’s all; what they say is discriminatory, and so it’s false and they shouldn’t have said it! (When things get to this point, exclamation marks start popping up.)

What is this but an excellent example of a moral standard that everyone is supposed to conform to, irrespective of what he subjectively believes, and in this case irrespective of what the actual facts are? So there *are* moral absolutes in the New Morality—lots of them, even though the very proponents of these moral absolutes would be shocked if you accused them of holding moral absolutes, still less of trying to impose their own absolutes on others.

Now I hasten to say that I happen to think that invidious discrimination is wrong (though I also think that not all forms of discrimination are wrong, nor is discrimination wrong simply *because* it is discrimination). There are things in the New Morality, in other words, that I don't necessarily have a moral problem with. All I'm trying to say at this point is that it's objectively false to claim that the New Moralists don't have any moral standards at all, or even that they're not trying to impose their moral code on everyone else. And everyone who has run afoul of this code (which is currently dubbed "political correctness" rather than "morality") knows how fanatical and rigid and intolerant (and even violent) it can be.

And it turns out that Bill Clinton is a pretty good example of the New Morality; and one of the reasons he is admired, and "feels good about himself" is that he's been acting in conformity with its standards of conduct, and is recognized as doing so by those in the know.

And those in the know make up a huge segment of the news and entertainment media; it is dominated by exponents of the New Morality, who are using the means of communication to "teach" the unwashed masses the errors of their traditionalist ways, and show them the folly of what they used to be doing and how good it is to be living according to the new rules.

But because of the peculiar nature of the New Morality's idea of morality, the whole of what they are doing is removed from the sphere of morals; these people think that they're just trying to "tell it like it is," to get behind the hypocrisy of the Religious Right, and

let people know that it's all right to be themselves.

Well, what's wrong with that? Nothing at all. But that's just what the traditionalists have always said *they* are trying to do. The Religious Right documents fully as many hypocrisies in the antics of the New Moralists as the media do in the behavior of the Religious Right. To take just one example, the women of the New Morality had enough cows to depress the price of beef when (as they allege) Clarence Thomas asked Anita Hill for a date by using sexually explicit language. And yet with Bill Clinton's shenanigans with an intern whom he explicitly declared he was using simply to service him, with no intent whatsoever to give her any sexual gratification in return, the feminists are hurt over how badly *he* was treated.

We will see later how the feminists could think this way. But the point here is to realize is that the so-called "culture war" is *not* a conflict between moral standards and amorality or permissiveness. It is a conflict between two different *sets* of moral standards, each of which is the logical consequence of the notion of what it means to "be yourself." Each of these codes, whether it explicitly realizes it or not, is considered by its adherents to be objectively true, even self-evidently true based on the real facts—subject to modification in detail, perhaps, but nonetheless true enough in its fundamental outlines to be worthy of making everyone subject to it whether they agree with it or not.

Each moral code permits some things and forbids others. It regards the other one as lax and evil insofar as the other permits what it forbids, and it regards the other as unenlightened and stupid insofar as the other forbids what it permits.

For instance, the New Morality regards the Religious Right as evil for allowing discrimination to go on for so many years and saying nothing about it, while it looks on the Religious Right as stupid and not "in tune with the twentieth century" in denouncing things like sex outside of marriage. It thinks of the Religious Right as both evil and stupid for declaring that homosexual sex is a sin, because that

(according to the New Morality standards) is at once forbidding what is really perfectly okay, and discriminating against a whole class of people who are simply trying to not to be hypocrites and are acting consistently with what they really happen to be.

It is in one sense very difficult to write a book like this, because the New Morality has so entrenched itself that the reaction at this point is apt to be, “Okay, so people have deeply felt convictions, and they tend to impose those convictions on the people around them. So what else is new?”

I want to treat this attitude in detail later; New Moralists believe and teach that morality is really how you *feel* about things; that it doesn't have any factual basis. But here let me just point out that there's out something fishy about this. Are feminists really interested in how you *feel* about feminism? Whatever your views are, however you “feel,” you had damn well better not step in the way of women's getting the opportunities they—what other word is there for it?—*objectively* deserve. And it is simply laughable to say that what Hitler did to the Jews “should” not have been done because it makes the rest of us “feel bad” about it. Those, in fact, like the Skinheads, who feel good about it (a) *should not* feel good about it because that feeling itself is objectively a perversion, and (b) insofar as it is so, they should be discriminated against, vilified, and if they act on their convictions, imprisoned.

So let me content myself this far in hoping that what I've said has planted a seed that what is going on in our country and our world is that there are two moral codes in mortal conflict with each other, each thinking that it is objectively correct, and each trying to see to it that the other one is stamped out, or at least rendered impotent to extend its views beyond a few harmless fanatics.

The Religious Right does not want secular morality imposed on it, or on anyone else; and the New Morality does not want its adherents, or anyone else, to be subject to the strictures of the Religious Right.

How we got this way.

The roots of the conflict go very far back, and I'll have to do some tracing of them; but I think a strong case can be made that the conflict in its present form sprouted out of Darwin's theory of evolution. Still, Darwinism has been around for well over a hundred years, and the New Morality didn't seem to germinate until the 'sixties of the twentieth century. Why? How come this seed so suddenly burgeoned?

What I want to explore in this section is what happened to make the Age of Aquarius (of which Bill Clinton is a product) a moral force which suddenly began taking over the best and brightest among us.

The explanation, actually, isn't all that complicated to trace. If we go back to my childhood, we find ourselves in the middle of the Second World War. We in the United States were convinced that we were the Good Guys and the "Japs" (Do you notice that you can't use that word any more? You have to say "the 'J-word.'") and Nazis (but it's okay to use the term "Nazi," because all Nazis *should* be discriminated against) were evil attackers of civilization. We had to win, at whatever cost, and everyone joined in to further the noble cause, even to rationing our food, practicing blackouts and air raids, and having us kids trot along the gutters and pick up the lead foil out of discarded cigarette packages to recycle for bullets for the War Effort.

And when President Truman dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and then Nagasaki, we regretted the resulting destruction, perhaps (though we were proud we had such a weapon), but we bought into Truman's justification that the action actually prevented a greater loss of life even of the Japanese, if we had attacked their mainland. This, I personally think, is probably true, though I also think (now) that the end doesn't justify the means, and that the actual bombing was morally wrong.

In any case, any misgivings we Americans might have had at the

time were dispelled by two things: (1) we heard about the atrocities on the other side, and our actions were nowhere near as bad as the ones we heard about, and (2) we proved that we were noble and righteous by helping build back the economies of our enemies. (I can hear the New Moralists screaming as I write this. I am simply reporting what our attitude was back then. We were convinced that we were a paragon of virtue in the messy business of conducting and concluding the war.)

What is significant about this, however, is not how we patted ourselves on the back. Add one more event, and I think I will be able to will show its significance for the sudden shift in morals that began not much more than a decade later: We were instrumental in founding the United Nations.

You see, with the Bomb and the United Nations, we had The Answer. The very horror of being able to blow up a whole city with a single bomb made any future war unthinkable, just as it stopped the most bloody conflict in history in its tracks. And the fact that, in the United Nations, we now had a forum in which differences between countries could be talked out instead of fought made war no longer necessary.

So we Americans looked forward to a future without wars, in which, under our benign guidance and modeled on our generous behavior toward our implacable foes, we would move into an era, as a song of the time said, of “One world/Built on a firm foundation...at peace forever more.” Those of you who weren’t alive at the time have no idea of the confident hope we had of the “postwar world,” where everyone had conveniences undreamed-of, like super-highways and instant communications—even of broadcast movies!—and everyone finally found commonality and mutual love with all other peoples—and all the rest of a noble utopian dream.

What happened, then, to burst this bubble? The first thing was that some of our scientists who had worked on the bomb, motivated (I think) by their own idealism and a suspicion that perhaps we

weren't quite as morally immaculate as we thought we were, got the idea that it would be more stabilizing if we weren't the only ones to have nuclear weapons, and gave the secret to the Soviet Union.

Once that occurred, The Answer suddenly became no answer at all. We learned to our sorrow in Korea that we didn't dare use the atomic bomb, because the Soviets had it, and if we used it our own cities would be in jeopardy. So we fought that agonizing conventional war, which resulted in the unsatisfactory division of Korea into Communist North and non-Communist South. And we simultaneously discovered that the United Nations had formed itself into two blocs, one of which, instead of looking to us for guidance, did everything in their power to stymie what we proposed, to question our motives, and in general to make trouble instead of peace.

But we still thought we were the Good Guys; it was just that now we realized, at the last minute, that the Bad Guys weren't the Nazis and the Japanese, but the godless Commies, together with their pinko followers here in the States who were trying to overthrow us. So we undertook a program to see to it that Communism wouldn't be allowed to spread any farther than it already had. The Cold War had begun.

But then, at the beginning of the 'sixties, three punches came at us all at once, and knocked the members of our generation out of our moral complacency, and finally made us give up altogether: The Civil Rights movement, the Pill, and Viet Nam. No one of them, perhaps not even two out of the three, would have been enough to give the New Morality a solid foothold; but all three together did us in.

Racial attitudes when I was a child were, on the part of the black people, that of leaders like Booker T. Washington, who saw that asserting rights and standing up against segregation and the status quo only brought on reprisals, and the last state was worse than the first—and so it was better not to rock the boat. On the part of whites, there was the carryover from the days of slavery, in which the

black slaves, understandably enough, portrayed themselves to us as “nice,” but stupid and incompetent, with no sense of time or responsibility (understandably, because a slave who shows himself bright and competent is going to be rewarded with more work and nothing else). So we honestly believed that black people were just too dumb to do anything but menial jobs, that they would be miserable, with rare exceptions, if they undertook anything intellectually challenging, and that they were happiest living by themselves among their own kind.

And then Rosa Parks sat in the front of the bus (legally, by the way, since the back was full and there were empty seats up there), but refused to get up and give her seat to a young white man when the front filled up—on the grounds that she was a tired older woman, and he was a young man, and he was much more capable of standing than she was. That broke the rules—but it made eminent sense.

And then we found black people sitting in at “our” lunch counters, and realized, with John Howard Griffin, who dyed his skin black, that if you were black, you had to plan your day around your bodily functions, so that when you needed to relieve yourself, you didn’t find yourself twenty blocks away from the nearest black rest room, and when you needed to eat, you were close enough to a black lunch counter that it didn’t take you a half hour to get there.

And Martin Luther King, Jr. pointed out to us that without realizing it, we had been treating human beings as if they were a lower form of life, and not really human at all—and we couldn’t do that. And we agreed. It didn’t really take very long to convince us, when you think about it; the moral attitude in the people as a whole toward race relations shifted drastically in four or five years.

We realized to our shock that we had made a great mistake, and had done something profoundly evil. But we assuaged our conscience, just as we had done with the Second World War (and with slavery itself), by saying that what made us Americans distinctive was that we were a practical people, and we would do something about

it. So we abolished the “black only” facilities, and changed the voting laws, and desegregated the educational institutions and so on, and, just as we had at the end of the War, we envisioned a future along the lines of King’s dream, where character and not the color of your skin counted.

I say “we,” of course, as a white person, because the white people, as the vast majority, set the moral tone of the people as a whole. But the blacks, naturally, were suspicious of our noble intentions—which hurt us whites very much—just as foreign countries could not see that we were genuinely interested in their prosperity, not in using them for our own advantage. (I hear cries of outrage from the New Moralists again.)

So our sense of moral uprightness was able to ride with this second punch, and was only stung, not knocked out; and we had fought back and were in the process of righting the inadvertent wrong. But then came the Pill.

Contraceptives existed—condoms—when I was a child; but, say what you will, a condom puts a barrier between the man and the woman, doesn’t feel as good, is messy, and all the rest of it that people are so familiar with nowadays. But at that time, when people had the attitude that sex had something to do with reproduction, it wasn’t hard to think of this kind of thing as against nature, and masking what the act was mainly all about.

But people at that time took pills for colds, headaches, acid stomach, and so on, and nobody thought that there was anything unnatural about this. So when The Pill was introduced, the reproductive dimension of sex was suppressed beforehand, as it were, and the act itself was just the same as it always was. What was “against nature” about this? Just as it was silly to say that you should endure a splitting headache (because it was “natural”) instead of taking the pill that suppressed it, why should it be any different to suppress reproductiveness by taking a pill? (I don’t happen to buy this reasoning, by the way; I’m just reporting again.)

And if you take this a logical step further—and who didn't?—then it meant that the act of sexual intercourse was no longer in itself reproductive, so to speak, and it was a matter of choice whether to make it so by taking the Pill or not. And what *this* meant was that suddenly the whole moral code about sex had to be rethought, insofar as it connected the sex act with reproduction. Why, for instance, did sex have to take place only in the context of marriage, since marriage obviously was instituted to see to it that the children would have proper rearing? And if sex has “in itself” nothing to do with reproduction, then the feeling of repugnance against homosexual sex was now seen as a feeling without any basis in reality. And of course, the “sin” of masturbation turned into a healthy form of release from tension.

It was not just the Aquarians who made this sudden shift. Middle-aged people who at first wanted to limit the size of their families discovered what they had been missing, and began to follow the logic of the technological transformation of the nature of sexuality, and the sexual revolution was in full force, quickly spreading to the decay of marriage as a life-long commitment, and then the technological divorcing of reproduction itself from sex, first in artificial insemination and then in “test-tube babies,” and all the rest of it.

Traditionalists all this time felt that there was something wrong here, but their vague unease was not enough to withstand the argument that if you couldn't use contraceptives, you'd have to give up aspirin too; and that if marriage had to be a lifetime commitment because of the children, what about a marriage where there *were* no children? And such marriages didn't have to be rare any more.

So this was a serious blow, especially to Christians, whose Bible seemed to proclaim that acts that now seemed perfectly natural were an abomination in God's sight. It worried many; especially when Christian theologians began saying that what the Bible *said* wasn't what the Bible really *meant*, and giving symbolic interpretations fully worthy of Bill Clinton at his slickest that the Bible was really telling

us that we should join the sexual revolution—responsibly and lovingly, of course.

And on top of all this came Viet Nam.

We started the Viet Nam war, actually, because of our effort to contain Communism; and when it began, we felt that it was another exercise of our moral nobility, especially since we didn't have anything practical to gain if South Vietnam remained out of Communist hands. We were simply helping an ally who had asked for our help, and we had to honor our commitment.

But it was really another Korea, with China backing the North Vietnamese, except that this time the country was already divided, and so the solution in Korea was closed. If we actually tried to *win* the war, we ran the serious risk of starting World War III; so we fought it (whether we realized it or not) along the general lines of the Just War Principle: That you couldn't trample all over the attacking society, but must do no more than prevent them from winning.

The practical trouble with this is that, depending on the determination of the aggressors, this kind of war is going to take a long, long time, with no really satisfying solution in sight; and the American people, with their football mentality, were not capable of understanding why we would engage in a conflict we deliberately didn't intend to win.

Further, as the war dragged on, and as the young people, who had to go to a foreign country and put their lives on the line for an abstraction, made louder and louder protests, we began increasingly to realize that the government we were propping up was hardly a model of civic virtue, and the Press, full now of people who were imbued with the New Morality, began screaming how the news was "managed," and managed themselves to manage the news in such a way that the war was perceived more and more as an evil, imperialistic country sending its own youth to die for the preservation of a corrupt government in the face of a takeover from a political system

which was far more just and humane.

And finally the nation as a whole bought this idea. We *thought* we had started the war from motives pure and sacrosanct, and now realized that what we had done was evil and pernicious. And then we reflected and saw that we had *thought* that we were doing the right thing when we kept the blacks under our thumb, and now realized that what we had done was evil and pernicious. And we looked at the sexual revolution, and what we had *thought* was self-restraint in the practice of virtue was, we now realized, repression of what was natural, and therefore evil and pernicious.

At this point, my generation simply threw up their hands. “All right!” we in effect said. “We were so sure we had all the answers. Now we know we weren’t even asking the right questions. You young people have unmasked our hypocrisy, and so you must be wiser than we are. You take over, and see what you can do. We wash our hands of the whole mess!”

And now, as we consider what these confident youngsters, with Bill Clinton as the first President from among them, have brought the country to, we look back at the moral vacuum we left them to fill, and we hear in the back of our minds, “Whenever an unclean spirit is driven out of a man, it wanders around the desert looking for a place to stay, but does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will go back to the house I left’; and when it returns, it finds the place empty, swept, and dusted. Then it goes out again and brings back seven other spirits worse than itself, and they all move in and make themselves at home—and the person’s last state is worse than the first. This is what will happen with this evil generation.”

Of course, there’s hope. Not all the country has subscribed to the New Morality, by any means; and our leadership now is of the old school. But the New Moralists are still all around us, still pushing their agenda, and we have to be aware of what is going on, or we might well lose in the long run. And that would be terrible, because the New Morality is in fact based on illusion.

**The First New (and Great)
Commandment:
Thou Shalt Make No Claim to Absolute
Truth**

Presumably, if you're still reading this, you're willing to entertain the notion that the New Morality is a real moral code, and you're curious to see if I can show what it is, and what's behind it.

It turns out that it's not all that hard to come up with Ten New Commandments, which pretty much sum up the prohibitions the New Morality enjoins on everyone. But of course, what ten they are, or whether there are ten, or fifteen, or only eight, depends on how you organize things. After all, people don't even agree on how you make ten commandments out of the passage in *Exodus*. Sex is called "sex," in fact, because it's what the Sixth (*sextum* in Latin) Commandment deals with according to Catholic listing, while it's the Seventh in the Protestant version. And Jesus showed that there were

“two great commandments” in the Torah which epitomized the whole set.

And I think you can make a case that there are two Great Commandments in the new system also—in my enumeration, the first two—which don’t perhaps sum up all of the rest, but which in many ways underlie all of them, and are presupposed in all of the others, and which, in fact, collapse, as it were, into the Third New Commandment. One of them sounds intellectual, but in its present form has transmogrified itself into a moral prohibition, while the other is explicitly moral.

These have their roots far behind Darwinism, though they are compatible with it; and so what I want to do in these beginning chapters is trace very briefly the history of the supposed evidence for them, and to critique it. And it needs a critique. If “by their fruits you shall know them,” then the intellectual and moral chaos we are in at present would, it seems, indicate *a posteriori* that there is something wrong with them. I propose to show why people came to think it reasonable to hold them, but also why holding them is in fact not reasonable.

So don’t expect this book to be a kind of neutral “don’t take a stand” kind of presentation (“objective” in *that* sense), where I give both sides of the issue, as if equally valid, and then you make up your own mind. That would be to give in to the First New Commandment, which, as I’m going to show, has an underpinning that is false if it’s true and true if it’s false. And I’m sorry, anything that says it’s false because it’s true isn’t worth bothering with in my book—or in any book that tries to make any sense. (Of course, say the New Moralists, that’s because of my prejudice. The only really effective response to this kind of thing is to punch the person in the nose and say, “I didn’t hit you because I hit you; so it doesn’t hurt because you’re in pain.”)

This is not to say that I “have an agenda” here, which is another way, as we’ll see, of subscribing to the Third New Commandment.

All I fundamentally care about is what the objective facts are, not with promoting some program I want people to follow. Granted, the facts as I see them *imply* a program, which is very close in many ways to the traditional morality; but if you want to follow it, that's your business and not mine. And, of course, I'm perfectly willing to grant that I might miss the point and see things incorrectly, in which case, I want to know the evidence that refutes me so that I can change my view to be consistent with what the facts actually are. But what I'm *not* willing to grant is that my view is "true for me" and still might be "false for you." That's the First New Commandment.

But let me state the Two Great Commandments, before I get into a rather detailed discussion of the first:

The First New (and Great) Commandment:

Thou shalt make no claim to absolute truth.

And the second is like unto it:

The Second New (and Great) Commandment:

Thou shalt not force thy morals upon anyone else.

Upon these two Great Commandments rest the New Morality.

The basic stupidity behind the First New Commandment.

I claim that, whatever it appears as, this First New Commandment is actually a *moral* imperative; it is not simply an intellectual statement. And in order to see this, you have to understand the history of the study of what truth is.

But before we get into that, and see why otherwise intelligent people can hold it, I want to point out that in fact it is supremely stupid, because its intellectual underpinnings say the opposite of what they say.

Obviously, what's basically behind it is the assumption either that there is no such thing as absolute truth, or (stated perhaps a little more humbly) that *no one can ever know what "the facts" really are,*

at least with absolute certainty (i.e., so that there's not even the possibility of being mistaken).

It follows from this assumption, as you can see, that it is the height of arrogance to claim that you actually know what the facts really are, and to assert that you not only aren't mistaken, but can't be. Who are you to say that you're right and everyone who disagrees with you is wrong?

But think about it. How humble is the alternative (the New Commandment)? I've talked to skeptics who make the claim that no one can ever know anything with absolute certainty, and when I say, "Are you absolutely certain of that?" their first reaction is not to understand what I'm asking. They generally answer, "Of what?" "That no one can be absolutely certain of anything."

It then dawns on the brighter ones among them that they're making the claim that (a) it's a *fact* that no one can ever be absolutely certain of anything, and (b) they *know* that this fact is true, and anyone who disagrees with it is objectively wrong. These intelligent ones see the trap they've fallen into, and generally come back with, "Well, of course, I can't be *absolutely sure* that no one could ever know anything with absolute certainty; but it's never happened up to now, and there's a very strong likelihood that it won't happen in the future either."

I then ask them how they know it's never happened up to now, and in the last analysis, they "sort of just know it," which shows that their admission of the possibility that they might be wrong is just a gambit in a debating game. Under a kind of Socratic cross-examination they wind up demonstrating clearly that they're so *sure* that no one can know anything with absolute certainty that they won't even *admit* that they're sure of it, because that would be to admit that there's one thing that they're absolutely sure of (that no one is absolutely sure of anything). "It's always possible to make a mistake." But how do you *know* that? Could you be mistaken on that?

You see, if it's known with absolute certainty that nothing can be

known with absolute certainty, then something can be known with absolute certainty. Or if you can't be mistaken that it's always possible to be mistaken, then there's something you can't be mistaken about. Which means that it's false that nothing can be known with absolute certainty. You see why I call this position stupid? Its own claim that it's true is a claim that it's false.

If they come back with, "Well sure, it's false from *your* point of view; but that's your truth, not mine. It's true for me." At which point I say, "The problem is that it's false from *your* point of view, not mine. You either *don't know* whether anything can be known with absolute certainty or not, in which case you should be trying to find out, or you take the issue as settled, in which case you yourself disagree with your own claim that no one can know anything with absolute certainty. And obviously, you consider this 'point of view' of yours to apply to me, because when I claim to know something that's absolutely true from every point of view, you deny it."

An absolutely certain fact.

What generally happens at this point is that the skeptic issues me a challenge. "All right. Then you show me something that you know with absolute certainty is true, that you not only aren't mistaken about it, but *can't* be mistaken about it; and not only that, but something I'll have to admit I'm absolutely sure of too, and so is everyone else, no matter what their point of view is. You can't do it, can you?"

And I answer, "Sure I can. It's simplicity itself."
And here it is:

There is something.

To forestall Clintonesque squirming here, let me say that by "something" I don't necessarily mean "something tangible," or "something measurable," or "something perceivable"; I mean the

opposite of “absolutely nothing.” Anything whatever that’s not nothing at all is “something” in my sense of the term.

Now then, suppose you deny that there is something. There’s the denial, isn’t there? But that’s something. Suppose you doubt it. There’s the doubt—which is something. Suppose you question it; there’s the question. Suppose you take *any* attitude toward it, then there’s the “something” which is the attitude.

Now you *know* this. When you doubt something, it’s *theoretically possible*, perhaps, to doubt that there’s a “you” who’s doing the doubting (Descartes’ claim that this was not possible was one of his mistakes), but you can’t doubt that doubting is going on—and that’s *something*. So as soon as you can entertain the proposition “There is something,” whether to agree with it or question it or doubt it or do anything with it, you know that there’s *something*; and you can’t possibly think that there’s nothing at all (because you are *aware* of the thinking, which is something, not nothing at all).

So you *can’t* be mistaken when you claim that there is something—because supposing you were, the mistake itself would be *something*, which means, of course, that it wasn’t a mistake. (There are, I should mention, a couple of phony ways of trying to get around this, which I’ll treat in the interlude that follows this discussion.)

“Now wait a minute! You’re running around in circles! All you’re doing is playing games with words!” No I’m not. I’m just stating the obvious. If you want to doubt the obvious, then all I’m doing is saying that when you do it, there’s the doubt, which is something.

The other thing I want to make clear is that there is no point of view from which it is possible for “there is something” to be false—since there would be the point of view, and *that’s* something (it’s certainly not nothing at all). So “there is something” is *objectively* true; that is, true from *any* point of view, and it is *known* to be true from any and every point of view (because you know that, whatever the point of view, that point of view is something). Obviously, it

does not depend on the point of view you take to it; it is completely independent of your point of view—and you know this.

In other words, all I'm doing is pointing out to you that *there is at least one case where you know something absolutely, objectively true, and you know it with absolute certainty*. It's a perfectly trivial case, of course, but so what?

You see, what this trivial case tells us are two vitally important things: first, **the human mind is capable of reaching absolute, objective truth, and being incapable of being mistaken about it**, and second, **not everything depends on your point of view**.

Still, I've had diehard skeptics respond to this, "Well, I can't answer you because you can twist words too well. But I still don't buy it. You can't tell *me* that there's not the slightest possibility that no one will ever be able to come up with a position that proves you're wrong." (Notice how *certain* they are that certainty is impossible.)

The answer, of course, is that if somebody did, there'd be the position, which is something—and so it would prove I'm right.

At this point, skeptics get mad at me.

"Who are *you* to claim that you've got a handle on absolute, objective truth, when there are so many people who deny that there is such a thing? Are *you* so much better than *they* are?" (Notice how italics seem to creep in at this point.)

The moralization of intellectual discourse.

And it's here we begin to see that the First New Commandment is a *moral* imperative. It isn't that I've met the challenge to come up with something that my skeptical listener wasn't forced to admit he knew with absolute certainty. It's that I *when* I did this, I was claiming that I was right and he (before I showed him "There is something") was wrong. Yes, he was *wrong*. Objectively *wrong*. I not only told him that he should come over to my side, I took away his

right to have his own opinion.

And this is what in other writings I have called the symptom of the disease of the age: the apparent truism that “everyone has a right to his own opinion.” (The disease itself is the stupidity that no one can ever know anything with absolute certainty.)

First of all, as a rights claim, this is silly. To have a *right* to do something means that you *can* do it in the sense that it’s immoral for people to try to stop you (they have “no right to” stop you). So rights only exist when there is the possibility in principle that they can be violated. But how could I take an opinion you have out of your head? The skeptics I’ve talked to and “forced” to agree with me because otherwise they don’t agree with themselves, very often *still* hold their position in spite of my “forcing.” I didn’t make a dent in their belief, because, damn it all, they have a *right* to hold any opinion they want, and they’re not going to give it up because some smartass shows they’re fools for holding it. (What a delightful world this would be if I *could* take all your stupid opinions out of your head, and replace them with something that made sense!)

Anyhow, the fact is that I *can’t* remove opinions you have, much as I might want to. So you don’t have a *right* to hold your opinion, because there’s no way I can violate this supposed “right.” But, of course, that’s not what the rights claim really means. (New Moralists seldom mean what they’re actually saying.) What it means is that if I claim that I’m correct and you’re mistaken, and even more, when I prove that I’m right and you’re wrong, then I’ve “dissed” you. I have in effect said that I’m better than you are, and who am I to put myself on a higher plane than you?

But this misses the point. It’s not who I am, but what evidence I have, that proves what I say. It has nothing to do with me as a person or you as a person; it’s simply that I happen to have more facts available to me than you have, and I’m filling you in on information that, for whatever reason, you don’t have in your possession. I’m no better than you are because I happen to be aware

of a fact you're not aware of.

But to the New Moralist, when I claim to know something you don't and ought to know, for this I am regarded as evil, because you claim that you have a "right" to your opinion, and I'm trying to take it away. (By the way, who are you to tell *me* that you have a right to an opinion when I think you don't? Aren't you doing to me the very thing you hate me for doing to you?)

This is one of the things that has killed education in our country. We are actually *teaching* kids that everyone has a right to his own opinion (pardon, "their" own opinion), and all the teacher is supposed to be doing is *sharing* his (Oops! There I go again being grammatically instead of politically correct) opinion, in the (often forlorn) hope that the students will agree with it. But if the students don't, then they have a right to their opinion, after all. If everyone has a right to his own opinion, why *should* a kid listen to the teacher and work to learn what the teacher is saying? All they have to do is latch on to the things they "feel comfortable with."

And if you look at education in our schools, what you will find is that the kids are being taught the New Morality, not "facts." They're being taught to "think for themselves," not "rote memorization." Why? Because the fact, supposedly, is that there *are* no facts. I've even heard chemistry professors in college say that the science is advancing so fast that you can't teach kids what's known in chemistry, because by the time they graduate, this information will be obsolete. You have to teach them how to *think*. To think about what? Are they supposed to know what this new information is with no background about the old information so that they can see what it means? You'll notice that the *professors* don't seem to have any trouble, even though they were taught the old way. In fact, *because* they learned the old way, they have the information they decry, and can fit in the new stuff with no great effort. But they're leaving the kids with a blank.

And now, as one who taught for thirty-five years, I'll tell you a

secret. One of the main reasons other than the First New Commandment for the decline in education nowadays is that *teachers got bored with teaching the same old stuff year after year*. The fact that for each new crop of kids it's new and exciting doesn't mean that it's new and exciting for the teacher. And things like the multiplication table aren't exciting for anybody; they're just necessary.

But, following the First New Commandment, teachers have trumped up plausible-sounding lies and backed them up with moronic research to say that these things aren't necessary, and kids learn "better" if they don't have to be bothered with this stuff, and—here's the kicker—are taught the kind of thing the teachers are learning, for instance, in graduate-level mathematics, about sets and unions and whatnot. Naturally, the kids are bewildered, and learn nothing at all—and hate and fear math. But the *teachers* are entertained.

What happened to get us into this mess?

This is the end—and I think it really is the end—of something that started a long, long time ago, with, of all people, Galileo around 1600, followed closely by the philosopher René Descartes. They held the view that our perceptions were false because the way we see things isn't actually the way things are. ("Truth" at the time was thought to be a matching of your idea of what was "out there" with what actually *was* "out there.") Well, whatever "red" is, it isn't red-as-you-see-it. (And there's truth in this, pardon the pun. When you go outside and feel the heat of the sun and see its light, it certainly *seems* to you—if you're at all like me—that the heat you feel and the light you see are different sorts of things. But actually, scientists tell us, they're just different degrees of the same basic kind of energy.)

Galileo's (and Descartes') mistake was to think that the "idea" was the perception. Since it didn't match the reality, it was false. Galileo held, however, that a person's idea (perception) of measurable traits, like length, distance, motion, and so on, matched the

reality; and so only measurement was true. Unfortunately, as subsequent thought showed, my *perception* of length is no more a “copy” of what length actually *is* than my perception of red is a copy of whatever caused me to see this color. And there’s a simple test to prove this: How far away does a foot ruler have to be from your eyes so that you see it as the length it actually is? Six inches? But then it looks huge. Three feet? Twenty feet? But then it looks tiny.

Galileo’s notion—which actually can be traced back to Plato two thousand three hundred years before him—was, then, that measurement got at a “match” between perception and reality; and that is, of course, the real basis for modern science’s worship of measurement, even when the measurement doesn’t tell you anything significant (for instance, how significant is the *measurement* of a dinosaur’s teeth in determining that it was a carnivore?). Let me hasten to say, however, that measurement is often very useful; and in physics and chemistry, which deals with things that are controlled basically by the amount of energy within them, measurement is essential if you’re going to find out what’s actually going on. But when you get up to living things and thinking things, measurement means less and less and in the last analysis is irrelevant, giving you not much beyond truisms. But even granting all of this, all I’m saying here is that measurement is no more “objective” than, say, perception of color is; but by the same token, perception of color is no more “subjective” than perception of measured quantities.

And, from Descartes, who tried to make a philosophical system out of this, based on “mathematical method” and “clear and distinct ideas” (i.e. ideas *he* didn’t think he could doubt) that were “innate,” through the various critiques and refutations of his and his successors’ views (this isn’t a course in philosophy, you know, so I’m not going to bore you with the details), we come to

Immanuel Kant, shortly before 1800, who did a magnificent (if misguided) analysis of human consciousness in which he seemed to show that the objects we supposed were “out there” were actually

constructs of our own mind as we organized the data *in* our sensation into coherent wholes. We get objective knowledge, he said, based on the structure of the *mind*, not on some reality “out there” that we’re responding to. Everything else is just subjective impressions. The idea he had is this: Imagine the mind as a camera loaded with black-and-white film. You can predict that every picture that comes out of it, no matter what the camera is aimed at, will be two-dimensional and in shades of gray, because this is the *camera’s* contribution to the resulting picture. For him, the picture is the “object,” and its “objectivity” is caused (though he wouldn’t use the term) by the *subject*, the mind; and we agree on the way “our” objective world is by the coincidence that my mind is structured in the same way yours is. That is, all pictures done with black-and-white film will have certain “objective” things in common, just because of the nature of the film, not because they’re making “discoveries” of mysterious “natures out there.”

But it doesn’t work. That would mean that the sun really changes color at sunset, because I can’t perceive it in any other way at sunset than as redder than the way my mind “organizes the data” at noon. But I *know* that it hasn’t really changed color, any more than the sun changes color when I put on sunglasses.

But even more telling against Kant’s position—which is brilliant, don’t get me wrong—is this: You’re waiting at the intersection, looking up at the red stop light against the green tree. Now you’re looking at both of them with the same eyes and the same mind at the same time. How can you account for the difference in the color-perceptions? Obviously, it has to be because *different information is coming into your eyes*. Similarly, when I see you get up off the chair and walk around, your color, shape, size, and so on go with you, while the color, shape, and so on of the chair stay behind. Why does my mind “organize” these into two *separate* perceived “objects” (even though I originally perceived them together) and I can’t think of the person-chair as one thing? Because *the information I am*

receiving prevents me from doing so.

Well, big deal! But would you believe it, these simple facts have been ignored for three hundred years? Thoughts about what truth is ever since Kant have all been of the “internal consistency” variety, not the “matching with what is ‘out there’” kind. Never mind that in order to hold any “internal consistency” theory of truth you’re forced into the absurd position of trying to assert that *the way things really are* is that the best we can do in knowledge is internal consistency, and can’t ever know the way things really are.

Let me be explicit on this. **Every “internal consistency” theory of truth necessarily is internally inconsistent as soon as it says that this is all that truth really is.** That is, as soon as somebody tries to *teach* that truth is nothing but internal consistency in a person’s mind, he’s saying that *you* (the student) have to accept this position as true for what goes on in *your* mind—which, of course, means that it applies *beyond* just the *teacher’s* own mind. And so, since the “internal consistency” theory is in effect saying that truth has nothing to do with what is “out there,” it’s *inconsistent with itself* if it claims that other people should adopt this idea of truth.

The problem is that people haven’t been able to get around the difficulties Kant raised against the “matching” theory, because nobody has brought up the business I just mentioned about differences in the “pictures” (the supposed “objects”) being inexplicable without differences in the information coming into the person. I’ll get into this in the interlude that follows this chapter.

But this internal consistency theory of truth (which is universally held among intelligent people nowadays) necessarily implies that what is a fact (i.e. true) for you is a fact *only* for you, and it is only a fact for me if it fits consistently into my subjectively created world. There are no facts “out there” that are just plain facts—or if there are, no one can know them. And thus we have the First New Commandment—which, I have to keep stressing (since we’ve been brainwashed into accepting it), is *false* if it’s true—because it says that

the objective, known fact for everybody is that no one can know any objective facts that are “facts for everybody.”

So the people who hold this colossally stupid position do so because they’ve come to it through some very sophisticated and intricate reasoning; and that’s why they think they’re smarter than the rest of us, who hold the naive view that if you know something, you know something about the real world “out there.”

I once even had to sit through a three-hour lecture on a “faculty development day,” in which this learned professor from outside our college was brought in to tell us that there were three stages of learning. In grammar school, the kids think that there is such a thing as truth, and the teacher has it; in high school, they still think that there’s such a thing as truth, but they’re not so sure the teacher has it; but by the time you get to the third stage, you realize that there’s no such thing as truth, and all you can do is critical evaluation of what’s being said.

So I critically evaluated what the learned professor was saying, and asked, “Then why are you standing there trying to tell us about the *truth* of this view of learning, as if you have it and you want us to learn it as the truth?” A colleague from the back of the room piped up, “All that shows is that you’re still in the second stage, George,” at which I answered, “No, it’s because there’s a fourth stage which has evaluated the third stage and found that it contradicts itself.”

Now then, if you think back to President Clinton’s deposition (the famous one in which he talked about what the meaning of “is” is), some things begin to become clear. People of conservative leanings (which in effect means people who disobey this First New Commandment and think there’s such a thing as objective truth) tend to be appalled at how many people have no problem with President Clinton’s obvious lying even under oath. (Why a lie about sex is even more okay will have to wait for a discussion of the Fourth New Commandment.)

But President Clinton is a very intelligent, sophisticated person:

a Rhodes scholar. So he's seen the reasoning I sketched above. And if there's no "real, objective truth," and if "the facts" are "the facts for me," then it's not really possible to lie. *For the President*, having someone perform oral sex on you is not "having a sexual relation," because a sexual relation involves a *personal* relation, and Monica, whether she realized it or not, was being used as a kind of sexual urinal (he said as much). This isn't *sex*, for heaven's sake; it's just relieving a physical tension. Now if it's *sex for you*, then that's the "fact for you," but not for me. I wasn't lying, because there wasn't anything sexual about it.

But could he really *believe* this? Sure, if he'd bought into the First New Commandment, and especially if he'd gone into the history of the philosophies dealing with truth. The smarter he is, and the more education he's had, the easier it is for him to think that there's no objective truth, and so what you say is true if you can get away with it.

But there's an insidious recent development of all of this, which has its roots in the later Ludwig Wittgenstein and its exposition in people like Jacques Derrida (it's called "deconstruction"): Since there aren't any objective facts "out there" which our knowledge is responding to, it follows that *telling* someone something isn't letting them know what the facts are (because there aren't any); *it's just a device by which I get people to do what I want them to do*. You find out what the person is *really* saying by "deconstructing" it to find out what "agenda" he's trying to promote. That is,

According to the New Morality, the "real truth" of anything anyone says is the *agenda* behind it. There's no "real truth" in the sense of what "the facts" are; the *truth* in the only meaningful sense is "where the person is coming from."

And so now you find people not listening *to* what you're saying but listening *for* where you're coming from, and judging the truth of what you say based on whether you're a liberal or a conservative, a Christian or an atheist, or whatever. Nothing you say makes any

difference; what you *are* and the program you're trying to foist on people is the real truth behind what you say.

"Oho!" I think I hear some of you saying, "The light goes on!" Why did feminists shriek in horror at Clarence Thomas who was supposed to have used dirty language to a subordinate? Not because she was "unwilling" and Monica was willing (because there's Ms. Willey and Ms. Jones, both unwilling, and Ms. Jones, after all, started all the fuss), but because he's a conservative and black to boot, which means that he's got the awful mean-spirited and traitorous agenda that's trying to put "his people" down.

On the other hand, Mr. Clinton, in spite of all that he actually *did* that should make liberals cringe (like NAFTA, welfare reform, the capital gains tax cut, and on and on) and in spite of the fact that he seems to have sexually harassed two of the three women we know of in the affair—in spite of all this, Mr. Clinton had the correct agenda (he's *trying*, he *cares*, they used to say—remember "I feel your pain"?), and so what he says is true.

Toni Morrison, in a speech which objectively was a masterpiece of stupendous idiocy (however nice she may be as a person) even said that President Clinton is "blacker than any black person who could ever be elected in our children's lifetime" because he had only a single parent, was born poor, played jazz on the saxophone (I kid you not, she said this), loves junk food, and was being persecuted for his sexual exploits by The Man. He *understands* "us"—which means that all middle-class blacks who aren't studs are automatically white. Thanks a lot, Toni. (I suppose, by the way, on these criteria I could almost qualify as black, since I was born poor, to a blind father and an alcoholic mother. I never took up saxophone, but I did play the French horn, which makes me mulatto, I guess; and when I visited my wife's family in Argentina, tar was poured over the door with "Yanqui go home!" written in it, so I've been persecuted just for being what I was. Of course, my skin seems to bleach back again as soon as it's discovered that I'm a conservative.)

And on the other hand, Ken Starr was known to be—gasp!—a Bible-Thumper who believes in gods and resurrections and things and wants to foist the Old Morality on everyone in sight and just *hates* everyone who disagrees with him, and is *out to get* our guy. Never mind what he says, because it's all trumped up, and therefore false.

The same sort of thing was behind O.J. Simpson's first trial. Evidence was completely irrelevant. O.J. was the victim of police brutality, who were framing him for a murder he didn't do—never mind that if he didn't do it, his framers had to be simultaneously diabolically clever and Keystone-Kopsly inept, and that the other person or persons who did it had to have been his identical twin. He was on "our side," and that made what he said true, and little details of whether somebody was objectively brutally butchered were "white facts," not "black facts," because we know the agenda of white people, and he's a brotha, for God's sake.

The point I'm making is that those of you who aren't New Moralists can now perhaps understand where these people are "coming from," and can see why President Clinton got such manifestly absurd defenses. He's had the right agenda, and that says it all.

I can't let this chapter go, however, without pointing out how deconstruction is another one of those things that's false if it's true. Let me deconstruct M. Derrida's thesis. Basically, he says that no text has any objective, factual meaning (it's not "telling it like it really is"), but is actually just an attempt to promote some agenda. Very well, then *M. Derrida's* text is either (a) merely an attempt to promote an agenda, and doesn't actually *mean* that texts don't actually have a factual meaning—in which case, it's false, and just a power-grab on his part—or (b) it's "telling it like it is" about what texts are *really* doing, in which case, there *are* texts (his, for instance) that "tell it like it is;" but since his text says there aren't any, it can't be anything more than a power-grab on his part, which *doesn't* "tell

it like it is.” So his text is false if he’s right and false if he’s wrong. It’s false no matter what.

Then why do people *listen* to garbage like this? Because you should see the language it’s expressed in—or rather, you shouldn’t; I wouldn’t wish that torture on anyone. By the time you’ve been able to untangle it a bit and can make any sense whatever out of it, you think you’ve got to be pretty damn bright, and you don’t want all that effort going to waste. Besides, you can now put yourself on the side of the oppressed (who *isn’t* oppressed, if you want to look deep enough?), and can use all the jargon as a club to beat down all those fools who think they’re actually meaning what they say. If you don’t believe me, listen to what goes on in the meetings of the Modern Language Association.

So what does all this mean? People *do* have agendas, of course, and can obfuscate things and lie to promote them—especially those of the New Morality, who think they’re being *honest* in lying to promote the “correct” agenda. But it happens on the other side too, of course.

But what you’ve got to hold onto is that there *is* such a thing as absolute truth, and it *can* be known; and even those who claim there isn’t any don’t really believe that claim, because the denial of the claim presupposes its affirmation. Don’t listen to them; they’re ranting. Just try to find out what the facts really are.

(A footnote. The Southern Association of Colleges and Universities now says this in its accreditation criteria: “An institution of higher education is committed to the search for knowledge and its dissemination,” which is a change from what they said earlier: “the search for *truth*.” When asked why the change, the response was “Truth is too controversial.” It’s serious, ladies and gentlemen.)

Interlude: The Facts about Truth

Perhaps one of the most infuriating things about the First New Commandment is that those who don't subscribe to it—that is, those who think that there is such a thing as the objective truth, and that words mean things other than the agenda you're supposedly trying to promote—are at a tremendous disadvantage when engaged in a debate with a New Moralist. He has no qualms about saying what is out-and-out false, as far as the objective situation is concerned; and you're stuck with the facts, which he impugns and ridicules, because he knows that you don't mean them and you're just trying to put something over on him.

We all know the story. During the impeachment hearings, all you heard was, "It's just lying about sex, and that's his private life, not something impeachable, for God's sake!" when all the time it was lying *in court* to avoid a sexual harrassment suit—hardly one's private life. Then, when Dick Cheney was picked as George W. Bush's vice

presidential candidate, the Democrats “examined” his record, among other things saying he voted to keep Nelson Mandela in prison, when what he voted against (along with Democrats the President campaigned for) was special aid to a Communist organization. And so on. The list is endless. And how do you answer it? The well is poisoned, because your answer will be taken as proof that the charge is false. Why? Because Republicans are liars just because they’re Republicans.

But you’ll notice that the New Moralists always have to come up with some obfuscation that sounds *plausible*, which means that in the back of their minds they know that what they say has *some* relation to what’s actually happening; so they don’t really believe what they seem to believe. For instance, when President Clinton was asked whether Bob Bennett, his lawyer, was telling the truth when he said “There is no sex here of any way, shape, or form” or words to that effect, the President answered with the famous, “That depends on what the definition of ‘is’ is. If it means ‘right now there is no sex,’ then it’s true; if it means ‘there never has been,’ then of course it’s not true.”

That is a beautiful example of what the English call a “Jesuitical” reply. There *is* a possible way of construing the sentence such that it agrees with the actual situation, if you take a meaning that couldn’t possibly be the one looked for by the question. (What conceivable reason could the questioner have for *asking* “Are you now, as you sit before me in that chair, engaging in any kind of sexual activity with Monica Lewinsky?”) But what it reveals is that the New Moralist can’t really, even in his own mind, totally divorce what he says from the objective situation. How could he? How can it be a fact that there are no facts at all?

The epistemological problem.

But I think we need to go a little deeper into this. Modern thought has been bamboozled, as I said, by what is called “the

epistemological problem”; and while it might think that Immanuel Kant hasn’t had the last word on it (the last word seems to be Derrida’s), he certainly set up the *problem* clearly; and it seems there’s no way out of it. Let me show you exactly what the problem is, and then show you the way between the horns of the dilemma. And when I do, we’ll be on the same page as to what facts are, and what the truth is. Then I’ll say a little about why science works, and what it’s trying to do; because what scientists often *say* they’re doing isn’t what they’re doing. Finally, I’ll show you what goodness and badness are, and why truth is fundamentally objective, and goodness is fundamentally subjective.

This is going to be somewhat rough going, so put on your thinking-cap.

You can see the problem of objective knowledge if I set it up this way: White light hits a molecule of green paint on the wall; this knocks an electron into an excited state, and as it falls back into its ground state, it emits light in the green part of the spectrum. This light travels through space and hits your eye, where the electromagnetic energy is translated (by a chemical process) into electrical nerve-impulses, which travel up to the visual centers of the brain, and stimulate the nerves there by which you have the green-seeing kind of sensation (which itself isn’t exactly the same as the electrical output of the nerve, though it’s not divorced from it). Now what right do you have to say that this green-seeing sensation is a *copy* of the infra-molecular resonance of the paint? None at all. But if your only contact with the real world is the sensation in your brain (which isn’t even the same kind of energy), then how is it possible to know things as they actually are “out there”?

As I say, there’s got to be a way, or the sun really turns red at sunset, and we know it doesn’t. Let me show you the way out by an analogy. Call the light a message that a man over in France is sending in French: “Allons, enfants de la Patrie . . .” Now what the molecule does corresponds to his sending this message (let us assume, in a

code of his own devising, not Morse) using dots and dashes on a telegraph key. The radiation corresponds to the radio signal with these dots and dashes. Your eyes are a computer here in the U. S. that's programmed to receive telegraph signals, but translates the dots and dashes into electrical impulses—and as if they were Morse code. The ASCII characters are now sent by a wire to your computer, which then prints out the message, “Fourscore and seven years ago . . .”

Problem: You can't get across the ocean to find out what the original message was. How can you know anything about it? The “internal consistency” theory of truth gives up and says, “You can't.”

Ah, but you can know *something* about it. First of all, if the message appears on the screen without your typing anything into the keyboard, you know *that you are receiving a message of some sort*. That may sound trivial, but it's important. Since we can (generally) distinguish perceiving (receiving information) from imagining (fooling around with stored information from past perceptions), then we can know whether we're being acted on by something “out there” or not. Even Kant admitted this (though others after him didn't see why he had to say it). What Kant said, however, is that you can't know anything whatever about the *contents* of the original message.

But not even that is true. Suppose our Frenchman now sends, “Les sanglots longs/des violons d'automne . . .” and so on, and keys it in, and our computer translates it, and we get, “Whose woods these are I think I know . . .” Once again the message received is not at all like the message sent, and it might seem that we're no farther along.

The solution.

But you'll see the solution as soon as the Frenchman again sends “Allons, enfants . . .” What's going to happen? All other things being equal, your computer is going to print out, “Fourscore and seven .

. . ." again. Voilà! (I seem to be in a French mood). I may not know what Messages 1 and 3 *were*, but I know *this* much about them: whatever they were, *they were the same message*. Similarly, I know that Message 1 and Message 2 as sent were different from each other, because the messages received are different.

—All other things being equal, and of course they aren't, always. If there's a thunderstorm, for instance, it might be that Message 3 as received is "Fo*&cs\$#@4 and *&xecy . . ." (You get the picture.) So I would conclude that the original messages were different when they were the same. All this shows is that we can make mistakes, if something interferes with the transmission of the data from the original source to our senses. Well of course we can. But I'll tackle how we handle that in a minute. But on the assumption that our senses are reasonably constant, we can be pretty confident that *based on the relation between sensations, we can argue to the relation between the causes of the sensations*.

And that is what a *fact* is: it is a *relation* between things "out there"; it isn't itself a thing. And a *mistake* occurs when the relation *as I understand it* (the relation between the messages as received) is not the same relation as the fact (the relation between the messages as sent). Conversely, the *truth* means that the relation I understand matches the relation "out there" which is the fact.

So there *is* a matching in truth; but it's not the matching of the percept with the object, but the matching of the *relationship between* the objects *as understood* with the *relation that actually obtains*. This slight complication has created four hundred years of controversy.

But you might wonder how, if the basis of my understanding is my private sensations, you and I can agree on what the facts are, since there's no guarantee that my sensations match yours. That is, the actual sensation I have when confronted with grass might be the same as the one you have when confronted with rubies. Each of us could then get objective knowledge; but it would be different,

wouldn't it?

Nope. Consider the analogy. When "Allons, enfants . . ." is sent, I, as I said, receive "Fourscore and seven . . ." Let us assume that your computer is different, and the message you receive is "When in the course of human events . . ." Clearly, the message you get is nothing like mine, nor is it like the message sent.

But then when "Les sanglots . . ." is sent, I get "Whose woods . . ." and let's say you get, "Let us go then, you and I . . ." Again, there's no similarity with your message, nor with the message sent. *But in both cases, the messages received are different when the sent messages are different.*

And, of course, if "Allons . . ." is sent again, I get, "Fourscore . . ." again, and again you get "When . . ." So *when the messages sent are the same as each other, the messages received by each receiver will be the same as each other*, even though your messages are different from mine.

Thus, though I don't know what's going on in your head, or what the "thing in itself" actually is, I know the *relations* between the "things-in-themselves," and so do you, and we both agree on what these relations are.

So when I say, "The grass is green," I mean "The grass has something in it that affects my eyes the same way emeralds and go-lights do," you will agree that this is the case, whether or not the actual sensation you have matches mine. Our *objective* knowledge extends beyond our own minds, because it doesn't deal with what's *in* our minds. The process of understanding relationships bypasses the subjectivity of our minds, and zeros in on the one objective characteristic involved in the situation: the relationship itself.

So yes, we can get objective knowledge about facts "out there," and also knowledge that we can all agree on; we are not locked into the subjectivity of our own impressions.

Mistakes.

But what about mistakes? And more importantly, how can we recognize them and correct them? Again, the basic answer is pretty simple, though of course in many cases the actual working out of it can be very complicated.

Take a person who is red-green colorblind. How does he recognize that there's something wrong with the way he sees, and learn not to trust his vision when it's a question of red and green? He has the first clue when he makes a remark like "Wasn't it stupid of them to make the stop light and the go light the same color, so that we have to remember which is on top?" His friend looks at him in astonishment and says, "What are you talking about? They're completely different colors." "Well, they look the same to me." "Well, they're not. Ask anybody."

What's happened here is that because of a defect in the retina of the eye, the color-as-seen is the same both times; so the *relation as received* is not the same as the relation between the sending objects; it is as if one person in our analogy received "Fourscore and seven . . ." all three times. Now the colorblind person is faced with a dilemma. Either he understands the objective situation correctly, or he's making a mistake because of something wrong with his sight.

So he asks other people. Why? Because if practically everybody else tells him the colors look different, then either (a) they're lying and in a conspiracy to deceive him, (b) they've all got some special peculiarity of their eyes that records the same energy as if it were different, or (c) he's the one that has something wrong with him. Since the first two alternatives are unreasonable, he adopts the third, and learns not to trust himself when it comes to red and green.

So this shows how we can make mistakes, and one way we can learn of them and correct them. But there's another, and this is the transition into science. I mentioned that when you see the sun's light and feel its heat, the two sensations (the messages as received) are entirely different, while the energy (the message sent) is basically only

different degrees of the same kind of energy. But how do we know this?

Obviously, you can't know it by asking anyone else, since our receiving instruments (eyes and heat sensors) are basically similar among all human beings—similar enough, at any rate, so that everyone will agree that the two energies are different. But it was discovered that spectrometers that are built to react only to electromagnetic radiation (the stuff that affects our eyes) react to *both* light and (radiant) heat, though to different degrees. So now we have a different receiver that says both are the same, and we're faced with a dilemma analogous to the one the colorblind person faced. Which is right? Our senses or the instrument? Well, the more reasonable conclusion is that, since we have different sense organs, they need not be responding to different *kinds* of acts, but only different *parts* of the electromagnetic spectrum; and so a difference in degree might reasonably show up as a qualitative difference due to the qualitative difference in the sensing organs.

Note here that there's no magic in the instrument, making it receive a "copy" of the original energy; it doesn't "know things as they really are" any more than we do. And instruments aren't necessarily more accurate than our senses, either. Ask anyone who knits and has made the mistake of buying yarn of the same color from different dye lots. They look exactly the same when you see the two balls of yarn, but when you look at the sweater, there's this line where you began the second ball, because our eyes are extremely accurate at noting differences in adjacent color-masses. No, instruments' usefulness is not that they're "truer" or "more accurate," really, it's that they're a *different* receiving-system, and we can "ask" them how *they* "see" things (i.e. what the *relation* is between their readouts) and compare this with the relations in our minds—and so eliminate a source of mistakes about relationships that are actually "out there."

What science is doing.

But science, basically, is doing more than just supplying instruments, and it's useful to know this so that you know where you can trust science without worshipping it.

First of all, when scientists say that all they talk about is what is observable, and they don't deal with unobservable things, they're talking nonsense. No one ever observed a dinosaur, because dinosaurs were extinct long before humans ever existed; but no paleontologist believes that dinosaurs are "mere mental constructs." There *were* such things—or if you want to get picky, animals very like them. Even more telling, no scientist ever *observed* radio waves, and no scientist or anyone else ever will; they're *in principle* unobservable (because, according to quantum mechanics, the attempt to do so would alter them in ways I don't have to bother you with). When scientists say they're "observing" radio radiation, what they're observing, of course, is either sounds coming out of the speaker, or needles on a dial, or a printout, not the radiation itself.

So science *does* talk about the unobservable. But how can it do this, if all we've got to go on is our sensations? Once again, the answer is simple. On the assumption that the impossible doesn't happen, then *when what I observe is impossible unless something unobserved is a fact, then I know that the unobserved something is a fact.*

Why do we know that there were dinosaurs? Because no known animal has the type of bones we find in places like the La Brea tar pits. But since bones don't grow on trees, it's impossible (for practical purposes) for there to be bones unless they're bones of some animal. Therefore, if there's no known animal *now* that has bones like these, then there *was* an animal with these bones. And based on characteristics of the bones, we can know characteristics of the animal. For instance, it couldn't have been a herbivore with "tearing" teeth like this, and so it must have been carnivorous—and so on.

Now it's *thinkable* that there might have been some little men on Mars who said one day, "Let's fool these earthlings into thinking that weird animals roamed the earth," whereupon they got their bone-factory humming and made a bunch of enormous bones that they then buried in strategic places for us to find. It's *thinkable*, but that kind of "solution" makes even less sense than saying that the bones "jus' grewed."

Similarly, when Peter Jennings in the studio says certain things into the microphone and my speaker picks it up, then (even though there's no *observable* connection between them) there has to be *some* connection, or it's just coincidence that my speaker happened to be making the same kind of noises that he's making into the microphone. But this coincidence is so great as to be for practical purposes impossible. Therefore, there's radio radiation, which connects the two. There has to be.

So science is not just an arranging of the observed data into neat little patterns. What makes science exciting is that it is the discovery of *new and unobserved, and sometimes unobservable, facts* based on the fact that the facts we *do* observe sometimes make no sense unless there are these unobserved facts. The observed "nonsense-unless" facts, of course, are called "effects," and the "fact that makes sense out of them" is called the "cause." Science looks for causes of observed effects.

Now all this in practice is very tricky, because, first of all, it's easy to misread the data and think that something doesn't make sense when it's just your approach to it that doesn't. To take a homely example, you might try to find out how your keys got out of your pocket ("They didn't just walk out, you know."), and then find out that the "problem" was that you didn't put them there this morning in the first place. That's why science has to *observe*. It has to find out (a) that there's real evidence that something in-itself-impossible is going on, and (b) exactly what it is about it that doesn't make sense.

But the other tricky thing is that for any problem like this, there

are an infinity of possible solutions; that is, for any effect, there are an infinity of possible causes—and you want the one that actually did the job. We saw this above with the green men on Mars and the bones. Another possibility here would be that the soil was such that it took ordinary cow bones, say, and distorted them so that they looked like what we call T. Rex. And so on. How do you distinguish the cause (the right explanation) from all these possibilities?

Here's what makes science science and not just speculation. *Any "cause" you dream up will turn out to have logical implications beyond what you've so far observed.* If it really *is* the cause, then it's a fact, and if you can show that this means that something *else* must also be a fact, then that something else will be a fact too.

This is "prediction." Any—well, practically any—scientific theory will predict hitherto unobserved (but observable) "facts." So you "verify" the theory by seeing if these *are* facts. If they aren't, you throw the theory out, because it can't be the real explanation; it doesn't make sense.

For instance, the original atomic theory of matter supposed that atoms were the ultimate particles (*atomon* in Greek means "uncuttable"), which would predict that there couldn't be any splitting of the atom. We know to our sorrow that this prediction was falsified, and so the atomic theory now has atoms that are complex systems of subatomic particles. Newton's theory of gravitation fell when it turned out that its prediction of where Mercury had to be—I won't bore you with the details—turned out to be a mile or two off, a fact not discovered until we had the sophisticated instruments of this century. Now physicists have switched to Einstein's theory (actually, theories) of relativity, which make sense out of all that Newton did, plus certain facts his theory can't explain.

The relevance of all this.

Now what has all this got to do with the New Morality and the First Great Commandment? Several things. First of all, it shows how we

can get at objective knowledge, knowledge of more than trivial tautologies, and knowledge that is valid for *all* of us. Facts are facts, and we can find out what they are.

Note this: *Facts don't depend on our knowledge of them*; it's the other way round. Still less do they depend on our "perception" of them; and so there aren't "facts for you" that are different from "facts for me." There aren't "black facts" or "white facts" or "Democrat facts" or "Republican facts," there are just facts: relations between what is "out there." If something is a "fact for you" and not a "fact for me," all this means is that at least one of us is mistaken about what the *actual* fact is. The "fact for me" is not a fact; it is my (possibly mistaken) *understanding* of a fact.

Secondly, science shows us how we can get at facts we don't *directly* observe, when the ones we do directly observe don't make sense by themselves. We can then argue to what the causes of these effects are, if we're careful.

And thirdly, we know how we can *test* these theories about what the unobserved facts are. We can make predictions from them, about what *must* logically be true if they are true, and find out whether the predictions come true or not. If they don't, then the theory is false.

And we don't have to do physics or chemistry to be able to use this. We can apply a version of scientific method to anything someone comes up with as an explanation of (a theory about) anything.

For instance, the theory that no one can really know what the facts are *has* to be a false theory, because it predicts that if it's true (if it's a fact), it can't be known. But supposedly the people who hold it claim to know it. The theory that the only facts we know are things we directly observe has to be a false theory, because that predicts that you don't know (a) that you ever fell asleep (how could you *observe* your unconscious state?), (b) that you've got a brain (have you ever seen it?), (c) that you had great-great-great grandparents, (d) that what you remember happening yesterday actually happened (you

can't go back there and observe it all over again), and on and on and on.

And since the First New Commandment, that there's no absolute truth, predicts the absolute truth that there's no absolute truth, we can safely disobey this Commandment and look for what the facts really, objectively are. And we're now in a position to tackle the Second New Commandment, and find out whether it makes sense to say that morality is a purely personal matter, and there are no moral absolutes. Does *that* theory predict its own opposite too?

A corollary about goodness and badness.

But before we do this, I'm going to draw a conclusion that'll probably shock the conservatives who are reading this. While truth and error are fundamentally objective, goodness and badness aren't. There's no such fact "out there" that's the objective goodness of something.

To still their beating hearts, let me hasten to say that this does *not* mean that right and wrong aren't objective. As we'll see (be patient), good and bad are not the same as right and wrong.

We say something's "bad" when the facts don't match what we think the facts "ought" to be; as when we see a blind man, and we say, "But human beings are the kind thing that can see, and he can't see; as human he *ought* to be able to see." We don't want to call him non-human, and we don't want to give up the idea that humans can see. What do we have eyes for, if not to see? And he's got them; they just don't work.

Now there's been a ton of theories over the centuries about where the "ideal" comes from that we use to measure whether something's good or bad. Most say it's because we can "intuit the nature" of things, and know that men "by nature" can see; and so the blind man is in an objectively unnatural condition. But the only objective knowledge we have is of the relationships between things, and this "nature" that we objectively know is basically a relation-

ship—which obviously doesn't obtain in all cases, or there wouldn't be blind people.

To make a very long story very short, what's going on here is that we observe people seeing with their eyes, and form the reasonable theory that eyes have sight as their property; and therefore, we predict that what has eyes can see. We find a blind man; but since the theory has so much going for it, we don't want to just throw it out; so we say, "Well sure, but sight involves a very complex mechanism, and he might still be a *seeing-type-thing* and have something wrong with the mechanism he uses to see." So we reattach his retina, for instance, and lo and behold, he sees again—which verifies that we were right in our theory. So then when we see another blind man, we say he *ought* to be able to see: meaning that "reason tells us that deep down, he's a seeing thing."

So badness occurs when some factual situation *seems to contradict* a well-established theory we have, and we don't want to give up the theory. In other words, *we have constructed an ideal*, for one reason or another, using the data that's already in our heads, *which we want the facts to agree with*.

So what we're doing in goodness and badness as opposed to truth and error is looking at the truth/error relation backwards. In the truth/error relation, we take the *fact* (the relation "out there") as the "independent variable," and adjust the relationship as understood until it agrees with the fact; in the good/bad relation, we take the *ideal* (the subjectively constructed situation—what's "in here") as the standard, and want the facts (what's "out there") to agree with *it*.

But since this ideal is in the last analysis subjectively constructed, it can have more or less of a foundation in fact. You might think that everyone ought to be able to see, or you might think that everyone ought to be able to afford a Ferrari; you might think that everybody ought to love everybody else, or that everybody ought to be able to do just as he pleases. But no matter how much foundation the ideal *has* in fact, as you conceive it *it doesn't exist*. You *want* it to exist,

because you'd like the world to make sense in this way; but no matter how much you'd like the world to be different, it is what it is, because facts are facts.

Now all this business of evaluation and of ideals and goodness and badness would be a total waste of time if facts were totally inflexible and couldn't change. But we know very well that if we *do* certain things, we can change what the facts *will be*, often in the direction of some ideal we have.

And thus, we can turn ideals into *goals*. We say, "I know that you can't see, but I know what's the matter with your eyes, and I'll fix them so that you *will* be able to see." And if you know what you're doing, and the person's eyes actually can be fixed in the way you intend to fix them, then the goal is reached, and the result is good (because the fact now matches your ideal—and also true, of course, because your idea now matches the fact).

But there's a twofold problem here: (1) Not all ideals are even in principle reachable, because they might involve some contradiction. For instance, you can't make a TV set belong to you just by taking it—because you know that when someone steals something from you, it still belongs to you. (2) What you're dealing with simply might not *in fact* have the power to get to the goal you've set for it, even if there's no contradiction involved. Many is the person who trains for the Olympics and doesn't get the gold medal, because he just doesn't have the potential.

But followers of the First New Commandment don't see this. Since facts are "facts for" them, they think they can make something be true just by declaring it, or by having it as a goal. "Make love, not war. We can solve all problems if we just talk them out." Oh yes? A nice goal, but will it work? Remember the old song, which epitomized this New Morality wishful thinking: "Everyone knows an ant/can't/move a rubber-tree plant . . . Whoops, there goes another rubber tree plant!" All well and good in the dreams of LSD and the Age of Aquarius, but it doesn't work in the real world.

The New Morality is fond of trying things that “ought” to work, and when they don’t, they say, “But that’s because we haven’t tried enough of it”—whereupon, they demand more money, rather than sitting back and figuring out why you can’t get there by this road. It’s all part of the First New Commandment. Because they have the right goal, and because facts for them are what they want them to be, then don’t bother them with your mean-spirited “practicality”—*they* know what your agenda is.

But what about this business that good and bad aren’t the same as right and wrong? How can you take a theory of goodness like this and construct an objective morality out of it? That’s what we’ll be doing in the next couple of chapters.

But for now, if you’ve followed me so far, then pat yourself on the back. You now know more than practically all the greatest minds that ever lived, from Plato and Aristotle to Kant and Hegel. But it’s not because you and I are all that bright; it’s because we’ve been able to build on theories that have been tested over the centuries.

**The Second New (and Great)
Commandment:
Thou Shalt Not Force thy Morals
On Anyone Else**

The condition we're in now is not unprecedented, actually. Whenever great philosophical theories come into conflict (as in our age with Kant's and Hegel's), there follows—after a period of wrangling—a time of philosophical despair, which takes either the form, “No one can really know anything,” or “Everything depends on your point of view,” or some combination of the two. And this epistemological uncertainty, which always thinks of itself as “the real true wisdom,” spills over into the moral realm, usually with disastrous results. So it was at the time of Socrates, who (after Heraclitus and Parmenides) got the Greek world back on track; and at the time of St. Augustine, who (after Plato and Aristotle) integrated Christianity into philosophical thought; and on through history. So don't despair; we've

been through this before, and come out the wiser—and better—for it.

Anyhow, the moral version of the First New Commandment is that people should let other people's morals alone, which of course showed up in spades in the New Moralists' indignation at prying into President Clinton's private life, which was nobody's business but his, as long as Monica was willing. Democrats, being politicians, were quick to assert how they deplore the conduct, but that was meaningless, because all it said was, "I wouldn't do a thing like this myself, but . . ."—but who am I to judge? Who am I to impose my standards on him? This is almost the equivalent of saying, "Well, I personally can't stand Beethoven, but there's no accounting for taste, is there?" Or perhaps, "Personally, I hate pizza, but who am I to say what you should eat?" Isn't morality more serious than that?

The basic stupidity behind the command.

It is indeed, and the New Moralists recognize it as well as anyone else does; in fact, they get very exercised over people trying to "impose their morality" on others—which should indicate, if you've followed me up to this point, that there's something fishy about this Commandment. Who are the New Moralists to impose *this Commandment* on those who don't agree with it?

Think about this. The father says to his son, "I know you're sinning with that woman, and as long as you're doing it, you're no longer living in this house and eating my bread!" The son replies, sadly and indulgently, "Dad, I respect your morals, but you have your standards and I have mine. You have no right to tell me what to do." The father answers, "Listen here, you! I have a moral obligation to raise my son to be a God-fearing Christian! Who are you to try to keep me from following my conscience?" The son is trying to force the command "Don't interfere with anyone's morals" on his father, and in so doing is interfering with the father's following what he considers a moral command—which happens to include

interfering with his son.

Once again, it's hard to talk about this, because we've been brainwashed into accepting non-interference as self-evident truth, when in fact it's self-contradictory idiocy.

Here's this New Commandment's underpinning: **There are no moral absolutes.** Another way of saying this is that **morality is a purely personal matter.**

This means, of course, that each person's morals apply to himself alone, and don't apply to anyone else. Hence, if you try to make me conform to your moral standards, you are acting as if your moral standards applied to me also, which is false. Therefore, *you should not do it*. The problem is that "you should not do it" is a *moral* command that applies to *you*, not me.

Think about this, now, don't just react. Look at the logic. It *follows* from the premise that morals are a purely personal matter that it is wrong *for anyone* to act as if his own standards applied to everyone. But that conclusion itself is a moral standard that applies to everyone. Hence, if there are no moral absolutes, there *is* a moral absolute.

Once again, as is the case with "No one can know what the facts really are," which no one really believes, no one really believes that there are no moral absolutes; because if you do, then you can't help believing that those who try to impose their morals on you are doing what is *objectively* wrong; and should be stopped.

And there's another little secret that confirms this. New Moralists, who in this regard are what they call "moral relativists" (for obvious reasons) are the loudest in asserting the "rights" that they claim they have. But if there are no moral absolutes, there are no rights.

Why? Because, as I said when I was discussing the alleged "right" to your own opinion, my assertion of a *right* to do something is nothing more than my assertion that *everyone else has an obligation not to try to stop me from exercising it—whether they want to or not*.

That is, the assertion of a right to do something is absurd and

otiose if you're going to let me do it anyway. I only assert it when I have reason to believe that you're going to try to stop me, and I want to prevent this—by making you realize that somehow or other, you're not “allowed” to stop me.

But what does *that* mean? It can't mean simply that there's a law against it, because then the Civil Rights Movement and the Feminist Movement and the Gay Rights Movement and all the rest of the Movements don't make sense. When the law said that black people couldn't sit in the front of the bus, then they had no *right* (legally) to sit in the front of the bus—but did that mean that they had no right in any sense? When the law said they could be slaves, did they then have no right to be free? If the law says that women can't be in combat, it automatically follows that they have no right to be in combat, and so what's their gripe? Their gripe shows that that's not it at all.

No indeed. The feminists who wanted to be in combat were claiming that they *must* be allowed to do what they want to do, and if there was a law against it, it was an unjust law which must be changed. That is, what rights imply is that there is an *objective, serious obligation* to allow the rights to be exercised, an obligation more serious even than that of laws, because if there's a law denying that right, the law is objectively unjust and must be abolished. But then what is this “super-obligation” but the moral obligation?

So no one really believes that morals are purely personal and don't apply beyond yourself. And, as I said, the New Moralists have all sorts of Commandments that they impose on everyone. So don't be fooled by this New Commandment; even its believers don't believe it, let alone follow it.

What happened to get us into this mess?

We don't have to go back all the way to 1600 to find the origins of this, only as far as David Hume, who died in 1776. In his analysis of human nature, he “discovered” that reason, which knew relation-

ships, couldn't tell you what is "good." (As you can see from my analysis in the previous interlude, he was right in saying that there isn't any "good-out-there" which can be discovered by reason.) He concluded from this that reason was incapable of motivating the will (the tendency toward "the good") to act, and consequently only emotions ("sentiment" in his terms) could do this.

But the fly in the ointment of his theory comes in his statement, "Reason is, *and ought to be*, the slave of the passions" [emphasis mine]. It's one thing to say that it *is*, but why *ought* it to be? Because up to his time, people had been basing their morals on what reason says "human nature" is; and according to Hume, this is inconsistent with the function of reason, and therefore *it ought not to be done*.

In other words, based on *his* analysis of "human nature," using reason as the foundation of your morals was inconsistent, and therefore it should be avoided. But this very command to avoid it (the "ought" here) contradicts the basis on which the command is founded. In effect, he said, "it's unreasonable to base your morals on reason, and therefore, reason tells you not to do it." So his view has a contradiction hidden within it.

But if you don't see the contradiction, and accept his idea, then certain things follow. The main logical implication is that what feels good automatically *is* (morally) good; which would mean that rape is fine if you feel good about it, and so is theft, and murder, and so on. Hume tried to fix this up by distinguishing "moral sentiments" from "selfish sentiments" which would lead to rape and plunder and so on; but if you analyze how you distinguish the one from the other, you can't tell why it *ought* to be the case that the "moral, unselfish" sentiments should win over the "self-interested" ones in a conflict—because the unselfish feelings are almost bound to be weaker. Why should they prevail, then? Well, . . . sort of "just because."

In other words, it's a lousy theory, not only because it's based on the very thing it denies, but because it predicts things that even its

author thought couldn't be considered moral. But it sounds very appealing to say to think that if something feels good to me it's okay for me to do it, and you shouldn't try to stop me (not even if it feels good to try to stop me?). So it caught on.

Add to this the contribution of Sigmund Freud, and we have an apparently scientific justification of Hume's view. Freud basically held that when you were born, you were just a bundle of desires seeking gratification. But it was inevitable that in the course of trying to satisfy your urges, you'd run into things that you thought would give you pleasure, but gave you pain instead—sometimes severe pain, very often involving a spanking from Daddy. So you avoided those acts, because you were afraid of the pain, and gradually forgot what actually would happen if you did them (you “repressed” the actual punishment, in his terms); and as you reached adulthood, you just “sort of knew” that you must avoid doing these things “or else,” except that you didn't know or else what. But it *felt* as if something like Daddy would punish you if you did them (that is, it was the same type of fear you had as a child when you expected Daddy to spank you).

And thus was the moral code dinned into your head, and this explains its connection to a god. And, of course, since parents in a given culture tend to punish their kids for more or less the same kinds of things, this accounts for why one person's morals would be similar to those in his culture and different from those in another. It's all in how you were brought up.

And so, morality on this theory *has* an emotional base; it's a kind of benign neurosis, a “deeply felt obligation” that you can't escape except by something like psychoanalysis; but it's not a reasoned thing; you “just know” what the god wants you to do.

The trouble with it, though, is what it predicts. Freud himself, in fact, used it to explain why a culture's moral code remained constant over years and generations (as it had up to his time). Obviously, if it's a neurotic compulsion that's instilled into a kid's mind by the time

he's five, then he's not going to be able to reason his way out of it, and he'll train his own kids in pretty much the same way.

From this, however, it follows that something like the sexual revolution or the civil rights movement could never have happened, because within a very few years, and based on reasons, not mass psychoanalysis, the moral views of the culture did a drastic shift.

Secondly, you could predict from this theory that people would feel as most serious the things they were punished most severely for. But when you look at what little kids are punished for, you find that they tend to be things like coming into the house with muddy shoes, slamming the door, not tidying up their rooms, and so on, not murder, rape, incest, and the rest—for which they generally weren't punished at all. Remember, on this theory, your sense of moral obligation comes from what you actually were punished for, not for what your parents told you in a kind of abstract way was wrong.

Thirdly, if this theory were true, we could never distinguish between feeling guilty and knowing we did wrong; and we often do this. I, for instance, was brought up during the Great Depression, and was a finicky eater, which used to drive my father right up the wall, since he didn't know if I'd have a meal tomorrow. To this day I feel guilty when I go to a restaurant and leave a whole pork chop uneaten on my plate (especially when we're going to a concert afterwards and can't take it with us). But still, I *know* that it's stupid to turn myself into a garbage pail and get fat and unhealthy just so the food on my plate won't be thrown away. Also, it's common for people who have escaped from fires to *know* that they did the right thing in not going back and trying to rescue others trapped in there, because all that would do would be to add to the number of corpses; but they can't help *feeling* as if they did wrong.

Besides, it's absurd to say that if Jeffrey Dahmer "felt comfortable with" cutting people up and having sex with the parts, then it was okay for him to do it; that if people (because they were brought up to hate blacks or gays) feel they ought to go around beating up black

or gay people, then they're really being moral in doing these things—that it's a “deeply emotional issue” and we should let them follow their conscience.

When you try to put these “it's the way you feel” theories in practice, they turn out to be ridiculous. Morality *can't* be the way you were brought up, because you *know* when you get to be an adult that there are certain things you have to do whether you feel good about doing them or not, and other things you have to avoid, whether you were trained to avoid them or not.

There's a Darwinian variant on this theory, though, which is behind a good deal of the idea that morals involve emotions and not reason; but I want to leave that for the Third New Commandment and its interlude, when I'll discuss the implications of evolution theory on our view of reason, emotions, and morality. Take my word for it at the moment that it also involves an internal contradiction, and is no more valid than what I just talked about.

But there's a view about the basis of morals that tries to get around the really stupid implications of “if it feels right, it's moral.” It started as what is called “utilitarianism,” whose basic tenet is that “the good” (meaning, what's morally right) is “the greatest happiness of the greatest number,” which boils down to what makes the majority feel best.

It was discovered early on, however, that this won't work, because it would mean, for instance, if the German people would be happier with the Jews all gassed out of existence, then (since the Germans were in the majority), this would automatically be a morally good thing. So people tried to fix it up with “rule utilitarianism” and various dodges; but they all come a cropper in trying to figure out *why* the rule that prevents a minor atrocity from being used for great happiness should apply. How can it “make most people feel better” to follow a rule that prevents most people from feeling better? That is, If a Palestinian can bring world attention to the plight of his whole people by blowing up a bus with twenty Israelis on it, then

why is this not a good thing? Well, just because.

Besides, happiness, like goodness, is a *personal, subjective* thing; and fifteen tons of subjectivity don't equal one ounce of objectivity. Yet we know it's objectively wrong to kill innocent people no matter what you or your people plan to gain from it. *We do* know it; don't kid yourself.

The latest twist and turn of this is that it's wrong, not because it feels abhorrent to somebody, but because *society* disapproves of it; and society's taboos define what the moral code of that society is. The horror people around you feel about taboo acts rubs off on you, and so you contribute to the social pressure at the same time you are subject to it. This collective repugnance seems to emanate from some invisible being (since no one knows where it came from; it's "just there"), and this explains why people think a god is responsible for the moral command. So it's not really the way you were brought up; it's what society thinks.

The trouble with this view is twofold: First, it's just a collective version of "There are no moral absolutes," which, as I'll show in a minute, contradicts itself; and second, like the Freudian theory, it predicts some things that are manifestly false.

Why does it contradict itself? Because if the only real morality is what the society *thinks* is right and wrong (for whatever reason), then it follows from this that *no society should try to force its own moral standards on a different culture*.

Notice, for instance, how indignant people who hold this view get (I write this near Columbus Day) at the Spanish missionaries imposing their European morals on the poor, unsuspecting natives of the New World. They should have let the natives alone to follow their culture's morals, which adapted them to the conditions they were living in. Oh? They should? By whose standards? Who are these moral relativists to impose their standard (don't export your culture's morals) on the Spanish missionaries? They, after all, were only following the moral imperative of their own culture—which hap-

pened to be “go make disciples of all nations.”

(I might remark here, by the way, the little objective fact that the Mayan civilization, for one, had vanished before the Europeans ever got there, though there are still Mayans in the Yucatan. And, as my Mayan guide told me on a trip to Chichén Itzá, “The intellectuals were making the people build whole new cities on top of the old ones every time the calendar cycled, and were sacrificing hundreds of young maidens every year to the god Chac; and the ordinary people finally got fed up with the oppression, and slaughtered them all, and then were able to live in peace. What did they need calendars and writing for?” Apparently, the nobles among the savages were not the noble savages Rousseau rhapsodized about. Many of the natives welcomed Christianity, which forbade such things.)

The point, of course, is that, just like the individual version of this New Commandment, its basis logically entails its contradiction. *If* morality is private to the culture, *then it follows* that one culture should not impose its moral standards on another. But *that* is a moral standard that applies to *all* cultures, which means that not all morals are private to the culture.

And, of course, in practice, nobody believes this one either. The Nazi War Criminals Trials were a statement that it didn't matter what the German people might think, you can't treat Jews as if they were literal pigs, to be slaughtered if you feel like it; the South Africans couldn't (in apartheid) treat the black citizens as if they were animals, when in fact they were humans. And so on.

In fact, this theory would predict, first of all, that a society's morals could not be wrong, (that is “mistakes” are impossible here) and especially could not be *recognized* as wrong by members of the society at the time. How could they be, if society's standards *define* the only morality there is? As William Graham Sumner (the exponent of this view) held, the society could change its moral standards for *practical* reasons, but not because it suddenly recognized that they were wrong. (You see, I'm not making this up; cultural relativists

preach this way all the time.)

And yet, the civil rights movement showed that societies *do* change their moral codes precisely because the society itself recognizes that what is being done is wrong, not “impractical.” It was certainly impractical to get rid of all the black-only, white-only facilities, and integrate the blacks into the mainstream life of the country (we’re still feeling the wrenching effects of our efforts to do this), but, practical or not, it had to be done, because you can’t treat human beings as if they aren’t human. It doesn’t matter what society thinks; you can’t do it; and if society thinks that it’s okay in a given case, then society has to change, that’s all.

The theory would also predict that moral reformers, like Martin Luther King, Jr., would be regarded as morally evil people (because they’re trying to get people to do what is objectively—according to society’s standards, which are the *only* ones—wrong); and yet in fact, while, like King, they may be regarded as troublemakers, they’re not thought of as in the same class as drug pushers or advocates for pedophilia. Why? Because drug pushers and pedophiles can’t make out a convincing case that what they’re advocating is a more human lifestyle, while Martin Luther King, Jr. showed quite clearly that by our own admission blacks were human beings and we were treating them as if they weren’t.

And it turns out that if you scratch any moral code deeply enough, whether of an individual or a culture, you don’t confront a haphazard set of taboos, you find the same basic moral command:

You must never deliberately do what is inhuman.

Or, to put it in a way that teenagers would like:

You must never be a hypocrite

—that is, deliberately pretend you aren’t what you really are. You *are*

a human being, and so you shouldn't try to pretend that you aren't.

In this sense, the leap from "is" to "ought" is inescapable. It isn't even escaped by the people who think that you can't make the leap—because they think that you *ought* not to try. Remember, I said that Hume claimed that because (according to him) it was inconsistent (and therefore inhuman) to base morals on reason, therefore people ought not to base morals on reason.

The differences in actual moral codes, then, don't come from the basic command; they come from different definitions of what "human" means, and therefore which acts are thought to be inconsistent with what you really are as human.

Let me give you some examples of how this works. First, there's the widespread theory (following the First New Commandment) that "there's no such thing as 'human nature'; a human being can do whatever he pleases with himself." This came from the existentialist philosophy of people like Jean-Paul Sartre in the middle of this century; and the existentialist notion of "to be human" means "to be free"; that is, to be able to make yourself into anything at all. And, as Jean-Paul Sartre holds, there *is* a command that follows from this notion: what he calls "bad faith," which is to choose not to choose (i.e. to let somebody else do the choosing for you, *pretending* that this choice—to allow this—was not your choice, and so the responsibility is his, not yours).

But of course, to say that we're *absolutely* free to make of ourselves anything whatever, because "there's no such thing as human nature" is just plain silly. Let me see you become a crocodile, or put out leaves and photosynthesize the way an elm tree does. Let me see you breathe water like a fish, or flap your arms and fly, the way birds do. Granted, you can fly *in an airplane*, but that's a *human* way to fly, and you can don your scuba gear and swim (for a while) under water, but that doesn't make you a fish. And the crocodile and the elm tree present rather greater problems, don't they? Why? Because you're *human*, and humans *aren't* elm trees, and

in fact can't do what elm trees do.

But, you might say, who'd want to become an elm tree? My point is that, no matter how much you wanted to, you couldn't do it, because your humanity isn't capable of doing it. But let's take a case closer to home. Suppose you're a man, and you feel as if you should be a woman. You go and have a sex-change operation, and after it you're a woman, right? Wrong. A woman has two X chromosomes in every cell of her body; you've still got an X and a Y chromosome in every cell of yours; a woman has a different skeletal structure from you, different musculature, a different endocrine system, a different nervous system, different thought-patterns (no matter what you might *think* yours to be), and where is your uterus? Having your penis removed and a hole cut in you doesn't make you into a woman, nor does taking female hormones to enlarge your breasts (normal men have some female hormones too, it turns out); all you are in reality is a mutilated male who can *pretend* that he's a woman; but a simple DNA test will betray you. The only way a man could really change his sex would be if he were infected with a genetically altered virus which would replace his Y chromosome with an X chromosome throughout his body, causing a chrysalis-like rebuilding of the whole organism.

But of course, those who follow the First New Commandment go along with this charade, and call him "her" when everybody knows what the real situation is. To say that the only thing that distinguishes a man from a woman is the presence of a penis and the absence of a vulva is to trivialize sexual differences to the point of imbecility. The only way you can do it is to say that the fact is that there's no such thing as a fact.

And the notion that we *ought* to make this pretense follows from the equally idiotic position that it's *inhuman* not to let human beings make of themselves anything they like, even when that's impossible.

And what the rest of this book is about is how this Second New Commandment is violated in practice by its own adherents.

But just to reinforce what I said, that a culture's moral code is a spelling out of what that culture's definition of "human" is, consider the following different codes:

Why was dueling accepted in the culture of the middle ages (though it was condemned by the Church)? Because the people considered their bodily lives to be their "animal" lives, and their social lives (their "honor") to be what distinguished them from mere animals—the essence of their humanity. Thus, if you insulted me, you destroyed my "real humanity," and I could regain my honor by putting my mere physical life on the line.

Similarly, the Japanese considered suicide something morally obligatory when a person brought disgrace on his family or organization. Why? Because, again, the individual, physical (animal) life was not the *real* human life; your humanity was vested in your social relationships; and that could be restored from damage by removing the physical life that had harmed it.

Cannibals don't eat people. Anthropologists who studied cannibals were startled to find that the members of other tribes (who got eaten) were thought literally to be animals and not people—but of course, since they were so like people, their flesh ought to be nourishing. But you don't eat other members of your tribe.

Why were black people held as slaves, while white people weren't? For a couple of reasons. In Jefferson's time, the scientific theory was (I kid you not) that black people were the offspring of women who had been raped by orangutans (Jefferson disagreed with this, by the way, because he saw that blacks had a moral sense and only humans had a moral sense). Certain theologians took a passage of Genesis (6:1) about the "sons of heaven" (the descendants of Adam, the people, the theologically "real" humans) taking wives from the "daughters of men" and concluded that there was a theologically non-human race—which, of course, they thought were the blacks. So, since these people were not really human, what was the problem in owning them as slaves?

In our own day, the abortion question, for all its complications which I'll discuss later, boils down really to the assertion that a fetus is not really a human being. Those who hold that abortions are all right in the case of rape, for instance, would not agree that if a woman didn't know she'd been raped (because, say, she'd been unconscious at the time), and thought the child was her husband's, and then discovered when the child was two years old that he was the result of rape, she could kill him then.

Let me finish with this: Karl Marx held that "bourgeois morality" was no morality, but simply a way the business class kept the workers from rebelling. But if you examine the foundations of his view, humans differ from beasts in that humans use tools and transform matter into something useful. Thus, your humanity consists in your use of the forces of production, or your work. When you work for someone else, however, he (according to Marx, now) owns your humanity (your "labor power"), which is then "alienated" from yourself into his control. And he isn't (always according to Marx) human either, since he doesn't do any work, but simply makes you work. Thus, no human being has his own humanity any more—until the classless society, in which workers work for everyone, not for some individual (in which they "alienate" their humanity into humanity itself—and thus get it back—all according to Marx). It follows from this (a) that working for the classless society is the only real moral imperative, and working against it (being "reactionary") is the only real evil, and (b) since no one is *now* human, anything goes in trying to achieve the classless society, even to starving millions into submission, as Stalin did in Georgia.

Let this suffice to illustrate my contention that there never has been a view of morality which was not a spelling out of what the person or culture thought were the practical implications of what it means to be a human being.

Now I would be the first to agree that "human nature" is not an absolute, fixed, rigid something that we all have identically. For in-

stance, my human nature is a married one, not a single one; and what this entails is that, by the promise I made, I have exercised my control over an aspect of my reality and made it over into one that has a special relation to this woman and no other. It has always been recognized that your reality as human can change.

But whatever your reality *is* at any given moment, then it's immoral for you to act as if it isn't what it is; and that's what the moral obligation says. That's why it's wrong, and recognized as wrong, to go back on a promise. By making the promise you are saying, "I have control over myself, and I will do such-and-such tomorrow," and when you break it, you are denying that you are the kind of thing who can control what he does tomorrow. But you *are* that kind of thing.

—Or are you? This raises the question of whether we're free to control our lives, or whether we only think we are, which we'll now have to look at a bit more closely. It will bring up the issue of when it is legitimate to interfere with another person's following his conscience, as well as a distinction I consider crucial in moral studies: the difference between values and morals. No, morals are *not* values.

But for now, hold on to the notion that it is a stupid moral stance to say that nobody should interfere with anybody else's morals—because that very stance is an interference with those who think they are morally obliged to interfere with others.

Interlude: Freedom, Values and Morals

Time out for a reality check. Granted, we've proved that "*Never* interfere with anybody else's moral standards" is a self-contradictory command (because, I have to keep stressing, it is itself an interference with at least some people's moral standards). But this fact doesn't automatically imply that it's okay any time you feel like it to go around forcing other people to conform to what you think is right. What is not black is not automatically white.

What it *does* mean is that we've got to come up with some objective criterion to find out when it's okay to interfere with others' following their conscience, and when we should let them alone. And when we do, it turns out to be fairly close to the non-interference preached by the New Morality. Well so what? It doesn't follow that the New Morality is nothing but unmitigated evil.

If, as I said, the basic moral obligation underlying *every* moral code, whether it realizes it or not, is that you must never deliberately

act inconsistently with what you are as human, then the question arises as to what it is about human beings that makes it consistent or inconsistent to interfere with each other, and when.

Human freedom.

And here we get into another place where contemporary culture has involved itself in a contradiction. On the one hand, we think we should be free to do as we please; but on the other, the culture agrees with Bertrand Russell (Surprise, surprise!), who said somewhere, “we aren’t free to please.” That is, according to him and the psychologist B. F. Skinner, the science of psychology proves the notion that it’s a myth and a delusion to think that we’re “free” in the sense that we can choose any of the alternatives we are aware of. We *think* we can, granted, but in fact (according to them), the only reason we think so is that we’re unaware of where the weight of the influence lies; we can’t (still according to them) choose anything but the most strongly motivated course of action. How could we? We’d have to pick the *less* strongly motivated action. (Well, that’s the point of freedom, isn’t it?)

Of course if we *can’t* choose the less strongly influenced side, this means that we can no more help choosing what we choose than we can help falling when thrown out of an airplane. Our genes, our training, and the circumstances we are in (says this theory) determine what we’re going to do and what we’re going to choose. So we’re not really free at all.

But it follows from this that it’s inconsistent to “leave people alone to do whatever they please,” because, depending on how they were brought up, they’ll do all kinds of objectively destructive things; and, like dogs, they should be trained (interfered with) not to do such things. So, according to the science of behavioral psychology, people are not in fact free, and so shouldn’t be left free.

But there’s something fishy here too, that Skinner never really answers in his writings. Who’s going to do the training? Obviously,

someone who's programmed in the "right" direction—because *he* can't be any more free than anyone else. But who trained *him*? And how is he going to do this? People aren't preprogrammed to listen to the trainers, and so how is he going to get them to listen to him so he can retrain them? Everything is already preprogrammed, according to this view, and so all of us, trainers and trained alike, are totally helpless, and therefore, the world is going to go on just as it always has. —Except that Skinner and the behaviorists don't really believe this, because they want to change things into their version of the Brave New World. So it seems that, without realizing it, they think that *somebody's* actually free.

So let's take a look at their theory. Remember, you test theories by finding out if the things they predict actually happen or not. Does this one predict the way we actually behave? (I'm amazed that scientists will test theories about rats, but little questions like this seem to escape them.)

Where do we start? It has to be from some fact that no one disagrees with (or you'll have to prove everything, which is impossible). Very well, everybody admits that people's choices *seem* to be free to the people making them (they *do* at least *think* they're capable of choosing any of the alternatives). So let's take this as the starting-point.

Now how do you account for people thinking that their choices are free? The free-choice people, of course, say, "Because they are"; but determinists (people who, like Skinner, think that the choices are preprogrammed and couldn't be anything but what they are) have to explain it somehow as a mistake. And they do so by saying that, when a choice seems to be free (as opposed to the situation where you say, "I couldn't help doing that"), this feeling is due to the fact that you *don't know* the factors (the influences) that are in fact forcing the choice.

For instance, you feel "free" because you *think* you chose the weaker side when you refused the second piece of cake that tempted

you so much, when in fact (they say) your fear of being fat was so strong that it overcame the desire. If you realized how strong it was, you'd think, "Nope; I just can't bring myself to eat it," and wouldn't feel free; but because you don't know how strong it is, you think you *could* have taken the cake, when actually it was impossible because of the fear.

This is not only the explanation given, it is the only *possible* explanation for how we can feel free if in fact all our choices are determined by the weight of the influences on them. But this is as far as the determinist theory generally goes. Instead of being good scientists and testing the theory, they say, "Okay, we've got an explanation that makes sense; and so that's the way things are.

So let's do their work for them and ask what you can predict if this theory is true. And what we come up with is the opposite of what actually happens. You can see that, since the theory says that the *reason* you think you're free is that you don't know what's forcing you, it follows that *those who are being forced by factors they are unaware of would feel free.*

But that means that what are called "compulsive" people, those who used to be called "neurotics," would feel free, because they are being compelled to do things without any idea what's forcing them. We still have no real knowledge, for instance, of what makes one person an alcoholic and another a social drinker: Is it a genetic disposition, something wrong with the brain, a habit, a chemical imbalance, or a combination of some or all of these, or something altogether different? No one knows, least of all the alcoholic. All he knows is that he drinks in self-destructive ways, without at all knowing why, *and feels out of control.* But he of all people (if this theory is true) should feel most *in control*, because the mechanism forcing him to drink is totally unknown.

But there's more. For a long time, most alcoholics do feel in control; they think they can "take it or let it alone" long after everyone else is aware that they're hooked. Why is that? Apparently,

because they don't have any reason for letting it alone, and so they never try—until something happens giving them a reason for not drinking, and they try, and *then* they realize that they're out of control.

For our purposes, this moment of revelation is very instructive, because it invariably comes, as I say, at some time when they have a very strong reason for not drinking *and actually choose not to drink*, and then find to their dismay that they took the drink “in spite of themselves.” They don't know at this moment what made them drink (in fact, when they made the choice, they thought they *weren't* going to drink); they only know—now—that they couldn't help it, in spite of the fact that they actually chose not to do it. So the compulsive recognizes his compulsion when he *chooses* not to do what he is compelled to do, and is shocked to discover himself doing it. If this doesn't happen, then the person doesn't try to get help, because he still doesn't realize he's a compulsive. That is, if he thinks that he just *decided* he'd rather take the drink, then he still feels in control.

But what's important here is what this says about the determinist position on choice. You see, the choice at this moment must (according to them) be preprogrammed, because all choices are; and since this one (the actual choice not to take the drink) feels free, then it must be programmed by something unconscious. So there's some unconscious factor in the alcoholic at the moment which *forces* him to *choose* not to drink, and which overwhelms his desire to drink—because he chose not to take the drink in spite of his desire to do so.

But at the same time, the person finds that, for *no known reason*, he can't actually carry out the choice, and he drinks in spite of the choice. So whatever made him actually drink is also unconscious. And what *this* means is that, simultaneously in the same person, the unconscious factor that forces the drinking overwhelms the supposed unconscious factor that forced the choice not to drink, while also *being* overcome by the choice-forcing factor as far as the choice (but

not the act) is concerned.

Huh? Come again? Factor A forces you to choose not to drink, in spite of your (known) desire to do so. Factor B forces you to drink, in spite of Factor A. Why didn't Factor B also force you to *choose* to drink? Because (evidently) it wasn't strong enough to overcome Factor A (remember, everything is determined by the strongest influence). But factor B *is* strong enough to overcome Factor A; it won't allow Factor A to carry out the choice. So Factor B is at one and the same time stronger and weaker than Factor A. Makes sense? Of course not.

What I'm saying is that the determinist theory has to suppose that in the same person's unconscious mind at the same time there are overwhelming influences in opposite directions, each of which completely swamps the other. But there's no *evidence* that either of these "unconscious factors" even exist; they are *assumed* to exist to make sense out of how we can think we're free if we're not actually free.

Now there are twists and turns the determinist can use to get around this, but take my word for it, in the last analysis, the theory is incoherent. It predicts the opposite of what actually happens—and so as a scientific theory, it bombs. (If you want to read a more extended treatment, there's one in Part II Chapter 3 of my *Modes of the Finite*, which goes 44 pages of 9-point type.)

But then why do scientists hold it? There are three reasons, basically. First, when I, as a philosopher, point out that the theory predicts what is false, the psychologists I talk to say, "What do *you* know, you've got no Ph.D. in psychology," and can't be bothered checking to see if I'm right.

But secondly, scientists, including psychologists, are human like anyone else. I remember once when I was an editorial assistant on *Sky and Telescope* magazine, I was asked to summarize a fascinating article in some serious, technical journal (I think it was *Science*) about what is called the "moon illusion" (why the moon appears big on the

horizon), which showed by a number of experiments why the then current theory, advanced by a psychologist named Boring, had to be false, and the author's theory (which dealt with seeing the moon against the objects on the horizon) was a better theory. I wrote up the summary and handed it in; but as it happened, Molly Boring was another assistant on the magazine, and the editor in chief asked her to take it home to Daddy to check it out. The editor called me in the next day and said, "We're not publishing this." "Why?" I said. "Because Boring says it's garbage." "But this guy proved that Boring *can't* be right!" "Look," said the editor, "we're affiliated with Harvard Observatory, which is a branch of Harvard University, and Boring teaches psychology at Harvard, and he says it's garbage. Case closed. Find another article to put in." They laughed at Mendel too, with his experiments with pea-plants, and I'm told that Einstein had tomatoes thrown at him when the Theory of Relativity was new. Nobody likes to be told that what he wrote his doctoral dissertation on was a waste of time.

The third reason scientists reject human freedom (and this is the real one) is that if you allow the choice to be free, in the sense of determining itself (as opposed to merely random), then somehow the choice chooses itself (as it certainly *seems* to, since we know when we make the choice that we could have chosen to postpone it)—and this smacks too much of the "mystical" or "metaphysical" or even (gasp!) "spiritual." And how can you be a scientist if you admit that there's something free of the determining laws of physics and chemistry? Heavens, that would mean that human beings are something special! Better to hold onto a theory that doesn't work than succumb to that sort of thing! We'll find a fix for the difficulty somehow.

But those who aren't locked into the mindset that anything that implies spirituality has to be false, can take the evidence and draw the most reasonable conclusion from it—always allowing for the possibility that new evidence might make us change our minds. We don't have to pretend that this new evidence is going to be out there

leading to the conclusion we'd like to reach.

In this case, the failure of the determinist theory does allow us to say this: Our inescapable experience is basically correct: we *can* choose any of the alternatives available to us (even the ones with weaker motivation); but (a) this choice is influenced (though not determined) by reasons—but only those we are *aware of* (only the conscious ones affect the *choice*) at the time, and (b) our choices do not always have control over our *acts*; sometimes, as St. Paul says, we “do what we choose not to do.” Further, (c) our emotions can exert *indirect* “control” over our choices themselves in that they can blind us to information we would otherwise be aware of, and create illusions that we take as facts. For instance, Monica Lewinsky said one time that she thought that Bill Clinton was in love with her and was just waiting until his Presidency was over to divorce Hillary and marry her. Now obviously, anyone who could actually believe that would have to be blind and deluded. But if you've ever fallen in love, you know how easy this is.

In other words, we do have control over our choices, but we can be tempted, and sometimes the temptation is too much for us and we give in. Duh. This is what people have thought for thousands of years; and is it really surprising to find that they got it right? After all, it's been experimented with and thoroughly tested in the only laboratory that really counts: the laboratory of experience.

But the New Morality is practically schizophrenic on this topic, veering from a belief that each of us is totally helpless to the conviction that we're all totally free and unable to be affected by temptation.

For instance, on the one hand President Clinton is treated as if he were the complete victim of Monica's blandishments, and was unable to help himself when she snapped her thong at him—and at the same time Monica is supposed to be totally resistant to the aphrodisiac of authority, and completely immune to any fear of what might happen to her life if she said No to the most powerful boss in the world. Any

boss with any common sense who is attracted to his subordinates takes steps to see he is never alone within five hundred feet of one, both for her sake and his; and any subordinate who sees a ring on the boss's finger knows that he's off limits, and out of respect for his possible weakness (and hers) is all business before him.

—Unless, of course, there's nothing wrong with sex if you both feel like it. But that's a different Commandment, which we'll discuss later, when we see its basis.

But it isn't just Bill and Monica, by any means. New Moralists say of the salacious programs on TV, for instance, "If you don't want to watch this kind of program, turn it off," as if the fact that it's easily available doesn't create a temptation that many who actually don't want to succumb might find it hard to resist. (I'm reminded of St. Augustine's friend who was persuaded to go to the gladiatorial match he didn't want to watch, and spent the first part covering his eyes with his hand—but when he heard a shout, peeked out through his fingers, and was hooked.)

—But I said that they were schizophrenic about this. Notice how they want to make sure nobody hears Dr. Laura.

Now what's the real situation here? It's one thing to have pornography or violence available in the sense that you can get it if you go out of your way (that's not censorship), and it's quite another to have it right there in your home at the touch of a button. You can only say it's the same thing if you assume that people have perfect control over their baser instincts—or that the instincts aren't "baser" in the first place.

And on the other side, New Moralists excuse all kinds of things because of the way we were brought up, like the Menendez brothers who shot their parents full of holes because, poor things, they'd been abused as kids. There's a further ramification of this too, based on evolution, which I'll get to later, showing why the New Morality is big on collective guilt and soft on individual responsibility. Suffice it for now that the supposed "scientific" theory of determinism seems

to bolster this position—but it can't as I said, be true because what it predicts is the opposite of what happens.

Freedom and non-interference.

Anyhow, if you've followed me, we, at least, can say that we human beings *can* make choices that are not determined by our character and circumstances—though influenced by them—and that this seems to be what is distinctive about us.

We must also say, however, that we can't necessarily carry out all our choices, not only because we don't have complete control over our acts, but because our choices in themselves are unlimited, and our actual potential is limited, as I was claiming in the last chapter. You can *choose* to be a crocodile if you want, but you can't *be* one; you can *choose* to be a woman if you're a man, but the best you can actually accomplish is to pretend that you're one.

So a *restricted freedom* is what we have as human. It follows, then, that insofar as we *are* free, we shouldn't be interfered with (because that would contradict our reality as human); but insofar as our freedom is restricted, it can be interfered with.

But how does that spell itself out? It would seem that if my exercise of my freedom interferes with your exercise of your freedom, then I'm being inconsistent, because I'm in effect saying that you're not free, when in fact you are. And therefore, I'm not free to do anything that restricts anyone else's freedom to act.

Sounds good, but it won't work. Suppose Johnny and Franky both want to play with the same toy, but it's not one that both can play with at the same time. The fact that Johnny wants to play with it means that Franky can't, and the fact that Franky wants to play with it prevents Johnny from doing so. The result is that *neither* can play with it because they would be restricting the freedom of the other—and yet freedom was supposed to *allow* you to do what you wanted.

So the restriction on our freedom can't come from the fact that

someone else *wants* to do something. Yet it's obvious that I can't ride roughshod over everyone else just because I claim to be "free to do what I want." Then what is it that makes sense out of restricting my freedom to act?

Here's the answer. **You must refrain from doing anything that does *actual damage* to the *present condition* of another person.** The actual state a person is in gives him, in other words, a **right** that restricts everyone else's freedom to act.

What do I mean by "actual damage"? That there is some aspect of the person that is *objectively contradicted* if he can't do some act. Thus, for example, it is part of being an adult citizen in America that one can vote. If I prevent you from voting, then in effect I am saying that you are a citizen who isn't a citizen. I have a license to drive a car, which is an "acquired right" that I got by taking a test. If you tell me I can't drive, I show you my license, and then you have to let me; otherwise, I'm a driver who isn't a driver. A student who has paid his tuition at my college has a right to attend classes, but doesn't have a right to a degree until he fulfills the requirements. His paying of the tuition puts him in the "student" category, which is contradicted if he can't attend class; but it doesn't put him in the "graduate" category until he fulfills all the requirements; before then, he just *wants* the degree.

This aspect of myself that connects me with a certain act is called the **title** to the right. The title to your car says that you can do anything you want with this car, and no one can stop you; the deed to your house is a "title deed," giving you the right to do what you want with it; your citizenship is your title to live in the country and vote and do all that citizens can do; your humanity is your title to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and so on.

And the general rule here, of course, is **your exercise of any right never extends to the violation of any actual right of anyone else.** Otherwise, the "right" contradicts itself. So, for instance, you might not be in practice able to burn your car up because it places

other people and property in danger. But the point is that no right every is “greater than” or “overrides” anyone else’s right. Whenever you exercise what would otherwise be your right, and your exercise would actually violate *any* actual right of someone else, then in those circumstances, you can’t exercise it.

But the important thing to note is that **rights do not depend on what goals we have, or what we want to be; they depend on what we now are**, for the reasons I outlined above. We are masters of ourselves, but not of others; but this does not mean that we have to defer to the whims or wants or “felt needs” of others, but only to what they objectively are. And a given person has to *make a case to others* that his objective reality allows him to do a given act (show them the title), because he is the one who wants everyone else’s freedom restricted. What I’m saying is that this case has to be something more than that you just want to do the act in question.

So you can interfere with someone if he’s violating the rights of someone else. Actually, not even the New Moralists disagree with this; but now you can see what it’s based on, and why it’s legitimate.

But what about the restriction of our freedom based on the fact that certain things we choose are beyond our genetic capability, such as a change of sex? Can *others* prevent a person from trying to act on such a choice, which in fact does damage to himself—i.e. gets him into a self-contradictory state?

It has traditionally been thought legitimate to restrict people’s freedom to do actual damage to themselves, on the grounds that you’re not really “free” when you do these things—and therefore, you can’t claim a *right* to do them.

But frankly, I don’t see the validity of this. True, if a person *in ignorance* does damage to himself, then he certainly should be informed of the consequences of what he’s doing; and if I refused to inform him I’d in effect be doing the damage—on the grounds that if I informed him and he stopped doing it, then the damage wouldn’t be done. In this sense, a person has a right to be informed of

damage that he is apt to do to himself in ignorance, and my refusal to supply this information is a violation of him as a person.

But if he knows what he's doing and is aware of the damage, then he *is* free to make of himself what he wants. In this case, what he wants is to be more or less crippled in some aspect of himself. True, he would *like* to be a human crocodile; but if he realizes that all he can accomplish is to be a human being who swims around in muddy water, and that's what he wants to be, then as long as he knows this and he's not doing damage to anyone else, what real grounds does anyone have for preventing him?

Similarly with the transsexual. If he is informed that he can't really *be* a woman by having this operation, and all he'll be is a mutilated man, and he prefers to be a mutilated man than what he is now, do we really have a reason for preventing him from mutilating himself?

This is connected with the notion of goodness as subjective that I spoke of earlier. Your goal in life is the set of acts that you conceive of as "yours" distinctively; and what your freedom implies is that you have the power to *set* the goal and to *change yourself in the direction of achieving it*. The goal that you would *like* to achieve may be impossible, because it involves a contradiction; but if the actual resultant state is one you find preferable to your present condition, then this truncated, partly frustrated state is the "true self" you are trying to achieve. And it seems to me that it contradicts you as a goal-setter and goal-seeker if someone else can prevent you from achieving even this miserable goal.

Thus, the most reasonable position on this seems to be that **if a person wants to do damage to himself, and knows what he is doing, then he can only be prevented from harming himself when he is *also* violating someone else's right.**

Let me add this, however: **no one ever has an obligation to *help* another person do harm to himself; in fact, we have an obligation to *withhold* assistance from such a person, even if it means**

that he is prevented from doing what he wants.

The reason for this is that when I help you do something, then the goal you are trying to reach now *also* becomes the goal of *my* actions; and so if you want to do something damaging to yourself, I can't help you without wanting the damage. Sure, you want it, and maybe you don't even think it's damaging; but I *know* it's damaging, and hence I'd have to choose your damage if I helped you. And that's wrong.

Thus, for example, a person (unless he's insane) has a right to commit suicide, and therefore mustn't be stopped (except by trying to persuade him); but he has *no* right to expect anyone else to help him kill himself—for the simple reason that he's asking another person to commit murder, and it's inhuman to kill another person. So yes, the "assisted suicide" laws are evil, because they turn doctors into murderers. All you have to do is look into "Dr." Kevorkian's eyes to verify what I'm saying.

—But wait a minute. If people mustn't be prevented from doing harm to themselves, shouldn't we be letting insane people cut themselves and burn themselves and do all sorts of things to themselves? No, that isn't what I said. The assumption is that a person who's insane is blinded to what the facts actually are, or is incapable of doing what he chooses to do. In the first case, simply *telling* him is not going to help him, because his insanity won't let him believe you; in the second, he doesn't want to do the act. Thus, for instance, if you explain to a paranoid person that others around him aren't actually trying to kill him, then in his mind, you just become part of the conspiracy against him. In that case, the person can't make an informed choice in the first place. I'm talking about a person who knows what the situation is, and says, "I don't care. If it's crazy to you, so be it. I want to do it anyway." That kind of a person should be let alone, unless what he's doing does damage to someone else.

Similarly, *children* think abstractly (yes, they do, they ignore

what's inconvenient) and aren't practically aware that unintended side-effects can alter what they want to happen with their acts. In this case, they can't make an *informed* choice of what to do; and so, until they can, they have the peculiar right *to be forced* to do what *the parents* think is good for them. When Johnny's up in a tree walking along a branch, and Mom says, "Come down; you'll fall and hurt yourself," and Johnny answers, "I can't fall; I've been reading Harry Potter, and besides, I've got on my heel-gripper sneakers," then Johnny can't be allowed to follow his own choice.

This control parents have over their children, of course, lessens as the children become more concretely aware that good intentions don't lead to good outcomes, and learn to take into account all of the possible consequences of their actions, accepting the consequences as "theirs" and not just the act and its intention. (That's called "maturity.")

Now then, as I said, this view of when we can interfere and when we can't, if you discount what I just said about children, is pretty close to what the New Morality's position works out to in practice. We shouldn't interfere with others unless someone else's rights are being violated. But now instead of basing the rule on the silly notion that "no one has a right to impose his moral standards on anyone else," which contradicts itself, it's based on an objective characteristic of human beings—that we *can* in fact direct our own lives, within limits.

Values and morals.

This leads to a further distinction we can make, and allows us to clear up a confusion in contemporary moral thought: that **values are not the same as morals.**

A **value** is a means toward reaching a goal you have chosen for yourself. As such it deals with the *future*, and with your *freedom* to make of yourself (within your given genetic limits) whatever you want. **Morals deal with the condition you are *now* in**, and say that

you must not act inconsistently with this “given” self.

Modern thought, particularly existentialism, is right in saying that there isn’t any *given* goal for us; we can be whatever we want to be, (within the range of our genetically determined possibilities); and in this sense, as I was saying in the preceding chapter, “good” is a term that is fundamentally subjective. What is “the good” for you is that set of acts that you freely choose as distinctively “yours,” and no one can make that choice but you (because you *create* it by your choice; you don’t *discover* it).

We can now add that your emotions and talents don’t *force* that goal on you. All your talents do is indicate what types of actions “come easy” to you (what you’re “good at” in *that* sense); but they don’t tell you what you *have* to do. If you decide that you’re going to be a doctor, even if you have to struggle through medical school and even if you’re really talented as an auto mechanic and you enjoy working with cars, then there’s nothing wrong with fighting your way toward your medical degree. There is, of course, nothing wrong either with chucking the whole thing and opening a garage. It’s all up to you; that’s what it means to be free.

(For those who say, “But the will of God for you is what’s good for you,” I answer, God created you *to be free*, and therefore, *that’s* his will for you, and to be free means to choose for yourself what your goal is. If God made you free to choose your goal in life—and he must have, because you can—then he would be contradicting himself if *he* picked out some *other* goal that you were supposed to choose. No, *his* goal for you is *your* freely-chosen goal for yourself, even if it means eternal frustration; in *that* sense, God’s will for the sinner is that he go to hell. There are complications in this—there are complications in everything I’ve said in the whole book; but trust me, you believers, there’s no incompatibility in my view of freedom and God’s purpose for my life. I actually passed a heresy examination on it once, I kid you not.)

Now the values you have follow from what goals you set for

yourself. If you have being a doctor as a goal, then a medical school is a value for you; if you decide you want to be an auto mechanic, then medical school for you is valueless, and a set of wrenches has a value it wouldn't have if you were only interested in being a doctor. Of course, you can choose to be both, and work on cars on weekends, say, in which case, both the school and the wrenches are values.

We *compare* values when we have a complex goal, and we have to give up (either permanently or temporarily) one aspect of our future self in order to have the other. The goal you keep is *more important* than the goal you give up; and so the object that leads you to a more important goal is *more valuable* than the object that leads to a less important one.

But notice this: **Importance is no less subjective than goodness. There is nothing that is objectively important**, for the simple reason that goals are free, and which goal you rank above another depends on your choice, not on objective factors.

We may be able to say that some acts are “greater” or “higher” than others: that studying philosophy, for instance, is a “greater” act than tinkering with cars (because thought is spiritual and physical acts aren't). But it's not more *important*, except for those people who want philosophical knowledge to be part of their “true” selves.

Does this mean that honesty is less important than making money? Yes it does. But the real question is, does *that* mean that it's okay to lie as long as you get money for it?

No indeed, and here's where the confusion comes in. Morals, as I said, deal, not with goals and the person you *want* to be, but with the “given” self you *now* are. Dishonesty, by definition, means acting as if you weren't what you now are. This isn't *important*, it's *necessary*.

Morals and what is necessary deal with what you are at the moment. Necessities are means toward living a *minimally human* life. Thus, it isn't a *goal* in your life to breathe; you take this for granted as a human being; it's part of what is genetically given, and

no matter what lifestyle you choose, it includes being able to breathe. So breathing isn't important; it's necessary.

In other words, as far as our goals are concerned, necessities are just presupposed and taken for granted. You *are* human, and so you take the minimal human acts as part of what you are, and what you care about and work for is the particular lifestyle or goal that is *your* freely chosen *meaning* to what "human" will be in your case, over and above this minimum that's common to us all.

Hence, breathable air isn't important for anyone. If you have it, you take it for granted as something you have a right to have. If you don't have it, *it is beyond all values*. You can't compare it with values, as if it were "more valuable" than medical school, for instance; because you know you'd have to give up *all* values to get it. What good is medical school if you're dead?

I'll spell out the economic implications of this in a later chapter. For now let's just recognize that there is this distinction between goals and their importance and the values that lead to them, and the genetically given self that's presupposed, and morals and the necessities implied in it.

Once we've made this distinction, something absolutely vital is implied.

The real moral issue.

Let me approach this by looking at the person struggling to get through medical school. Let us suppose that in order to get into medical school in the first place, you have to get good grades in all your undergraduate courses, including philosophy. But you're not talented in philosophy at all, and you can't seem to pass the tests, let alone get A's in them. What do you do?

Well, you can cheat on the tests, which will give you the A's you need to get into medical school. But if you cheat, then you're acting inconsistently with yourself as a test-taker. Tests, obviously, are devices by which you tell the teacher how much you know, not how

well you can read the fine print on the floor beside your foot; and so if you fulfill your goal as a doctor by cheating on your tests, then you have *violated* (contradicted) the *given* reality of yourself as a test-taker.

Now there's a certain sense in which you *do* have as a goal to be consistent with yourself as a test-taker, since if you were able to get the grade on the test without cheating, you'd do so; and so there's an *aspect* of yourself that you'd like still to have (you'd like to be an *honest* doctor) that you can't achieve. In other words, if the choice were open to you of being an honest doctor or a dishonest non-doctor (or even an honest non-doctor), there'd be no contest.

But we're supposing that the "honest doctor" option isn't in practice available to you; so you have to choose between being a dishonest doctor or an honest non-doctor.

Here is the real issue dealing with morality. It doesn't even depend on how you define right and wrong; no matter what you mean by "morally right," you will run into situations in which you can't be what you really really want to be unless you deliberately do what you know is morally wrong.

The moral issue is why you should do what is morally right if it keeps you from the goal you have chosen.

In other words, is honesty the best policy? There's been enough propaganda saying that "Of *course* it's the best policy" to make anyone suspicious that it might not be all that obvious. Even Parson Weems, who told the story of George Washington and the cherry tree ("I cannot tell a lie") told a lie (the event never happened) to get kids to be honest; and the probable result of admitting you chopped down your father's tree would be an extended trip to the woodshed, not a pat on the head. Let's be realistic here.

Thus, if Bill Clinton could get away with what he did with Monica and Gennifer and Paula and all the others, as well with as the

FBI files and all the rest of it (and *didn't* he get away with it? What bad thing happened to him?) why shouldn't he have done it? Well, he shouldn't, because it's wrong. But so what? If he did the right thing and resigned, then he would have lost the Presidency—which obviously he wanted in the worst way. Why should he be a person who admits guilt and lose his cherished dream, when he can have the dream and all the chicanery too? So people don't like and respect him. Okay, so being where he is and respected would be better; still, being where he is and not being respected is a hell of a lot better than not being where he is at all—respected or not. (And let's face it, if he resigned, would people respect him? It is to laugh. Look at Nixon.)

What I am getting at is this:

It can be good (in the sense of a value) to do wrong.

Granted, it *ought* not to be this way. It *ought* not to be the case that you can *better* fulfill your reality (achieve more of your goals) by violating some—unimportant to you—part of your given reality (your given, present humanity); but “reality” has two senses here, and there's no contradiction in this happening.

A conclusion we can draw from this is that **no amount of “values clarification” will solve this problem.** It's not a question of *mistaking* what your values are or where your goals in life are; it's a question of recognizing that morals are not the same as values, and that being immoral (violating your given reality) can sometimes lead you to where you want to go.

All you have to do is open your eyes, and the problem is all around you. It's good to do evil, sometimes. Of course it is; otherwise why would people do it?

—And here I leave you, for now. I plan to handle this issue at the very end of the book; I just want you to be aware of it here. (If you want an extended treatment of it, I recommend going back to Plato;

for instance, my *Plato's Republic for Readers: A Constitution*, where you will find the strongest case ever made that honesty is the best policy—a case which, as I say in the Afterword, ultimately fails as Plato presents it. I think, however, that there *is* a solution.)

So what I want to do now is go on to the rest of the Ten New Commandments, and show how they follow from Darwinism, in what respect they don't (or do) fit the facts about what we are, and so why we ought not (or ought) to follow them, and to what extent.

The Third New Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Be Intolerant

In one sense, this New Commandment is a kind of amalgamation of the Two Great Commandments; but in another, it's quite different. The positive side of this one is “Celebrate diversity,” which you can't really tease out of the meaning of either of the two Great Commandments. The reason is that this Commandment has a different base, which is the real base on which the other nine nowadays stand: the Darwinian view of evolution as a chance modification of organisms and natural selection among the results—what used to be called “the survival of the fittest.”

You know the basic outlines of the theory. The genes of a given organism get modified somehow—say, by being exposed to radiation. This results in mutant organisms being born from the parents. Generally, these mutants are defective in one way or another, and can't survive, so they die out, and their defective genes die out with them. But once in a great while, one of these mutants happens to

have a “defect” which actually makes it better able to survive than its parents, and so it prospers, and reproduces more than its parents, and so the new genes get multiplied. Insofar as the new organism is in competition with its ancestors, it tends to take over, and *they* become the “defective” versions which gradually die out. There’s nothing to prevent this new, improved organism from also being modified, and so the process goes on, creating, instead of a mutant version of the species, a whole different species, which can no longer produce fertile offspring with the organisms from which it arose.

I’ll critique the theory in the interlude that follows this discussion. What I want to do here, however, is to draw out its implications for this New Commandment and the Two Great Commandments that preceded it—because, even though the history of their development is longer than this one, the emergence of this mutant theory, so to speak, has modified how they are understood in the present day.

First of all, the fact that all of this happens by chance means that you can’t really talk about “progress” or an “advance” in evolution, as if there were a planned, definite direction for it that it “ought” to follow. What happens happens because it happens, that’s all.

And what follows from *this* is that you can’t really call one organism “better” than another, because *all* the organisms that exist are by definition the best (so far) at adapting themselves to the ecological niche (the place in the biological environment) they fit into, and *any* organism is subject to being replaced by some chance mutant that happens to fit in still better. Thus, we can talk about the *results* of evolution, but not its *purpose*.

But with hindsight, we can see that what in fact has happened is that organisms have proliferated. It seems that there are all kinds of ways to fit into a given ecological situation, and eventually, some mutant comes along to fill up a gap, very often not replacing the other organisms but fitting in along beside them. It does its job, which is different from the others’ doing their jobs; but it is no better

or worse than any other organism, because there's no hierarchy of jobs to do; there's just the environment, and the job, if you will, of *any* organism is simply to fit in. I hasten to note that this isn't really its task; if it fits in, it fits in and multiplies; if it doesn't, it dies out. But it's *as if* its "job" is to fit in, for this reason.

One other thing to notice, and we'll be able to draw conclusions. The new organs or characteristics that adapt the organism to its environment better than its parents are not really advances on the earlier organism; it's just that with this new organ, the organism happens to fit into the environment better. From the point of view of the earlier version, the new organ is a defect, because it doesn't allow the new version to interact in the old way with the environment; it's just chance that the environment happens to be such that this inability becomes a vehicle by which the organism can survive and reproduce more.

Relation to the First New Commandment.

First of all, let's see how this affects the understanding of the First Great Commandment: Thou shalt make no claim to absolute truth. Human beings differ from other mammals mainly in the fact that humans can reason and converse with each other, and the other animals can't. When other animals communicate with each other, the motions or sounds of one animal create an effect in the instinct of the other animal, causing behavior. But "conversational behavior" has never been observed except in humans—the kind where one of us says something and the other listens, and then the other says something and the first listens, and this goes back and forth, with each gaining information from the other and passing information back to the other. With humans, what the information *is* matters, irrespective of what you can do with it; with other animals, everything is oriented toward what they do with the input they get. There are ambiguities and complications here, of course, but in outline that's a main difference between humans and other animals, and it's

due to the fact that we have reason or thought, which apparently the other animals don't have.

In any case, the ability to do this (which, of course, I am now engaged in with you) has clearly made the human animal extremely capable of fitting into all kinds of diverse ecologies, and in fact, capable of fitting the environment to himself in a way that the other animals give only the barest rudiments of doing. So the human species is exceedingly adaptable; and in being so, it has become the dominant species all over the planet. In fact, one of the interesting facets of humans is that they don't seem adapted by nature to any one ecology; they can adapt themselves to anything, even bizarre places like outer space.

But not even this, from an evolutionary standpoint, means that reason is some "superior power" that human beings were "gifted" with by a supernatural being who had their development in mind, and who commanded them to "have dominion over the birds of the air, the fish of the sea," and all the rest of it. It's just a quirk that happened in the brain of some primate, and that quirk just happened to make the offspring incredibly efficient at fitting in anywhere, and so in reproducing their own kind.

Therefore, reason has no real relation to "the facts" or "truth." It's just a reproduction-enhancer. Reason did *not*, on this theory, evolve to give humans access to the reality of what was around them; there was no purpose for it at all. It just happened. And it just happens to make them more efficient at reproduction than other organisms; but not even that is its purpose; it *has* no purpose. Nothing has a purpose. Things just happen.

So mankind has nothing to brag about because we have reason and animals don't. We're efficient in adapting to our various environments, true; but the other organisms are supremely efficient in adapting to the conditions they find themselves in as well. We *think* that because we have reason we're special and unique, but there's nothing really special about us; each organism is special and

unique in its own way, because of the organs that it happens to have developed which happen to fit it into its own proper place in the environment.

In other words, evolution confirms what Immanuel Kant thought about reason and truth. Reason happens to be the kind of thing that tricks people into believing that it can get at the “real true reality,” but this is a sham and a delusion. As Kant said in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, when reason tries to do this, it gets itself all mixed up in contradictions, and can “prove” that the same thing is both true and false. Well, surprise, surprise! All reason is is a chance quirk that allows us to reproduce and fit into diverse environments; to say that it has a handle on what’s really going on “out there” is to give it a use that it wasn’t fitted for in the first place.

Hence, the First Great Commandment. Reason can’t get us to the absolute truth; it wasn’t made for that; in fact, it wasn’t made “for” anything; it just is, and it just happens that with it we fit into this world.

—But wait just a minute, now. Isn’t the theory itself a *reasoned* account of what happened: the “real story” about how organisms got the way they are? But if it concludes that reason can’t get at what the “real story” is, how can it claim to be the “real story”?

We seem to have just uncovered a new version of Derrida’s deconstruction, which apparently applies to everything except itself. If the theory I just outlined is true, then it is worthless as a theory, because it concludes that no theory is worth anything, since every theory is just a misuse of a mechanism that adapts the organism to its environment, no more.

And also, remember what we said in the discussion on the First Great Commandment: we know that in fact we *can* get at absolute truth (at least in one case, that there is something). So even if reason evolved, you can’t conclude that it’s a mere adventitious means toward making reproduction more efficient; somehow or other, it *does* enable us to know what is going on “out there.”

But let's leave this for the moment, and take the evolutionist where he is. His assumption is that evolution is just chance and has no purpose, and so any "progress" or "advance" we see is just something we impose on a set of random operations. From this assumption, as I said, it follows that all organisms are on an equal footing; they're all "just there," fitting nicely into the place they happen to be adapted for.

This also applies to the diversity of races and cultures among us humans, of course. No one race or culture is "superior" to another; we're each of us just ways in which we have adapted ourselves to the particular environment we happen to be in. For instance, black people, living near the equator, have a lot of melanin in their skin, which protects them from sun; and they have kinky hair, which forms an insulation against heat. White people's hair doesn't insulate them so well from heat (though it's better at cold), and they don't get the sunlight so directly, and so they've bleached so as to be more able to synthesize vitamin D from the meager sunlight that falls on them. Equatorial people live in jungles, where there are all kinds of things for food growing year-round, and where the only shelter they really need is shade; and so their culture has adapted itself to this. People in colder climates have had to develop warm clothing and housing, and places to store food for the winter, and so on. There's no way of saying that one of these lifestyles is better or superior to the other; it depends on the environment you happen to be in.

Thus, racial differences and cultural differences are simply ways of adapting the people to their environment, and imply no superiority or inferiority either of the bodily characteristics they have, or of the behavior they exhibit. And since the culture's behavior rests on what that culture considers as "the facts" (that is, the way it uses reason to adapt itself to its surroundings), then one culture's grasp of "the facts" is going to be quite different from what another culture sees as "the facts." And from this you can conclude that there's no special "set of facts" that's privileged and allows those possessing it to say

that some other culture (which sees things differently) is just plain wrong.

But of course, that is exactly what western culture holds: That there *are* things that are true, and are true for everyone, that can be known objectively; and anyone who disagrees with them is mistaken at best and malicious and subversive at worst. From an evolutionary point of view, this is simple nonsense, and the (perhaps natural) arrogance of a culture to assert itself as superior simply because it happens to be adapted to its own conditions in a very efficient way.

—But wait a minute again. What do you mean, “simple nonsense”? Aren’t you saying that it’s *objectively true, for all cultures* that what one culture thinks is “the truth” applies only to that culture and doesn’t apply to all cultures? Where did you get this “universal truth” that “truth is culturally determined” except by making a prediction from the theory of chance evolution? But that means that the theory of chance evolution predicts something which *by your own admission* is patently false, because it generates a “truth” which is not culturally determined: that *all* truth is culturally determined.

But you can see why people who haven’t spotted this inconsistency would hold (a) that no culture is superior to any other, and (b) that each culture’s truth is true only for that culture, and there is no “objective” truth that applies to everyone irrespective of culture.

The evolutionary basis of the Second New Commandment.

So let’s leave the inconsistency aside and go back to where the evolutionist is, and continue with what follows if you accept a chance-evolution view of things. What applies to truth, of course, applies *a fortiori* to conduct. A culture’s behavior is precisely its way of adapting itself to the conditions it finds itself in.

And this is part of the basis of the Second Great Commandment, not to force one’s moral standards on anyone else. “Moral standards” is taken on this view to mean “cultural adaptation to the environ-

ment,” and obviously there *is* no privileged adaptation to the environment which “ought” to apply to all peoples in all environments.

—I’m sorry; I find I can’t help reminding you here once again that this view of morality also predicts its own contradiction, the moral imperative not to export your culture’s morals—which applies to all cultures. So once again, if the theory leads to this conclusion, it refutes itself.

But let’s continue. Serious things happen biologically when an organism adapted for one environment is moved to a different one. Ordinarily, it will be maladapted and die out. But occasionally, it will be *so* well adapted to its new location that it will eat up everything in sight, and disrupt the ecology drastically. Thus, the kudzu plant, once introduced into the American South from the orient, doesn’t have the predators that kept it in check, and it’s climbing over the trees and bushes there, killing them all at an alarming rate.

And we see biological effects like this among humans too. Move black people into temperate climates, and they’ll get sick unless they take artificial vitamin D supplements; move whites into the tropics and they need sunblock to survive.

Extrapolating from this, it follows that for one culture (which has, by trial and error, adapted itself to its environment) to impose its cultural norms on another culture is for it to try to make the other culture do maladaptive things, which is positively detrimental to the other culture. So it ought not to be done.

—Another reminder. Sure, among the Mayans, killing off the virgins stabilized the population so that there could be calendars and fancy buildings and all the rest; but the population *itself* didn’t want this; only those in control did. So it doesn’t follow that the “adaptive” route which leads to a stable population in the environment is what *ought* to be done. In our country, slavery adapted the South to its cotton-growing lifestyle; and therefore it was okay?

What I’m saying is that using evolutionary biology as the criterion

for moral goodness or badness isn't automatically the right way to go. The survival of the fittest supposes that the unfit are worthless and expendable; and do we really want to say that? If so, why?

People like Edward O. Wilson in *Consilience*, of course, have an answer. They pick out the traits they like, claim that biology has selected for those traits, and then say that we should do these things to follow our nature as evolutionarily selected for. They find traits they don't like—for instance, the Nazis' attempt to purify the gene pool by getting rid of what they considered misfits (like cripples, the blind, homosexuals, and Jews), which is an explicit imitation of what natural selection does—and they either ignore this logical consequence of their theory, or say, “Well, you see, evolution didn't *really* select for that kind of behavior, so we ought not to do it.”

Do I have to point out explicitly that that's circular reasoning?

The evolutionist would, of course, answer, “Not really, because that's what we are, and it's *all* that we are. To say that we have reason and therefore each individual has a special dignity that makes him inviolate is simple mystical nonsense. Reason is just an accident that happened to certain mammals; but natural selection *of course* applies to humans as much as it does to anything else.” It's just that they have this special insight into what natural selection is *really* trying to do, based apparently on some mystical insight into genetics.

But tabling again whether this is correct or not, you can now see why a good Darwinist would have to hold the Second Great Commandment as well as the first. There *are* no universal moral standards, because all environments are different and special, and there is no single way in which humans can or ought to adapt themselves to their situations.

Therefore, all lifestyles are equal, and equally to be “celebrated.” The maladaptive ones don't have to be consciously stamped out; they'll die by natural selection. But any one that has been around for a good long time is as good as any other.

The Third New Commandment.

Putting both of these lines of reasoning together, we come up with the Third New Commandment: Thou shalt not be intolerant. True, you will necessarily think of your own way of doing things as “better,” and your truth as “truer,” because it *is* better (and hence truer) for you in your circumstances; but the other’s circumstances make *his* lifestyle better for him, and who are you to say that he should adopt your customs?

For someone who hasn’t thought the matter through, the argument sounds quite convincing; it seems to explain the differences in cultural outlooks very neatly, as long as you don’t push it too hard—and it even fits into the traditionalists’ view that tolerance is a good thing. But this is a special *kind* of tolerance, as we’ll see.

But in any case, *the* virtue of today is tolerance. (Haven’t you noticed?) This virtue doesn’t mean that you have to *agree* with someone who holds a different position from the one you have; simply that you have to *accept* that other position as “no better than” yours. So the neat thing about this sense of tolerance as a virtue is that it doesn’t mean you have to give up what you cherish as true or as moral; it’s just that you have no right to expect the other person to give up *his* view. Who are you to impose your ideas or standards on someone else?

—But once again there’s a fly in the ointment. If tolerance is the virtue of all virtues, then it follows that bigotry or prejudice is the vice of all vices—and *therefore intolerance and bigotry must not be tolerated*. Those who proclaim themselves as tolerant and open to all points of view are violently intolerant toward the bigoted and closed-minded; they want to make sure that *their* view is suppressed, because—well, because it’s intolerant, and tries to suppress opposing views. Exactly.

And you can’t escape the logic of this. *If* there is no privileged point of view or privileged standard of conduct, *then* relativism in truth and morals is automatically privileged, and any other view or

moral standard must not be tolerated. How could you tolerate bigotry if you held that bigotry was evil? Even if you say that bigotry is evil only *for you*, how can you say to someone else, “Sure, be a bigoted as you want and stamp out everything you disagree with; it’s perfectly okay with me, because I’m tolerant of your position.”? That might be a logically possible position, but it’s not one that anyone can hold in practice.

Is it any wonder that contemporary society is all mixed up?

And did you notice all the people who quoted the Bible during the whole impeachment process? One particular passage in the Bible: “Judge not lest ye be judged.” (New Moralists, as we’ll see, can live quite comfortably with a certain—very selective—view of Christianity.) It was okay to deplore the conduct Bill Clinton engaged in in the abstract or for yourself, but who were *you* to hold *him* to your standards—and actually want him punished! You should be jailed yourself for wanting that! Remember how many of these “tolerant” people wanted bad things to happen to the “intolerant” Kenneth Starr? And said so, on national television, and no one batted an eye. But say that *Clinton* should be impeached and removed from office! How dare you!

But actually, the whole thing is a crock. If you look ahead at the other New Commandments, you will find how intolerant all these “tolerant” New Moralists are toward what violates their moral code. Do you ever hear of people preaching “tolerance” toward those who want to see the Pope’s sexual moral standards once again the norm for our culture, or toward those who think it’s perfectly all right to have large families, or those who pollute the environment or destroy a species whose sole habitat happens to be on their private property, or who smoke or do any of the other things the New Morality finds evil? Of course not.

“Tolerance” in the New Morality, whether the New Moralists realize it or not, means that (a) they and everyone else are expected to be tolerant of “differing lifestyles” (including ones like Clinton’s),

and (b) those who disagree with *them* must be tolerant of their position, but (c) *they* are exempt from tolerating what they consider evil—because, as I said earlier, they don't define it as "evil," but as "maladaptive," or "ignorant," or in general, "not with it." And, insofar as the practice or view is maladaptive, of course, then natural selection will destroy it—it's just that the New Moralists, like the old Marxists, want to help out and hurry along the inevitable.

And of course, since it looks as if there's a scientific base for what the New Moralists hold, then they don't consider what they're doing bigoted; they're not being *intolerant*, they're just being sensible. Sure.

The hatred of "eurocentrism."

This interpretation of "tolerance" as "every culture is equal to every other" explains the war against western culture, or what is now called "eurocentrism." It is regarded as a kind of oppressive force which is trying to mold people's minds all over the world into lock-step agreement with this particular notion of "the truth," when the *real* truth is that there are many versions of the truth, one for each culture. Eurocentrism to the New Morality is intolerance writ large.

But the ironic thing, of course, is that western culture is in one sense exactly what these people are advocating without realizing it. Granted, the scientific aspect of it comes from the ancient Greeks (who were, of course, Europeans)—and in fact from Aristotle, who invented the science of logic, the organic theory of living bodies, classification of living things by genus and species, the notions of matter and energy, the empirical method of collecting data and drawing conclusions from what was observed, and so on.

But even here, the Greeks had no problem borrowing outside concepts. For instance, the time and the calendar use a number system whose base, instead of 10, is 12, which is from Babylon; nor did they shrink from incorporating into their mathematics the discoveries in geometry that came from the Egyptians—and there

wasn't any attempt to deny that it came from them either. They weren't interested in claiming, "We thought of it first"; they just cared whether it was true or not. And Plato's view, and certainly Plotinus's a couple centuries later, is heavily influenced by Hindu thought about what the "pure" life consisted in, and what happened after death. So what is "eurocentric" about even this most European aspect of western culture?

Later on, of course, when the Arabs invented zero, the Arabic number system was taken into "eurocentric" culture, because it was a much more efficient way to write numbers than using letters (like the Greeks) or those Xs and Vs of the Romans. And, when Aristotle's explanation of how the planets appeared to move against the background of the stars was shown to be inferior to the Ptolemaic view, the latter simply supplanted the Aristotelian one, even though it was, like the number system, Arabic in origin.

But the major influence that makes western culture what it is came from Jerusalem, not Greece. The Greeks, after all, were polytheists; even Aristotle was; and the universe was regarded as either eternally in a steady state, such that before each chicken there was an egg, and before each egg there was a chicken, or in a cyclic condition such that the present state of the universe had happened over and over again at the proper point in the eternal recurrence of things (a view Babylonian in origin, not European). The notion that there was a single God who "started everything off" at the beginning, before which there *was* no universe, and who had a plan and was directing things toward an end, and who had a definite set of things that had to be done, came from the Jews, hardly what you would call European.

It was Christianity, really, which transformed the world of Greece and Rome into what is now western culture; but it actually did so some four hundred years after Jesus died, by means of the greatest thinker of that first millennium, who, incidentally, happened to come from Africa (and no "eurocentrist" ever tried to deny this): St.

Augustine. He showed how Christianity was compatible with what was known from Greek thought; and his ontogeny, if you will, recapitulated in a way the cultural phylogeny of the time, starting as a pagan who was following something very like our New Morality, and going through all the theories that justified it and finding them wanting, and finally realizing that only Christianity could make sense out of life. He was also the first evolutionist, saying that the universe was developing rather than staying the same, with “seeds of reason” imparted long ago germinating at their proper time. He got this evolutionary view of things, interestingly enough, from his interpretation of the Bible.

And then in the Middle Ages (which by the way was full of intellectual ferment, and was anything but “dark”), when Aristotle’s scientific studies had been lost because of the brilliant synthesis of Platonism with Christianity that Augustine made, the Arabs preserved these pagan writings and studied and developed them; and when they conquered Europe, Aristotle’s wisdom dropped like a bomb into Christianity, apparently refuting scientifically the notion of one God, the immortal human soul, and much of the rest that Christianity thought of as factually true.

It was St. Thomas Aquinas who did for this new infusion of science what St. Augustine had done for Neoplatonism; he showed how Aristotle’s empirically based theories were in fact compatible with Christianity; and so once again western thought modified itself through adoption of lore preserved by Arabs.

And, of course, with the discovery of China and the New World western culture modified itself with new learning, new art, new foodstuffs, new forms of recreation (among them smoking), and so on.

The point, of course, is that western culture is *world* culture. The western world wasn’t interested in keeping its culture intact and imposing it on others; it was interested in anything it could find that was useful and true, and adopting it. There’s almost no aspect of

western culture that can't trace its origins to some place outside Europe.

Then why is it so hated? "Hey, hey, ho, ho, western culture's gotta go!" Because it supposes that there *is* something true irrespective of your culture, there *is* a right and wrong that don't depend on your culture, there *are* works of art that "work" no matter what your culture is, and others that are bad irrespective of your culture. And if you disagree with the western idea, then it wants you to state your case, and if it finds you correct, it adopts your view, your art, your moral stance; and if it finds that you contradict yourself or the known facts, it rejects your position, however passionately you believe in it.

Let me take as an example the alleged "sexist bias" of western culture. What about Mary Ann Cross, who wrote things like *Adam Bede* dealing with the woman's tragedy of getting pregnant by the noble and killing her child? Yeah, but she wrote under a man's name, George Eliot. Well then, what about Jane Austen? But look at the *kind* of things she wrote about: romances and subordinating yourself to the domineering male, for heaven's sake!

You can't win. The real problem is that if you read *Adam Bede*, whether you're a man or a woman, you identify with the girl even in her barbarism; when you read *Pride and Prejudice*, you look at the characters and you say, "There but for the grace of God go I." It's because you recognize *yourself* in these characters that they "grab" you, no matter how foreign their culture may be to yours; and that's why they're in the canon. You see the sameness in the difference, and the difference in the last analysis makes no difference.

This is what the multiculturalists can't stand. *This* is why western culture must go. Its claim is that there is a universal bond in humanity, and the cultural differences are superficial—interesting, but not of ultimate significance. What the followers of this Third New Commandment, however, think, is that this view is *evil* and must be "selected away from" (a.k.a destroyed). Different cultures, as evolution shows, are irreducibly different, and so "It's a black

thing; you wouldn't understand," is the *real* truth, which must prevail. If you come back with "It's a human thing; I *do* understand," you're a fool at best and a liar and hegemonic pig at worst. You're taking the white male as the standard and expecting us to conform to it. But that's only *your* truth, Honkie.

And underneath this, I think generally at the subconscious level, is the knowledge that evolution implies speciation, and species are unique within themselves and don't interact. Hence, a given cultural group has its own identity, its own special truth, and its own special morals, which must be *recognized* by other groups, but definitely *not* assimilated.

But which is right? *Are* cultures irreducibly different, or does our common humanity shine through them? I have, by accident, been a laboratory for the study of this question. I married an Argentine (like me, a philosophy professor), who considers herself Argentine still, though she has lived in the States almost forty years now; and so I know what it is like to be on most intimate terms with someone from a vastly different culture (for instance, she was shocked the first time she saw me go downtown without a suit and tie). In the course of our life together, we have had living in our house and eating at our table for as long as a year at a stretch at different times, a Catalan from Barcelona, a girl from Madrid, one from Colombia, a student from Japan, a woman from Viet Nam, one from Indonesia, and a devout Muslim plucked right out of Kabul in Afghanistan, whose mother never left the house.

To say there were no cultural differences is silly. We found to our surprise that the Vietnamese thought she should never say "No" to an elder, which caused problems when, for instance, we were teaching her how to use our washing machine ("Do you understand, Trinh?" "Yas." "Are you sure?" "Yas."—and you can imagine what happened, since she didn't have a clue), or when we asked the Afghan how many people she had invited to a party at our house and she couldn't tell us, because Muslims can't say, "I'll be there" or

they'll be tempting Allah.

But in the last analysis, what we all found is that these things didn't matter, because at the core we were the same—which is why, as I said, Muslim literature resonates with us, and why we stand in awe at Japanese paintings and African art, and all the rest of it.

My best friend at Thomas More College is a Hindu professor of physics, Sudhir Sen. His Hinduism is of interest to me, as is his black skin and light palms, his slight build, his health problems, and his knowledge of physics. But they are of interest because they are characteristics of *him*, and he is the one I care about. When religion comes up naturally, neither of us is reticent to say what he believes, and although I think he is profoundly mistaken (as he thinks I am), I don't see it as my place to convince him that I'm right; but I tell him what I believe as he asks me questions—since I presume that my religion is of interest to him just as what he believes is of interest to me in my knowing him better.

Group paranoia and moral equivalence.

That is the kind of thing that I would call “tolerance.” But this sort of tolerance is actually anathema to the New Moralists, because it does not imply that all truths or all moral codes or cultural customs are on the same footing. To say that a black person's blackness simply makes no difference to me, or that a Jew's Jewishness is irrelevant to my relationship with him (except in the sense that Sudhir's Hinduism or blackness is of, as it were, academic interest as I mentioned above) is shocking to a New Moralist.

It is important to understand this. For the New Moralist, I *must* relate to the black person—excuse me, the “African American,” because that is the euphemism of the moment—as if I were a member of the hegemonic, oppressor group and he were a victim of our horrible behavior which must be atoned for by every white person. The fact that neither I nor my ancestors had anything to do with his enslavement (since my ancestors were Canadian), and that

whites from the North in fact fought and died to free the slaves—many of whom were bought in Africa from their black Muslim masters—is irrelevant. I belong to the oppressor group, which therefore must atone.

The reason for this is that, in order to establish themselves as a distinct “social species,” as it were, blacks must define themselves *as distinct from* whites in a significant way. But since they can’t (and don’t want to) define themselves as different in ability or role, which might imply inferiority, they define themselves in terms of slavery. Thus, the *truth* for the New Moralistic black person has to be heavily colored by the slavery-experience as now imagined (since no one living has actually experienced it), which is to say that everything has to be looked at through the lens of being oppressed. Even when there is no evidence for it, “hidden racism” is trotted out at every blow from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. And what is behind this is that otherwise, black people don’t have a *cultural* identity as black; all they’ve got is black skin, irrelevant customs and an accent that is all too ephemeral. Thus, they have to claim that no white person can hope to understand “the black experience”; you have to be black to do so.

But the problem with this is that it is a kind of social paranoia, because when you once accept it, then *anything*, even the most benign of all statements or actions, simply reinforces it as a scheming lie to take you off guard. And the least sign of anything pejorative directed at you is immediately transmogrified into an inadvertent admission of “the real truth,” which is implacable hatred for your race.

Let me just remark that this is far, far too high a price to pay for establishing cultural identity. But it’s being done now all over the place.

For instance, the Jews who subscribe to the New Morality no longer define themselves by their special relation to God, but by the Holocaust. This is why they became outraged at the canonization of

Edith Stein, a Jewish Christian, or at a cross outside Auschwitz which commemorates all the Christian Poles (and there were many) who were also gassed at the site. To say that these Gentiles experienced what the Jews experienced is the equivalent of blasphemy, because it deprives the Jews of the only specialness they have left. They are victims in a unique way which can only be understood by a Jew.

Women, of course, have leaped on the bandwagon, in an effort to establish their equality as a group to men. They find all kinds of sinister evidence of oppression in the use of the generic personal pronoun, which happens to be the same as the masculine one, as well as the generic term “man” when used in the German sense of “*Mensch*” as opposed to the male sense of “*Mann*.”

When women say that in the “canon of dead white males” women’s “issues” are not raised, they become indignant if a person mentions Euripides’ *Medea* or Dickens’s *Dombey and Son*, because these were written by men, who couldn’t possibly understand what a woman goes through.

—And the fascinating result of this is a uniculturalism of “oppression studies.” Writers of other cultures must be read, but only if they express the struggle against western, white, male, homophobic, fill-in-the-blank oppression. You don’t read the *Baghavat Gita* or *Martin Fierro* or *Anna Karenina* or the *Analects*, still less the *Republic* or Cicero’s orations, or the *Golden Ass*, and for God’s sake stay away from the Bible! Only writers from other cultures who express a basically Marxist view of a class- (read: group-) struggling world are let into this “multicultural” stuff that’s taught; because all the rest have the taint of universality about them.

And it is this irreducibility of truth and morals and its confinement to only one culture that accounts for the moral equivalence among the most grossly non-equivalent things. For instance, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee Henry Hyde’s long-ago private affair, which he acknowledged and repented, was trotted out as a reason why he should not “judge” Bill Clinton, who seduced (didn’t

he?) a subordinate, committed perjury about it, suborned perjury, obstructed justice, and all the rest. (To those of you New Moralists who say “Allegedly! Allegedly!” I answer, “We’re not in a lawcourt, and so we don’t have to abandon common sense. You heard the report and the testimony.”)

Similarly, the fact that Mark Fuhrman once said “nigger” meant that O.J. Simpson had to be acquitted of his butchery, because his accuser was “just as guilty.” You can understand this only on the grounds that in “black truth” the use of the N-word (by a white) is a slip revealing the fact that white people are really plotting to exterminate the whole black race—which is worse than somebody cutting up somebody else in a jealous rage.

I remember so vividly the 1998 elections, in which the black people responded to Democrat commercials, of which this (I kid you not) is an example, “(Sound of something blowing up) Get out and vote, or another black church explodes! (Sound of fire) Get out and vote, or another cross is burned in someone’s front yard! Get out and vote, or the Republicans will take away your childrens’ lunches and your health care!” As a Republican and a conservative *because I care about the poor and blacks* I am outraged beyond limit by this lie; but the real tragedy is how well it worked, because of black group-paranoia.

The same thing happened during the cold war, when we constantly heard that the Soviet Union was as afraid of our imperialism as we were of their expansionism, and after all, we had McCarthy—which, of course, balanced off the Gulag and Stalin’s starvation of a million Georgians. But that was because “Soviet truth” is irreducibly different from “capitalist truth,” and neither can even approach understanding the other.

—But that, of course, means that the *objective, real* truth is that truth is culturally conditioned; and if you disagree with *that*, then you’re a Right Wing Extremist, who must be stamped out. That’s the New Morality’s idea of tolerance.

But real tolerance—the only one that isn't intolerance in sheep's clothing—is *not* an acceptance of what is manifestly false (as if it were "true for the other guy") just because someone else happens (in his ignorance) to think that it's true, or a winking at what is manifestly evil as if it were okay just because someone else has a warped conscience. Tolerance might leave the person in his ignorance if he's adamant, but it will try to enlighten him if he is capable of being informed. Tolerance wants to be corrected if it doesn't really understand, and it recognizes that it *might* not understand (except in cases like "There is something"). But it doesn't make its own humility a fetish.

Put it this way: An open mind is like an open house; it's fine unless you have something valuable inside. Then you have to lock the door. —Only don't throw away the key.

Interlude: The Theory of Evolution.

I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to bear with me for a while. I want to discuss the theory of evolution and what's wrong with it, and I can't unless I get into some pretty deep water. Just hang on, and I'll try to hold your head up; but realize that I'm going to be summarizing things that would take a fairly large book to do justice to, but we can't get on with a discussion of the New Morality and be honest with the facts unless we dive in. So take a deep breath.

I could stand corrected on this, but I think that Darwinism is the first agenda-driven theory in the natural sciences. (There have been others since, of which global warming is an egregious example, and previously there were theories not in the natural sciences—for instance, Marx's views were almost certainly driven by his outrage at the way workers were being treated in his time.) Whether from the beginning this was how it was in Darwin's mind, or whether it rapidly got that way from people who saw what it could imply, it

certainly has been used as a vehicle by which it is “scientifically” proved that no God is needed to explain how the world came to be the way it is. This is why it has to be looked at very, very carefully, to see if the data haven’t been fudged to lead to the conclusion desired.

But this sword cuts both ways. And, for this reason, I want to begin with a word to the “seven-day creationists.” If you say that evolution can’t be true, because we’ve got to believe what God said, and he said he made the world in seven days, then I have a problem for you to consider. Presumably, you hold this because you have to believe what the Bible literally *says*, not some interpretation you “feel comfortable with.”

The problem is this: Genesis 2:2 says (I’ll give the *King James Version*, because that seems to be what’s relevant for the people I’m discussing this with) “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.” How do you reconcile this with the *literal* meaning of *John* 5: 17: “My father worketh hitherto, and I work.”? The Greek for “hitherto” is *hecs arti*, which means “hitherto” in the sense of “*up to* the present.” The Greek is clear; it can’t mean (as the English sometimes can) “*at* some time before”; and this is confirmed by the use of the present tense, “worketh,” not “hath worked.” This *ergazetai*, the present tense after “up to now,” is used because Greek does not have a perfect progressive tense, “has *been* working,” and using the perfect would imply that the Father has “now” stopped. So the *only* meaning of the Greek (and the KJV English) has to be, “My Father has been working up to now, and I am working too.” or, as the *New English Bible* translates, “has never stopped working.”

So the *literal* sense of *John* 5:17 says that God never rested “up to now” (and is still working even now), and the *literal* sense of *Genesis* 2 says that God *finished all* his work and then rested on the seventh day. So you either have to interpret one passage or the other

not in a strictly literal sense, or the Bible contradicts itself. To put it another way, *John 5:17* clearly implies that the seventh day hasn't got here yet.

And, as I mentioned earlier, St. Augustine interpreted the seven days of creation not as literal 24-hour days, but as the whole of creation, including history, with the "seventh day" the end of time; and most Protestants go back (with Luther) to Augustine. So it's hardly un-Biblical to be a Christian and accept that some kind of evolution actually occurred. Certainly the Pope (no New Moralists he) thinks so.

The reason I say this is that I'm going to show that if you once are willing to take the fossil evidence and so on (which is overwhelming, it really is) as establishing the *fact* of some kind of evolution, then examining it fairly screams that it can't be just due to chance, but has to be under the control of a benevolent being who directs it (and even helps it surpass itself) while respecting its reality. In other words, if you want to believe in a chance evolution, you are being more irrational than believing in a God and even a Jesus who rose from the dead (since his body, having been alive, had nothing *in principle* preventing it from re-living).

With that out of the way, though I realize that by saying it I have perhaps turned off a good chunk of my Religious Right readers (which would be a shame, because we're on the same side—but truth is truth), let us try to take an honest and fearless look at evolution and see what it implies. And I want to look at *radical* evolution, including the evolution of the whole universe from the Big Bang on.

In the beginning.

Physics doesn't want to examine the Big Bang itself, largely because it spells trouble. We know several things from physics which no one disputes: First, any system which explodes is unstable. Second, any system in equilibrium will remain as it is unless its equilibrium is disturbed from outside. Third, energy as we now see

it isn't lost, but just transformed when it leaves a system (the First Law of Thermodynamics).

Now the observations on which the Big Bang theory is based are that the farther out you look through our ever-more-powerful telescopes, the longer it takes for light to get to you, since light travels at a finite speed: 186,000 miles per second. So the light from the sun we see now started out some seven minutes ago (it had to go 93,000,000 miles). But distances to stars are just a *tad* farther. The closest star is some three and a half light-*years* away, meaning that the light we see from it started out three and a half years ago (so it's $186,000 \times 60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 365.25 \times 3.5$ miles away; get out your calculator and multiply it out, if you want—it's a lot of miles). Well it turns out that for various reasons, astronomers can say that some of the other galaxies (systems of stars whirling around each other) are millions and even billions of light-years away. And that means that when we see these distant galaxies, the light that finally gets now to our eyes had to have left them millions or billions of years ago. We see them now, in other words, as they existed those billions of years ago.

Another thing that's observed is that the farther out we look, the redder these stars appear (and by the spectra—rainbows—emitted by their elements, we know that this isn't because they've got more red stuff in them). This is only explainable if they are moving away from us, faster and faster as you go back in time (that is, slower and slower as time goes on). And *this* means that everything in the universe is getting farther away from everything else as time progresses, or the whole universe (that is, the set of all material objects) is expanding, but more slowly as time goes on. Which in turn means that it was very small many many years ago.

In fact, it was *so* small several billion years ago (the actual time is not important) that it was a very dense, small mass of all the stuff there is, so dense and small that it was unstable and exploded.

At this point, physicists stop, and say, "We'll concede the fact, but

we won't ask questions about it. We can't." Well, sure they can; they're just timid. Because there are three possibilities. (1) Either the material universe suddenly came into existence (with nothing material to be "made out of"), (2) it came out of preexisting material, which was in equilibrium beforehand, or (3) the explosion was the result of a previous phase of collapse of the same material which is now expanding—in an eternal cycle of expansion slowing and then stopping, once gravitational attraction is greater than the explosive force that started it, and then collapsing, faster and faster, back to the unstable lump that blows up in a new Big Bang.

The third alternative has been explored by physicists; but the problem is that in order for it to happen, there has to be an enormous amount of mass beyond what we can observe. So some scientists have simply said, "Okay, that mass exists, but can't be seen." The trouble with this, of course, is that it's a pure act of faith that there *is* this mass; there's no evidence for it but this third alternative.

On the first hypothesis, obviously there has to be something that caused the material of the universe to begin to exist in such a way that it exploded, and started its own activity of formation; and on the second hypothesis, something other than the material universe would have to have interfered with it, making it unstable. Either of these two sounds like a good candidate for a God of some sort.

The point, of course, is that right from the get-go, it's not possible simply to accept the fact of the Big Bang as if it were self-explanatory, because, as unstable, it isn't. So if you're honest with the data, you have to assume something not observable: either a "creator," a "disturber," or a bunch of matter that can't be detected. No one of these is preferable, based on the observed data, to any other—unless, of course, you subscribe to the dogma that there can't be anything other than the material universe

The driving force.

Now then, we know the driving force of the universe: the Second Law of Thermodynamics, that “the entropy of the universe is always increasing.” When I asked my professor in thermodynamics class what entropy was, he pointed to the equation and said, “This part of the expression,” and when I asked “Yes, I know; but what does that refer to? What does it describe? What *is* entropy?” He looked at me and said, in effect, “The equation works, so just learn it.” But of course, entropy isn’t a set of letters and numbers; those things are a mathematical language that describes something-or-other. Well, when I turned it over and looked at what was going on, what this Law amounts to is this: Any interaction involving energy always *loses* some energy out of the system of interacting objects; the entropy isn’t a “something”; it’s the amount of loss of energy from the system “into the universe” (i.e. outside the system) because (by the First Law of Thermodynamics) the energy doesn’t just vanish; it’s there, but “free,” outside the system, as a lower-grade energy. (To be fair to my thermodynamics professor, he said this, more or less.)

So what the Second Law of Thermodynamics amounts to is this: Any unstable physical system changes from a higher-energy state to a lower-energy state when it interacts with its environment, spilling the excess energy into the environment. That means that its equilibrium is its “ground state”: the lowest energy-level possible for that type of system. It also implies (for reasons I won’t bore you with) that systems which are more organized tend naturally to break up and become less organized.

Add something from General Relativity and we can take a look at what happened immediately after the Big Bang. Einstein said that space (by which he meant the path that anything moving had to follow) was curved around massive objects. Now the initial material of the universe was a colossally massive object; and so the extremely high radiation of this explosion (much more energetic than heat or visible light) would be bent into a very tight circle, and come back

on itself, so that the photons would tend to knock against each other as they completed their circuits. At this point, by the way, there wasn't anything we could call "stuff" any more; there was just this super-light. (I can't resist: "And God said, 'let there be light,' and there was light.")

But one of the ways photons can interact, or interfere with each other, is what is called "pair production" in which they don't just make brighter or dimmer light, but the energy is now wrapped into itself in a new way, giving us, for instance, an electron and a positron (which still has electricity and magnetism, but in a new form, as a field, and now has mass, the tendency to resist motion, and the source of a gravitational field of its own), and probably other, more massive particles, depending on the energy of the light that interacted.

Stop a second. Where did this new energy (called "mass") come from? Obviously, from the light. The first thing to note is that it takes an immenso amount of light to "restructure" itself into mass; one unit of mass is equal to 3,000,000,000 units of light, as I recall—which is why atomic weapons are so potent, because they convert a tiny amount of mass-energy back into radiation-energy (light). But more importantly, this new form of energy is *not* just a fancy kind of light; it's different from light (which is just electricity and magnetism), and so while it came from them, it isn't a version of them. In other words, the light is, as it were, "creating" something brand new out of what used to be itself.

Now that potential had to have been built into the light from the beginning, or it couldn't have happened. It wasn't there, except as a potential, from the beginning; but it had to have *been* there *as* a potential from the beginning, or there would just be light interfering with itself by being brighter or dimmer.

In any case, since we know in hindsight light has this marvelous potential, we can predict from this tightly-knit, small universe in which light is forced to interact with itself, a transformation into

subatomic particles. And, of course, some electrons zipping around space would be bound to hit protons; and so hydrogen atoms would be formed (creating a new form of energy, the internal field of the atom, its “binding energy”); and as the universe expanded and cooled somewhat, these atoms would likely find other hydrogen atoms, and we would see hydrogen molecules, which have their own special form of internal energy, and are not simply “connections” of two atoms; the molecule *behaves differently* from the parts. And so *now* we have to say of this initial light that it had the potential to form particles, which themselves have the potential to unite things into something which is different from a sum of the particles themselves.

Once again, the potential to do this had to have been in the light from the beginning; but it wasn't an *immediate* potential to turn into hydrogen molecules, but only mediately through the formation of subatomic particles with definite properties of their own. Very mysterious, when you think about it.

Fine. But now what you would predict from this is a random distribution of hydrogen molecules. And based on the Second Law, these would not organize themselves further, but would simply stay randomly distributed throughout space.

But they didn't. They coagulated into lumps (clouds), somehow (just by chance, of course), and each cloud had greater mass than a single particle (mass “just happens to be” one of those things which is “additive” when a bunch of things are together), and so the cloud swept their immediate area clean of hydrogen—and eventually, some of these (we can still see plenty of them) got big enough so that they formed a center, drawing all the hydrogen inward, until this center got so hot that the molecules were turned into atoms again, and then the atoms lost their electrons, (notice, we've got destruction of the gain so far) and then the protons banged into each other—but in some cases not so hard as to turn back into light, but hard enough that they fused like a hydrogen bomb (and the “strong force” which

lay dormant all the time—or was it even there previously?—made helium nuclei, and then oxygen nuclei, and so on), and a star was born.

But note again that the *potential* to be oxygen and nitrogen and all the rest had to have been there in the light from the beginning. But *this* particular potential can only be activated by the catastrophic destruction of the advance that had been made up to this point.

Pay attention to this. The advance is not straight-line. It happens only by the annihilation, as it were, of the “advanced” stage that went before. And all just by chance, of course. Of course.

We can skip the details at this point, though the wonders just keep piling up. But what I want you to pay attention to is that *the universe was organizing itself into complex systems*—and it’s still doing it. Stars are still being formed; and the stars in a given area orbit each other and form galaxies, and it’s the galaxies we see moving apart. But if the Second Law of Thermodynamics is what’s driving all this, this means that *the basic direction of the the universe as a whole is the opposite of what you would predict from the Law, in its probabilistic form.*

Now, of course, since this *is* a probabilistic law, it’s *possible* that the universe could be doing this by itself, just as it’s *possible* that you could win the lottery five times in a row; because with probability, however improbable some event is, the theory never lets you say that it’s actually zero. But it’s suggestive, no? This is not some isolated event that happened once in the universe; it’s the basic direction of the universe as a whole. But predicting from the Second Law of Thermodynamics, you would say that the *basic* direction would be from more organized to less, not from less to more.

What I’m saying is this: Probability predicts that if you do something like drop a dark green dye into the clear water of your swimming pool (as when you add chlorine), it spreads through the water making the whole pool slightly greenish. You never find the slightly greenish water organizing itself into perfectly clear water

except for a cupful of dark green stuff in one corner. It *could*, but you can confidently predict (from probability) that it *won't*. But that's what seems to be happening with the organizing universe.

And of course, pure probability is all that's operating here, Right? Not.

But before considering what seems to have gone on, I have to make a few remarks about chance and its laws.

A word about probability.

The laws of probability are sometimes called the "laws of chance"; but that is precisely what they are *not*. Chance, by definition, is what is random, which is another way of saying is *not* systematic, or "lawful."

I've been pointing to what I'm going to say here when I talked earlier about the "potential" that had to have been there from the beginning. A little experiment will show what I'm driving at. Flip a coin. How often will the heads turn up, in the long run? If you said "Half the number of flips," you win the prize. If I take one of a pair of dice, how often will the one-spot appear on top as I roll it? One-sixth of the time. Oh? Not half? Why not? Because the die has six sides, not two. Ah! So if I had a ten-sided die, the one would appear one-tenth of the time, right? Right. Elementary, my dear Watson.

Now what does this mean? The fact that the die *always* has the same number of sides for every throw means that this *constant structure* prevents the results from being totally random, and the ratio of a given possibility to the number of throws will equal the ratio of the real outcome of one throw to the number of possible outcomes in that one throw. (There can be complications, but they're all variations on this basic theme.)

That is, it's the fact that the die always has six sides, only one of which can appear on any throw, means that in the long run any one of them will appear one-sixth of the number of throws. (Technically, what it means is (a) there will not be absolute randomness, and (b)

the number you get will not systematically diverge from this number.)

There are two important points here. First, of course, is that the “lawfulness” of the laws of probability is due to the constant underlying structure of what is operating randomly, not to the randomness itself. And you can test this by making a “die” of soft clay and throwing it in such a way that when it hits the table, part of it will flatten, so that on a given throw, the number of “sides” of the “die” will vary from one to infinity. Put a spot somewhere on it, and now tell me what proportion of the time the spot will come on top. You can’t. By having everything random, you destroyed all “lawfulness” or statistical predictability. So the laws of probability are *not* the laws of the chance or random *element* in what is behaving randomly; they are the laws of what is *left over* to shine through the random operations.

The second point, and this is a subtle one, is that this basic law of probability is an *empirical* law, not a law of logic or mathematics. Why not? Well, flip a coin. Have you any reason to expect heads to come up? No. Have you any reason *not* to expect heads to come up? No. You have no reason to expect either outcome. Now flip the coin three times. Have you any reason to expect three heads? No. Have you any reason to expect that three heads *won’t* come up?

You might say yes, you do, because in the three flips, there are eight possible combinations of heads and tails, and only one of them is three heads. So what? All you’re saying here is that three flips is the same as rolling an eight-sided die (with HHH on one face, HHT on another, HTT, on a third, and so on) once. Now. Have you any reason for HHH to come up on this throw? No. Have you any reason for it not to come up? Not really; because if it doesn’t, some other face (say HHT) comes up, and there’s no reason to expect the one that actually *does* come up. So you have no real reason for saying that the outcome won’t be HHH. Of course you don’t.

My point is that a *lack* of a reason for something is not the same

as the *presence* of a reason for saying it *won't* happen. There's no reason for saying HHH can't come up. And if you flip the coin eight times, then this is just the equivalent of a 256-sided die, and there's no reason for any one face on this die appearing either; so you can't say that you *have a reason* for saying that all heads *won't* happen. The same goes for a die of however many sides you want to name.

Of course, it sort of “stands to reason” that if there are 256 possibilities, only one of which is the one you want, you ought to expect that it won't happen. What I'm saying is that this is not a *logical* reason for saying it won't happen.

And you have to be careful of what “stands to reason.” It's following a kind of logic that leads to the gambler's delusion. He has in the back of his mind, “Well, my number will either come up or it won't”; and so that gives him the kind of gut feeling that it “stands to reason” his odds of winning are fifty-fifty, no matter what the odds makers say. He'd never consciously reason this way, but something like this is what keeps him playing. The point, however, is that his inclination is just as *logical* as saying, based on probability, “Forget it; the odds are too high against it.”

Similarly, there's the (more sensible, perhaps) gambler's fallacy, also based on logic. You've been flipping the coin (and let's say you know it's not fixed); you got a hundred heads in a row. Wow! But a hundred and one heads in a row is *extremely* improbable (it is; 2^{101} is twice as big a number as 2^{100} so the actual difference between them is enormous); and so you bet the farm that the next flip will be tails. Your *logic* is flawless; the only trouble is that it doesn't work. *Once you've had 100 heads*, then the probability of getting 101 heads in a row is exactly—surprise!— $1/2$.

My point in all this is that, whatever “stands to reason,” the constant number of sides doesn't *logically* allow you to predict (i.e. give you a positive reason for predicting) anything that's going to happen. There is no *logical* connection between the possibilities involved in one event and the ratio of outcomes of any given one to

the total number of tries. There's nothing to prevent the outcomes from being absolutely random. That is, there's nothing *logically* inconsistent in saying that if you threw a die six hundred million times, you'd get six hundred million ones, or five hundred million ones, one two, and all the rest threes. Or any other combination. And that's true of six trillion or any other number of tries.

So what I am saying is that **the real world happens to be so constructed that the laws of probability actually work, and the gambler's delusion and the gambler's fallacy don't.**

That's a very important point. It has to do with the *structure of the world*, not "chance." Chance by itself explains nothing, allows the prediction of nothing. *Probability* allows for prediction, in spite of (partial) randomness, because that's just the way the world is. But it didn't have to be this way; it could have been totally random. But it isn't. How come? Just by chance, of course. Of course.

Are you beginning to get my drift? We have a world whose beginning (as unstable) can't be accounted for by just what is in it, and which "just happens" to have a structure such that all these amazing new things "just happen" to emerge so that, *contrary to what you would predict from the probabilistic law driving the universe*, it organizes itself into something "wonderfully, fearfully made," as the psalmist says—just by chance, of course.

The leap to life.

Another rough spot is coming. When we get from the *destruction* of a star a smaller mass cooling in the presence of another star (that is, a planet, an extremely unlikely event in itself), then it *might* just happen that this planet now can form the kind of molecules we find on earth, with water and so on, because it's now cool enough.

And the most complex inanimate chemical is the carbon chain called a virus. Viruses are not alive; but they look a lot like what is in the nucleus of a living cell. What's the difference between them and a simple living organism, and how do you get from one to the other?

That's two questions. As to the first, a virus is a complex chemical, which, however, is in equilibrium (it just stays as it is unless interfered with). But living organism starts existing in an *unstable* condition whose energy is both *too high* for it to be in equilibrium physically (so it loses energy with every act it performs, like an obedient slave of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, trying to get to its ground state), and *too low* for it to be what biologically it "wants" to be—so it spontaneously pulls in energy and material from the environment, transforms them into itself, and *gains* energy and complexity, until it reaches its high-energy biological equilibrium; and there it stops growing and maintains itself at this super-high (physically unstable) energy level for the rest of its life by absorbing energy when it falls below this level, and getting rid of the excess when it's above it.

But of course, its nature as a physical body wins out, it seems, in the end, though as living *it's fighting this physical nature all the time to maintain its biological equilibrium*, and it loses the struggle and dies, and then decays to its ground state. But in the process, as if it knew that as an individual body it was doomed, it creates another body with the same form of organization (but with a different level of biological equilibrium that *it* "points toward" as living), which survives it, so that the *form* of living body (the species) goes on indefinitely, in spite of the physico-chemical tendency of everything to run down and stop.

Now I ask you, how can the tendency of any physical or chemical system to "run down" *account* for the tendency of a living system to "run up and stay there," especially when it is struggling *against* this physical tendency in it all the time? You're asking the force of nature to do what is directly the opposite of what it is trying to do, while at the same time it does what it is trying to do. That doesn't make sense.

In other words, the leap from non-life to life is not only *improbable* based on the laws of physics and chemistry; it's *impossible*. It is

directly contrary to them; and the physics and chemistry of the very system in question are constantly fighting this biological tendency. That is, from physics and chemistry, it isn't just that you couldn't predict that it would happen (even if extremely unlikely); you can positively predict that it *can't*, and therefore *won't* happen, because it goes *against* what these forces are trying to do.

Now we know (from geology) that the earth existed for millions of years with no life on it. Yet life suddenly emerged at one point. We also know that, since every living thing has genetic material in common with every other living thing, we seem to have all developed from *one* leap millions of years ago from the inanimate to life, which then proliferated into what we now see. But the point is that that one leap is an impossibility, based on physics and chemistry.

So what do you do? You either say, "Something is fooling around with the physical objects here and raising them to a new level they can't attain by themselves," or you say, "Well, it just *seems* impossible; but it must be possible *somehow*, because it happened; and therefore, there's a *physical* law that we just don't know that explains it."

Isn't the faith of the materialistic scientist touching? Rather than draw the logical conclusion from the evidence as it presents itself to him, he resorts to some occult—but material, always material—force that wars against the very physical laws he claims are the only things that exist.

(And I'm willing to bet that I haven't converted any New Moralists who's reading this. This faith they have, far from being the most logical conclusion based on the evidence, is impervious to evidence.)

Now then, back to probability. The DNA molecules in even the simplest bacterium are horrendously complex. But the thing that makes DNA DNA is that it's an enormously long carbon chain, with things like hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorous, and so on sticking out at intervals (these are the genes), and it just happens

that, like other nucleic molecules, the elements sticking out of the chain attract elements to them, which can (by chance) hitch together by a stronger chemical bond than the one that attracted them to the chain, and form a chain themselves, which breaks away. (The set of all these genes in an organism is the “genome.” We just listed all of them for humans; that was what the human genome project did.)

The DNA chain just happens (by chance, of course) to be constructed so that the atom on the tail end attracts a copy of the atom on the head end, and the next-to-tail atom attracts a copy of the next-to-head atom, and so on, so that the molecule that gets attached and then breaks away is an exact copy in reverse of the original DNA molecule.

Now what is the probability of something like this happening? On the order, I would say, of trillions if not quintillions to one against. After all, if one event is unlikely (that the one atom on the tail of the parent would attract one on the child that happens to be the same as the one on the head of the parent), and you also need another unlikely event also (the one next to the tail which just happens to be the same as the one next to the head), and *both* have to happen, then the improbabilities are *multiplied*, not added—for the same reason that it’s 1/6 probable that a one will come up on a single die, but 1/36 probable for snake eyes with two dice (since there are now 36 possible combinations of sides, and only one is snake eyes).

So even if there were only five carbon atoms in the chain, the probability that it would form a replica of itself is millions to one against (given that it’s unlikely that *any* actual molecule would be formed at all by stuff that stuck to its outside). But here we have chains of carbon atoms that are hundreds and hundreds of atoms long.

Add to this that these molecules are extremely fragile (as we can see from mutations), and so it’s extremely unlikely that any self-replicating molecule could last long enough (even in that “primordial soup” they used to hypothesize existed—against which there’s now

a good deal of evidence) to reproduce even once, let alone suddenly spread all over the place. But it “just happened,” presumably, to be in a benign environment—which it proceeded to transform by its own waste products (remember, it’s pulling in energy and material all the time and transforming it and discarding what it can’t use).

And just by chance, it happened that the waste of one organism was the food for another which just happened to be one of its offspring. Just by chance. The odds against something like *this* aren’t just staggering, they’re mind-boggling.

And we know from bringing organisms into new ecologies that there are three possibilities here. By far the most likely is that the organism will die because it’s not adapted to the environment. Second, it might be like the kudzu plant, and find itself *so* well adapted that it destroys everything else, including its own food supply, and so everything dies. Notice, this is the *natural tendency* of any organism. *It* doesn’t care about what’s around it except insofar as it can use it for its *own* development. And *it* doesn’t know that it’s not supposed to go too far or it’ll kill itself off in the process; it just “does its thing.”

The third possibility is that this natural tendency of the organism is (by chance, of course, of course) thwarted by the selfishness of the other organisms, but just to the degree that it fits right in, and its selfish use turns out to be a contribution to the environment, and the other organisms’ selfish use of it turns out to be a basic benefit to *it*. Just by chance. The probability of this happening even once is infinitesimal, so close to zero that you couldn’t see any difference.

But of course it does happen; it *has* happened billions and billions of times. And so the basic selfishness of the living organism (which uses up the environment for its own benefit) is cheated into being a marvelous cooperation with all its neighbors; love is brought out of hate, if you want to put it that way.

Now as I said, you don’t *predict* from the laws of probability that the water in your swimming pool is going to collect itself into a

cupful of pure chlorine in a poolful of pure water. And here we have events that are billions—gazillions, inquantillions—of times more unlikely than this.

But there's more. At any stage, an organism or virus like some super-ebola could emerge which would be able to eat up everything under the sun, including itself, and so it would eat itself and everything else right out of existence. That this isn't a far-fetched scenario is demonstrated by the fear we have in importing foreign organisms into a new ecology. It's what scares the pants off those who are against genetically altered organisms getting into the environment. It's not only conceivable, it seems to be rather likely.

And that's by no means all you need for evolution to happen. At each stage of advance, the organism—just by chance—has to have the potential to mutate into another organism that (a) can survive, (b) is better adapted to the environment it finds itself in, and (c) won't so ruin the environment that you don't have a regression of practically everything else. Any one of these is billions-upon-billions-to-one unlikely; but *unless all three occur in an unbroken stream from the first organism to what we have today, evolution either stops in its tracks or goes backwards toward destruction.* The stream doesn't have to be straightforward, without blind alleys appearing and then disappearing; but it has to *be* there, just as when you get into a maze, there *is* a way out, even though you might take a while to find it.

And remember, the laws of probability are laws of the structure of the universe, not "laws of chance." But according to these laws, not only is each event horrendously unlikely, but the improbabilities multiply insofar as they all have to happen, and happen in sequence. The upshot of this is the following.

Simply on the grounds of probability, the unlikelihood that biological evolution would occur is so great that it would be impossible to write so large a number.

Now I don't know about you, but if I were playing dice with someone and he threw a hundred twelves in a row, I wouldn't just

sit back on my haunches and say, “My, my, what an extremely improbable event!” I’d say, “Let me look at those dice; they’ve been fixed.”

Precisely. You have to make an enormous act of faith in randomness to take even the *probability*-aspect of all of this and say, “It’s all just due to chance; there’s no intelligence behind it fixing the dice.”

Let me put it another way: What you would *predict* from the laws of probability is just exactly the opposite of what actually happened in evolution; it’s just that, since the laws never reach a zero probability, you can’t (based on these laws) *deny* that the whole thing *could* have happened, however irrational it might be to say that it *did* happen.

But that’s the faith of the Darwinian evolutionist.

Now let me add something that molecular biologists have discovered fairly recently. The simplest advance (like a light-sensitive spot on some organisms, which is supposed gradually to have developed into that wondrous thing we call the eye) is, at the molecular level, not simple at all, but an enormously complex technological marvel, *each of whose parts has to be there and function, or the whole thing is useless*. It’s like a watch. If you take out even one gear or spring, the watch won’t run, and it just sits there, a lump weighing down your wrist.

What these people are saying is that “classical” natural selection can’t account for the molecular structure of these “simple” proto-organs, because the original view of natural selection is that slight modifications *which were better adapted* survived and led to greater complexity when *they* got modified. But how do you construct all the parts of this biological watch by gradual accretion? Until the whole thing is there, it has no function and is just an impediment—which means that natural selection would select *away* from it long before it formed.

So you have to accept a kind of “catastrophic advance,” with a mutation that just happened to be “defective” in a thousand different

ways at once, and the thousand—surprise, surprise!—just happened to work in this new way which adapted the whole organism much better than before to its environment.

That these organs got formed seems to be without doubt. *How* they got formed is the question. The improbability of a mutation so complex that it would produce a whole functioning organ isn't just enormous; there's no word to express how fantastic the improbability is. And remember, this new organ has to be adapted in such a way that it fits into the environment without destroying it, in spite of the natural tendency of a living thing to regard the environment simply as a vehicle for its use. And this had to have happened hundreds and hundreds of trillions of times for evolution to have reached the stage it's at now.

And remember we know also that there's at least one instance—the leap from the non-living to the living—that *can't* be accounted for by the laws of nature that underlie the otherwise random operations of probability.

But it turns out that there's a bit more on this point; and here we're at another rough spot. I'll try to be as simple as I can. (I have a bit longer treatment in my textbook *Living Bodies*, and a somewhat more rigorous one that takes about a hundred pages in Part II of *Modes of the Finite*.)

The leap to consciousness.

Certain living things developed nervous systems which give them what we call "consciousness." Now for the New Moralistic scientist, consciousness is nothing but the nerves firing (discharging bursts of electrical energy) in the brain. Thus, as you read this page, the nerves in your visual centers are firing in complex patterns, and you are conscious of seeing it.

Oh come on, now! If seeing the page is nothing but the energy-output of the nerves, then (a) how can there be energy in the nerves "below the threshold of perception"; that is, *without* consciousness?

Further, (b) if the energy-output in the visual center is identical with the energy-output in the auditory center (and it is), and the nerves in the visual center are identical with those in the auditory center (and they are) how come seeing and hearing are *different kinds* of consciousness?

But more significantly, you not only see (react to) the page and its words, you *know* you are seeing it, and what you are seeing. Now this “second act” can’t actually be a different act, because, like the pilot light on the stove, if it were, it would not know what it was reacting to; but you *do* know more than just the fact that your eyes are turned on; you know what the *contents* of this act of seeing is (for instance, you are probably aware at the moment that you are puzzled by what you are reading). But you don’t *see* yourself seeing or hear yourself hearing; so the knowing-that-you-are-seeing is at one and the same time *not the same as* the seeing, but *not anything but* the seeing. The act of seeing contains the whole of itself within itself as (only) part of itself. That is, your act of seeing contains within it the *consciousness* that you are seeing (as part of the “whole” act of seeing); and simultaneously, the consciousness that you are seeing contains as part of *itself* the act of seeing (which contains *it*, as I said, as only part of itself). Put it another way: the act reacts directly to itself as well as to what it’s reacting to. It is two acts without actually being two.

I’m sorry; I’m not trying to play games with words; I’m just telling it like it is. And the reason your mind is boggling is that what it implies is that *you can’t think of acts like this in terms of numbers*. They are limited, to be sure, because seeing is only seeing and not hearing; but they are not limited *in degree*, or measurable, because if they were, then the act (as double itself) would have to have a degree twice as great as the one it has, which is absurd. No form of energy can “do itself” twice in any sense, nor can anything measurable contain the whole within a part of itself.

Something that can’t be described in terms of numbers, in case

you're wondering, is what is called "spiritual." The evidence, therefore, indicates that consciousness as such is spiritual.

Things get enormously complicated at this point and much more difficult to analyze honestly. For instance, sensation (seeing, hearing, and so on) is a basically spiritual act, but one which in one of its "duplications" of itself limits itself quantitatively as the nerve-energy in the brain, while thinking (knowing what the relationship is between connected sensations) has to be a purely spiritual act, without any energy-"component," except indirectly through the energy-"component" of the sensations it sees the relationship in.

But let's leave this aside for purposes of this discussion, except to remark that it's no wonder scientists deny things like this, because scientists like to measure; and they have the dogma that what isn't measurable doesn't exist. But that means that in their "explanations" of consciousness, they have to be dishonest with the data, and make the silly oversimplification that consciousness is nothing but the nerves firing in the brain—which is as sensible as saying that because your liver reacts to food in your stomach by secreting bile, the bile secretion is knowledge that you're eating.

For our purposes here, what this implies is that *physical forces are totally incapable of explaining or causing what is infinitely beyond them*. Since physical forces all have a quantity (and so are "no more than" a given amount of the form of activity in question) and spiritual acts are not limited at that level, it follows that spiritual acts (though finite in *kind*) are infinitely beyond any physical force or energy.

Then how did consciousness evolve out of non-conscious life? Exactly. How? It did; but it couldn't. Not by itself it couldn't. Then the only sensible conclusion is that it didn't do it by itself. The potential for *this* wasn't there in the light at the beginning.

What evolution shows, then, if you face the evidence squarely, is (a) that a pure chance process founded on the basic forces of physics and natural selection is "selected away from" by any reasonable look

at the evidence, and is only sustainable by a supreme act of faith *against* the overwhelming weight of the evidence. But it also shows (b) that the “cosmic watchmaker” theory of a God who “started things off” and established the laws of the universe, which then ran “by itself” just won’t work. The laws (basically, the Second Law of Thermodynamics and the laws of probability) would *not*, if left to themselves, result in evolution as it actually happened.

There’s only one reasonable conclusion you can draw. In order for it to have reached the stage it’s at at the moment, it had to have been helped all along the way, so that the excessively improbable advance actually occurred, and this led to the next excessively improbable advance (which doesn’t *contradict* the laws of probability, but *isn’t what you’d expect* from them if they were operating by themselves), and so on. A gentle helper is leading things, respecting their reality, and only manipulating the chance element in their operations.

But also, at certain stages, the advancing bodies had to have been lifted above their own capabilities, so that life emerged from non-life, and consciousness emerged out of non-consciousness. And all the while, good was being brought out of evil, and greater constructs out of destruction, and the selfishness of the living body was being cheated into cooperation with its neighbors, with the result that everything works harmoniously for the good of all.

And think: What would you predict but this from a universe created by a God who is love? As the creatures become more complex they acquire more control of themselves, and they are *left* more in control of themselves, except that the probabilistic, random element in their nature is tampered with in such a way that without imposing upon them, they develop into greater and greater beings, manifesting in themselves (almost in spite of themselves) a love and respect for each other which is a pale reflection of the One who is directing them.

As I said, a close look at evolution fairly screams that there is a

benevolent God who is managing it. But the stage it has reached now is critical. There has emerged in the course of evolution the human being, who can understand and know relationships, and whose spirit can control by choices the energy-flow in his brain, which in turn controls his body, and through his body, the world.

Humans, then, have used their spiritual acts to set about remaking the world unto *their own* image and likeness; first, the material, physical universe, with buildings instead of caves, the human transformation of the world gradually evolving into the computer I am writing this on now; and then the living, biological universe, from farming and breeding and the manipulation from outside of the organisms by human-directed selection, to genetic engineering and the actual creation of organisms that didn't exist before.

Natural selection now is almost irrelevant. We can get inside the chromosomes of organisms and produce tomatoes that can grow in cold climates, corn that resists predation by insects, and even Dolly the Sheep. The universe that humans touch is now consciously directing itself from within—and all this just by chance, of course. Of course.

A final remark.

Let me finish off this long chapter—and “segue,” as they say, into the Fourth New Commandment—by looking briefly at sexual reproduction. We know that most of the organisms in the world (the one-celled ones) reproduce asexually, by simply dividing (even though some of them have a kind of sexuality and occasionally reproduce by “conjugation”). Therefore, asexual reproduction *hasn't been selected against*, since the ancestors of these organisms are among the most ancient of all organisms.

Now when you consider it, organisms such as these have *a priori* an enormous reproductive advantage over sexually reproducing ones, since the sexual ones have to seek another member of the species in order to reproduce; and especially if they're not mobile (as they

weren't for a long, long time), this is a huge handicap. Asexual organisms also have the advantage of the fact that better adaptive mutations immediately spread through the whole population, and maladaptive ones are immediately got rid of, leaving the uninfected members of the population intact.

Biologists counter this by saying that sexual reproduction, with the duplication of genes, allows greater variation and therefore adaptability for the organism, and this is a greater survival-value, which is why sexual beings took over. But is this really true? It *would* be true, if either gene could express itself, depending on the environmental circumstances; but as Mendel showed, *one* gene is always dominant (no matter what the situation) and the other recessive. So if the better-adapted trait is on the recessive gene, then too bad; it won't show up, and all but the double recessive offspring will be killed off.

And the more you look at it, the more puzzling it gets. If (1) a better-adapted mutation occurs in the dominant gene, then only three-fourths of the organisms will be better adapted (those with two recessives will die out), and two-thirds of *them* will be "infected" with this ill-adapted gene that they can't get rid of. If (2) the better-adapted mutation occurs in the recessive gene, then only one-fourth will be better adapted, and only those with two identical recessive genes will take over.

Questions: How are either of these scenarios *a priori* reproductively more advantageous than asexual reproduction, and where are all the organisms with the two identical recessive genes?

On the other hand, if (3) a maladaptive mutation occurs in the dominant gene, then three-fourths of the population will be wiped out, and we will be left with only those with two recessive genes again.

Finally, if (4) a maladaptive mutation occurs in the recessive gene, a fourth of the population is lost, but two-thirds of the rest are left with the maladaptive gene, which will show up in the double

recessives for the rest of time.

Questions: How are either of these scenarios reproductively advantageous, and where again are all the organisms with identical recessive genes?

Any sensible person would say, “They’re not advantageous at all; there has to be some other reason why so many organisms reproduce sexually.” The New Moralists’ answer, however, is, “Well, it happened, and so it must somehow be better adapted than the alternative. What other explanation is there?” There’s the blind faith again. He’s reasoning in a circle. He says, “Only what’s better adapted survives. But these survived; therefore, they’re better adapted.” But how do you know that “only what’s better adapted survives”? These things seem not as well adapted and they survived. “They *have* to be better adapted, because they survived.” So “only what’s better adapted survives” isn’t a *conclusion* based on observation; it’s a *dogma* you have to fit the recalcitrant observations into, come what may. See what I mean by blind faith?

But then what *is* the likely explanation? Well, consider this: Apart from any question of reproductive success, isn’t it fitting that an in-itself-selfish organism should (a) have an urge to do something that benefits itself not at all—since what gain does Daddy Guppy get from having a lot of little Junior Guppies born from Mommy? Daddy eats them (implying that he could care less about “multiplying”). Further, (b) in performing this act, which benefits that abstraction called the “species” (which doesn’t exist as such) rather than itself as an organism, it has to go outside itself and find a different organism to perform this amazing function? The answer: it’s nature is being directed toward love in spite of its natural selfish tendency.

And the function it performs *is* amazing—astounding. The act of reproduction is a physical act; but it is a physical act that results in something far above the mere physical, and in the case of animals infinitely beyond the physical, though united to it, and in the case of humans a body organized with a spiritual, immortal soul. The

organism participates in a miracle, in other words—it cooperates with God in producing what is infinitely beyond its own physical capacity. (Ask any pregnant woman who's just looked at the ultrasound.) Sexual reproduction is by far the most glorious, noble physical act that in the providence of God can be performed.

Compare this with what Bill Clinton and Monica were doing beside the oval office. It's not food, Mr. President, nor is it an adornment for a dress. How can you look at Chelsea and not know that your act is the kind of thing that teams up with God to bring into the world a new, independent person who nonetheless is the actual, physical union of the two of you: both, but neither, and master of her own destiny?

And what have you done with this sublime ability you have? You are like Belshazzar, carousing with the sacred vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem. And the handwriting is on the wall. And so it is, God help us, for all of us who join with you in this type of feast.

The Fourth New Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Restrict Instinctive (especially sexual) Gratification

I think you can now see why I said that the theory of chance-directed evolution is “agenda driven.” Rather than looking at the data and drawing the conclusion that seems most reasonable from it, scientists start from the conclusion that there can’t be a God directing things on earth, that there’s nothing but measurable, physical forces; and so they gloss over difficulties in their position, and simply ignore evidence that is staring them in the face.

As St. Paul said (in the middle of *Romans* 1, if you want to look it up) about the scientists in his day (I’ll give my own translation): “The evidence for God is there before their eyes; God himself has made it obvious. His invisible presence from the creation of the world can be seen from what he made by anyone who puts his mind to it....And this means that they got nowhere in their scientific

investigations, and their empty minds were filled with darkness....And the result was that God left them the prey of the hungers in their hearts, so that they acted in filthy ways and disgraced their own bodies.”

I hasten to add that *Romans* goes on and doesn't allow believers to be complacent about this, still less to want these people punished for their blindness, since to do so would be to commit the very sin (of blindness about what God is) that you condemn in them. But that's for Scripture scholars to argue about; I just thought it interesting, among other things because the moral position of the present age is nothing new; you can find it in Paul's pagan Rome.

But I do want to remark that evolution, even as I analyzed it, does *not* form a conclusive proof for the existence of God, however suggestive it might be—and this for at least two reasons. First, as far as the chance element is concerned, no matter how unlikely it is that evolution as we know it occurred based solely on the physical structure of the initial radiation and what developed from it, the probability that the universe would evolve in this way is *not* zero (it never is) and can't therefore, be ruled out. It's just that it's irrational to say that this is how it *did* happen, if the odds against it are ten to the trillionth to one. But the unlikelihood doesn't *prove* the opposite.

Secondly, the leaps which I said were impossible, based on the (known) laws of physics and chemistry, might either actually be possible on the basis of some physical law that hasn't yet been discovered, or might be a misreading of the evidence on my part, and so might actually be perfectly consistent with known physical laws. I don't personally see how, because I know the arguments on the other side, and they ignore evidence rather than give better evidence than mine. But that doesn't exclude the possibility, by any means.

So let's not be too hard on scientists who have an atheistic bent, especially in this poisoned atmosphere of secularism every educated person is plunged into, in which “of course” Gods and things are on a level with witches and ghosts and horoscopes and alchemy.

For those of you who are curious, I think there *is* a conclusive proof that there is a God (which I have given in my text *The Finite and the Infinite*, and also in Part I of *Modes of the Finite*), but believe me, you don't want to hear it here, because the last chapter is nothing in comparison to an attempt to be rigorous about this question.

(In fact, I once taught it as a course in a rather conservative Catholic seminary near my college. I began by showing that all the standard arguments, as well as all the traditional arguments given throughout history, for God's existence were fallacious—at the end of which a delegation of the students went to the dean saying, "You've got to get rid of that Blair character! He's an atheist!" The dean, who knew me, answered, "Now just be a little patient. He's a good man; give him a chance." Having demolished all the reasons they *thought* they had for believing in an infinite reality, I then started my positive argument, which took three weeks of classes to get through. It is, as I say, conclusive (supposing I haven't misread the evidence, of course), but one thing is sure: it is anything but convincing in the sense of "satisfying"—because to be rigorous and show that an infinite being is the *only possible* explanation for otherwise contradictory facts, you have to be very, very careful, and very, very abstract and abstruse. I shut my seminary students up, but I don't think I satisfied them, because the complex argument I gave tends to repel people; so let's drop the subject.)

I'm really trying to do four things in this book, as you've probably figured out by now. First, to lay out what the New Morality position is, and its basis, since it's hidden now as not even a moral stance; second, to show why, if you don't look at the evidence extremely carefully, very intelligent people would sincerely hold it; but third, to point out that there *is* evidence, if you know where to search it out, that reveals that *in fact* the position of the New Moralists is not rationally tenable—and finally, to indicate that it is possible to show that the world and our lives *do* (or perhaps I should

say “can”) make sense, if we are willing to use our heads rather than our “hearts.”

(To paraphrase Pascal in the light of what I quoted from Paul: “The heart has reasons that the mind knows not of; but the gonads are quite familiar with them.”)

But as I was saying, let’s not fault the people who were brought up in a secularist environment with believing in chance evolution as if it were scientific and not a dogma of secularism, and let’s look once again at what this position implies with respect to how humans ought to behave.

The evolutionary basis of the sexual revolution.

In the first chapter, I outlined how the sexual revolution took hold in our country’s moral consciousness. But it wouldn’t have done so without what seemed to be a pretty solid rational, scientific justification behind it; after all, as I mentioned, contraception using condoms was known and practiced back then, but was not regarded by the people as a whole as moral.

But that justification was waiting in the wings for its curtain call. The Theory of Evolution as a chance development of species by means of natural selection has a couple of very strong implications here. The first and obvious one is that what distinguishes a new species is not so much that it has some new organ or bodily configuration, but that this newness makes it reproductively successful. Thus, *the essence of the new species* (according to this theory) *is sexual prowess*. It is new and distinctive because it can reproduce more efficiently than organisms that went before it.

Granted, human beings are distinctive because they can think; but in the evolutionist’s view, thinking is just another one of those accidental accretions that happens (always by chance, remember) to make the organism more efficient reproductively. It doesn’t, as I mentioned, get us at “the truth,” according to this view, but is simply a vehicle by which we can spread ourselves over the earth.

Which, of course, “scientifically” validates David Hume’s dictum that “reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions.” Precisely, on the evolutionist view. Reason is “special” only insofar as it makes for reproductive success. If an animal were gifted with reason and reason happened to be maladaptive, then natural selection would get rid of it as a detriment, not an asset; and so it is an asset *only insofar* as it is adaptive—which means, insofar as it promotes reproduction.

The logic is inescapable. Reason is and must be subordinate to the reproductive instinct, which is what we, like every other organism, are really all about. Everything else about any organism takes a back seat to this, because without it natural selection inexorably destroys the organism, and with it the organism is blessed with prosperity and posterity, however gross its distinctive character might be to the observer from another species. Flies like to crawl around on dung; but hey, it works for them. Look at all the flies there are.

But what’s important is that it follows from this that any attempt to use reason to *restrict or limit* a person from following through on what his sexual instinct urges upon him is (a) an abuse of reason, because it presumes to dominate rather than serve, and (b) an abuse of the person as a whole, since it is the instinct (not reason) which is the person’s *true* reality, which is what is driving him and all of us ever onward and upward through evolution’s constant progress.

That is, when President Clinton had a desire to do what he did to Monica Lewinsky, and she had a desire to have it done to her, who are *me* to say, as I did at the end of the last chapter, “It’s not food, Mr. President,” as if he shouldn’t have done it? For me to say this implies that I know what sex is “really all about” because I’ve *reasoned* to it by looking at what I think are “the facts.”

But, according to the evolutionary theory behind New Morality, all this amounts to is that in the past, this type of sexuality has been maladaptive and so had a taboo against it; but after all, it has been there as long as there have been human beings, and in fact analogous sorts of things can be seen in a certain percentage of other animals.

How do we know that this sort of sexual expression has not been there just waiting for the opportunity to predominate once the environmental conditions would favor it over the missionary position?

And, in fact, with overpopulation, you could argue that environmental conditions *do* favor a great deal more of things like this, as well as homosexual sex, because we've been *so* successful in "missionary sex" that we have to be careful or we'll encroach on our food supply.

But at the same time, our instinct is also telling us that we can't just give up sex altogether and become monks, apparently because, like everything else, "use it or lose it." Just as nowadays when all we do at work is sit around clicking on a keyboard instead of toting that barge and lifting that bale, we go over to the gym three times a week and run on the treadmill and strap ourselves into that Torquemada dream called the "Nautilus" to keep our muscles in shape. Monica was Bill's sexual Nautilus, that's all. What's to condemn?

It makes a lot of sense when you put it this way, doesn't it? And now you can see why New Moralists are indignant that Bill Clinton was *impeached*, for heaven's sake, for doing this (though thank Aphrodite the Senate had enough sense not to find him guilty). It's the Religious Right that should be impeached, with their obsession that certain forms of sex are evil, and their lack of recognition that the instinctive urge you have to engage in sex is actually the *true* nature you have as the product of evolution. Suppressing these natural urges as "perverted" simply prevents evolution from working and therefore selecting what happens to be best adapted to the environment.

That is, if people can't experiment with sex as their instinct urges, then you freeze evolution in the stage it happens to be in at the moment; but since the environmental conditions are changing all the time, then you risk pushing the organism into a maladaptive relation to its environment, and killing off the species altogether. Thus, on

this view, it's *contrary* to nature *not* to allow all the sexual experimentation that people feel like engaging in.

And as to the canard that the Republicans issued that it wasn't about the sex, but about the lying, the perjury, the subornation of perjury, and the obstruction of justice, this was just a red herring thrown out by the Religious Right, and it's just as pernicious.

Because, as I've said so often, for the chance evolutionist, reason isn't something divine that gets us at the "absolute truth"; it's a device that evolved whose function it is (or rather which happens by chance) to make reproduction more efficient. Hence, reason's *first* task is to protect the reproductive drive. And this, of course, means that, in a hostile environment (and the Religious Right is certainly a hostile environment), lying is perfectly legitimate—in fact, it's the only correct action to take.

That is, when the lying is about sex, it's not only permitted, it is demanded by the nature of the human being as an evolving organism. And to the rejoinder that "Yes, but what you said wasn't the truth," the answer is, "That's bad only on the supposition that reason is supposed to get at absolute truth. But it isn't. It's function is to protect the sex drive." That is, that's what it evolved to do, isn't it?

The same goes for perjury, obstruction of justice, and all the rest of it. As even our Founding Fathers showed, when the government is violating the nature of the citizens, then it isn't just their right, it's their *duty* to rebel, even to forming a totally new society. We confirmed this in the Civil Rights movement and the protests against the Viet Nam war. Bill Clinton is simply extending the noble principle under which Martin Luther King, Jr. was operating, and disobeying laws that are not real laws, because laws are for the good of the citizens, and the law that says you can't experiment with sex is directly counter to the very nature of the human being. Enforcing it is a kind of slavery.

So what is the problem with what he did? If what he did with Monica doesn't seem natural *to you*, then you haven't got the same

gene pool he has, because you obviously don't have a genetic structure that drives you in the direction of that kind of act; but who are you to say that your genes are superior to his, and must prevail over what his nature is impelling him towards?

And your attack on him prompted him to defend himself against your blindness. Organisms defend themselves against attacks. What's wrong with that?

Sensible, what? It's all perfectly logical, once you accept the premise that evolution is driven by sex and natural selection.

—Wait a minute. *Logical?* I thought logic was out, and you were supposed to listen to instinct, not logic. You see how insidious this is? *The people who are trying to tell us that we should abandon reason as our guide and listen to instinct have the need to justify (even to themselves) what they are saying by a resort to reason.*

It is *reason* that is behind their position: the theory that human beings evolved by chance driven by the reproductive urge, which *logically* results in that urge's being paramount with reason as its handmaid. It is the assumption that this theory gives us the *facts* about what we *really* are as opposed to the myths that have been around ever since we got scared of lightning and earthquakes and invented angry gods and resurrections and whatnot to "explain" them. And so, now that we have a handle on what the facts about us *really* are, we can draw the proper conclusions from them, first and foremost of which is the First New and Great Commandment, that we have to abandon reason as a source for getting at what the facts really are.

But any use of reason which comes to the conclusion that reason is useless is an abuse of reason.

Now of course, the New Moralists at this point will pull another Clinton on us and say, "I never said reason is *useless*. It's very useful in figuring out ways of gratifying instinct so that it's adaptive to the changing situation. All I'm saying is that it doesn't get you at the "real true essence of things."

Oh? And why do you say that? Because reason evolved by chance and natural selection, and so is something simply useful for reproduction, not a divine power that gets us at Absolute Truth. And why do you say *that*? It's obvious; look at the facts; what other conclusion can you draw? Precisely. *Reason* (you think) tells you that the *truth*, based on these premises, *has to be* that reason is only the servant of instinct, and *can't* get at the truth. In other words, reason got you to the "real essence of things": that reason can't get at the "real essence of things."

And what this means, of course, is that if the theory you base this conclusion on is worth anything, it isn't worth a damn.

And do any of the advocates of this position *really* want to say that if your sexual instinct urges a certain type of act, you should follow it no matter what? What about Jeffery Dahmer's sexual urges to kill people and have sex with their parts? What about child molesters? What about incest?

As to this last, Edward O. Wilson in *Consilience* cites cases of incest avoidance in primates and Westermarck's theory that infants reared together don't seem to have an interest in each other. He favors this as "solidly based" over Freud's view that infant sexuality is present and gets inhibited by training. After page on page of this, he says, (p.180) "By translating the Westermarck effect into incest taboos, humans appear to pass from instinct to rational choice. But do they really? What is rational choice anyway? I suggest that rational choice is the casting about among alternative mental scenarios to hit upon the ones which, in a given context, satisfy the strongest epigenetic rules. It is these rules and this hierarchy of their relative strengths by which human beings have successfully survived and reproduced for hundreds of millennia. The incest avoidance case may illustrate the manner in which the coevolution of genes and culture has woven not just part but all of the rich fabric of human social behavior."

You see, I'm not making this up. Reason, according to his

reasoning is simply a vehicle by which we discover and codify culturally the “epigenetic” rules: the ones selected for in our genes. Never mind that reason is what led him to conclude this, and I defy him to find some epigenetic rule that prompted his book. Incest is to be avoided *because* we have an instinctive repugnance to having sex with our immediate relatives.

But *is* it basically instinctive and not reason? Consider this: If incest is allowed, what is my relation supposed to be with my sister who’s simultaneously my wife and my daughter, or to my mother, who’s another wife of mine—or for that matter, to my youngest brother, who’s the grandson by my sister (who is thereby my aunt) of my father, who happens occasionally to be my lover? Would it be at all surprising to find that, *irrespective* of dominant and recessive genes (which, as Westermarck showed with adoptive children, have nothing to do with it), any parent with a smidgen of common sense is going to nip any interest in this direction in the bud—just as they do with playing with feces? There’s a perfectly simple explanation of why incest is taboo in practically all societies without resorting to elaborate genetic hypotheses.

(I should add here that these people who find incest so repugnant don’t seem to have any problem making their pets and farm animals commit incest *for the good of the breed*. The genetic argument cuts both ways. True, incest can allow for more cases of bad double recessives; but it can also, if carefully done (by removing the defective offspring) result in a vast disproportion of double (good) dominants, so that the recessive gene and the bad traits are consciously selected away from. How else, with sexual reproduction, are you going to get rid of these defective mutations? But of course, this side of the story is not even mentioned in Wilson’s book, because it undercuts his case that reason is supposed to be the servant of instinct.)

As I say, Wilson seems prone to pick out traits he likes, find some evidence in genetics for their being selected for, and then run with this ball toward the goal line, completely oblivious to the tackles

rushing at him from all sides—not to mention the blatant contradiction in using reason to “prove” that reason’s function is to cast about “among alternative mental scenarios to hit upon the ones which, in a given context, satisfy the strongest epigenetic rules.” (Don’t you love the terminology? It makes the whole thing so scientific and profound, yet it’s perfectly clear to us unwashed, except for “epigenetic.”)

I’m probably being hard on Mr. Wilson, who’s not by any means as dumb as I’m making him out to be here; he’s just fundamentally wrong, based on a buying into the chance-evolution dogma. And I hasten to say I’m *not denying* that there might be a genetic base underneath much of our morality. After all, the evidence seems to indicate very forcefully that there *is* an evolution; my quarrel is with the chance-and-no-director theory. It’s also undeniable, it seems to me, that the genes we’ve *got* have a lot to do with what we are as a species, as well as what each individual is. And morality says, however you got to be what you are, you *are* what you are, and so you should act consistently with it.

So, for instance, there *are* indications in primates that (in the wild, at least), there is an avoidance of incest. My point is that even if there weren’t this instinctive aversion, and even if there weren’t genetic consequences from it, incest should *still* be avoided, because of what I said above: that it’s impossible for a person to know what his role is as a member of a family if it’s allowed.

Put it another way. We have an instinctive urge to pop someone on the nose when he disses us—or to pull out the old Swiss army knife and decorate his face. Why not act on *that* urge? It’s certainly been selected for genetically, since it keeps the organism free of threats and able to maneuver in a hostile environment. But it doesn’t adapt us to the environment we’re *actually* in; so who cares if it was adaptive when humans lost their tails and came down out of the trees?

My problem with the idea that our essence is sexuality, and that

we should follow our sexual urges, is that this undercuts any reason for saying that *any* of these urges are inconsistent. If they're urges, they are *automatically* consistent, on this view.

But certainly, human males' sexual urges are promiscuous, and have been from time immemorial. Then why has monogamous marriage been the norm in practically all cultures—even ones like the Islamic, which permits polygamy? True, Margaret Meade thought that the Samoans couldn't be bothered with such nonsense, and wrote ground-breaking studies on this earlier in this century. But we have recently found out that the culture she was studying considered sexuality a very private thing, and resented this outsider's intrusive questions; and, being pranksters, her liaisons to the culture made up these elaborate tales she so faithfully and naively recorded in books like *Coming of Age in Samoa*.

Again, there's a simple explanation that has very little to do with genetics. When a child is born, that child can't survive unless cared for; it has to be *given* food, shelter, clothing, education, and love—and therefore, the child has a *right* to these things. Now Hillary Clinton is big on the notion that “it takes a village to raise a child”; but is the village *responsible* for the child? Does the child, in other words, have a right *against the whole village* for what it needs to survive? No, because it wasn't the *village* that caused the child to exist, it was the two parents.

Therefore, even if the village takes over the job of rearing the child, the two parents who caused him to exist in the first place *still* have the *responsibility* for him (because he's the result of *their* act and not of the village's); and if, for instance, the village is remiss, *they* have to step in and see that the child is brought up right.

But that means that, if you're going to have a child, who is your responsibility whether you like it or not, then you have to be in a position to bring that child up to live a decent human life, village or no village. And that, in practice, means monogamous marriage.

For President Clinton simply to hand Chelsea over to a govern-

ment-run child-care program and wash his hands of her would be for him to say that he performs an act-with-consequences without the consequences. And that's inconsistent.

Having said that, *then* you can add that evolution seems to have put into human instinct the desire to nurture children as well as the (contradictory) desire to have promiscuous sex; and since one of the instinctive desires coincides with the *real* situation, we "give in" to that one and we fight the other one, just as Jeffrey Dahmer has to fight the instinctive tendency he has to have sex with the corpses of his victims.

What I'm saying is that you can see what instinctive urges are "natural" and "unnatural" if you use your reason and look at the objective situation first; you can't *derive* the reasonable thing to do from your instinctive urges.

But that's what the evolutionists do. And the notion that you can do this this leads us to a corollary of the chance-evolution view of human reality.

The view that the way you feel is the "true you."

If you accept that humans are just the result of chance evolution and that reason is basically the servant of the sex drive, it also follows that reason is the servant of *all* our drives, because our drives are the genetically-determined adaptation we have to our environment. Thus, what you *think* your reality is is not what your reality actually is; what you *feel* is your true reality, and you have to come to terms with your feelings in order to get in touch with your real self, not this manufactured self that you have invented by perverting your use of reason.

Psychotherapy is for practical purposes based on this. To repress your emotions only means that you are bottling them up. But since they are the expression of what you *really* are, then they are only going to burst the bottle sometime, and the last state is worse than the first. You have to learn to *come to terms* with your feelings, to

stop regarding your natural feelings as *evil*, and to *express* them in healthy ways, or they are simply going to express themselves in unhealthy ways, and destroy you.

Well, what's wrong with that? It's true, isn't it? Doesn't the whole science of psychology give ample verification of it? Well, it's not quite so simple. The human unconscious is not directly accessible by an outside observer and not even by the patient who has it. What's in there, and what it's doing, is very often based on *post hoc ergo propter hoc* reasoning.

Take the notion that suppressing (that is, deliberately refusing to express) emotions bottles them up inside you, and they get more and more of a head of steam until they burst into really destructive behavior. That's almost a given nowadays. But we have over two thousand years of Stoic tradition which says that if you deliberately act *against* what your emotions incline you to, and deliberately suppress them, then what happens is that they get *weaker*, not stronger—just as our muscles atrophy if we neglect to exercise them. “Use it or lose it.” So instead of finding that they explode into some kind of violence, you find that now you don't even *want* to do the things you've trained yourself not to do. Reason is in control.

“Oh well, sure, that's what they *say*. But it doesn't work. People who try this and repress their emotions and ‘live their life based on reason’ will find that in the long run they're miserable and make everyone else around them miserable too.”

The problem with this is that it's a gratuitous statement, which is belied by thousands of years of experience. People who followed the Stoic way of life (a) certainly have *thought*, throughout history, that they were happier than those who give in to their every whim, and (b) there's every evidence that people who deal with self-controlled individuals have a much easier time with them than with those who are at the mercy of the latest instinctive impulse.

If Stoicism were *that* self-destructive, why did it last so long? And *are* the New Moralists that much happier and contented than those

who try to live their lives based on reason and the objective situation? The suicide rate in recent times wouldn't seem to bear this out; nor would the land-office business therapists are doing trying to get people to "come to grips with their feelings."

No, what's really behind this view is the New Morality. Sigmund Freud, who started all this off, was an atheist who bought into David Hume's view that "reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions." He tried to make a psychological structure of the self in which reason (the ego) was simply an outgrowth of the conflict of the instinctive desire (the id) with the hostile environment which thwarted it (the superego). It didn't get at the truth of what we are; it was a form of adaptation of the instincts to their environment. So the *true* reality of the person is not reason; it's instinct. And the inhibitions that get put into us (which result in conscience, or guilt feelings) have nothing to do with reason, but are simply the environment "talking back" to us, as it were, and getting programmed into our unconscious, habitual behavior—showing up as this "voice of God" we call "conscience."

But that's a theory, not the inevitable conclusion that has to be drawn from the observable data. And it's another one of these theories that uses an elaborate *rational* structure in "proving" that reason doesn't have anything to do with the real truth of things. And I mentioned in discussing the Second New Commandment that the theory predicts things that are the exact opposite of what happens.

But, of course, if you don't see this, and you are predisposed to accept the dogma that humans evolved purely by chance driven by sex directed only by natural selection, then it makes perfect sense, which is why it caught on. It's been modified, of course, in sundry ways, because it doesn't work—and neither will its modifications work, since they all put the *true* reality of the human being in what he *feels* rather than a rational assessment of what he in fact is in the situation he's in.

Actually, very early in my life I lived the refutation of this view.

I had a Chinese friend and playmate, Kang Ng, who was one of those people fate seems to single out for hard luck. His family was rather prominent in China, he once told me, but in the revolution had to move to the States, where his father opened—of course—a laundry down the street from my house. After having four children, he died of tuberculosis, and left his wife to tend the store and the kids. Kang, the oldest, used to help out with the ironing (they lived in the one room at the back of the store), which used to annoy us, because many times he wouldn't be available to play.

One time when he was, I think, in Junior High School, he was flying a kite in the lot opposite my house, using wire for string; and the kite got caught in the electrical lines overhead, and Kang couldn't let go and writhed on the ground in agony—and wound up in the hospital for months, emerging with huge scars on his body, and two fingers missing from one hand. During that time his brother Thin (whom we called "Little Sunny") more or less took his place, and so we didn't miss him much.

We welcomed him back, and life resumed until one day in his Junior year in high school, when he was watching the school's baseball team from a seat along the first-base line. A wild throw hit him in the temple and knocked him out for a while; but the trainer on the field eventually said he was okay, and could go home. He went to sleep that night and never woke up. He was in the hospital again for months, in a coma, during which we once again played with Little Sunny, and didn't really miss him much. (Hey, we were *kids*, remember).

Finally he died, and we friends were asked to be the pallbearers at his funeral. I didn't feel devastated or tragic about it (I'd got, as I said, used to his not being around), and I remember how much of a hypocrite I felt, in my best clothes in the front row of that Baptist church, as I looked at that waxen figure in the coffin that had only the remotest resemblance to Kang. I wanted to stand up and shout, "What's the big deal? Why are we all looking so solemn?" and cursed

myself for being too much of a coward to do anything but look as if I was desolate when I didn't feel a thing.

We took the coffin out to the grave, and as the body was lowered into the grounds Mrs. Ng put on top of the coffin the food and things that the Chinese bury with their dead—and I saw the look on her face.

“Thank God I didn't act the way I felt!” I thought. *She* knew what the situation *really* was, and *she* was acting appropriately with the real situation—and so was I, and I was condemning myself for being a hypocrite, when I was being honest with the *real* situation, and it was my *feelings* that were screwed up. The real me was the mourner, not the smartass; I loved Kang, whatever I felt at the time. I still do, and I hope he hears this tribute to how much he taught me, after all these years. I hope to meet you fairly soon, Kanga, and we can take up the wrangles we've had to table while I finish up my rather more prolonged gestation.

Let's face it, ladies and gentlemen—many, many of you, I hope: I'll grant that our instinctive urges are the way we are programmed genetically to behave. But they adapt us to the environment humans emerged into; but the environment we now live in, *because* of our use of reason to adapt our environment to make our lives easier and—yes—more human, is no longer the environment they adapt us to. They are often counteradaptive, as were my feelings about Kang.

And even the psychologists admit this when they talk about “healthy” expression of the emotions as opposed to bottling them up and having them explode in “unhealthy” ways. What do they mean by “healthy” or “unhealthy” but *rational*, based on the *real* situation we are in? If the emotions are king, how is *any* expression of them preferable to any other? Oh, well some are maladaptive. Yes? Well, *they* don't think so. I know, but it's obvious. Precisely; because *reason can get you to what the facts really are.*

And therefore, you should base your actions on what reason indicates is the appropriate behavior, *irrespective* of the way you feel.

And the Stoics are right; if you suppress your emotions in small things, you'll find that you don't have to suppress them in big things, because they'll be under your control. And which would you rather be? Someone who knows what the right thing to do is and can do it easily, or someone who knows what the right thing to do is and either has to fight the feeling that it's the wrong thing, or gives in to the feeling and does the wrong thing?

But this doesn't mean the psychologists are all wet. They have this profound truth in their favor. *The feelings themselves are neither good nor evil; they just are.* They're just the conscious aspect of the automatic program in your brain starting from a given stimulus. But we have, to a large extent, *conscious* control over the flow of energy in our brain, and we can in ordinary situations block the automatic impulse and direct it toward behavior that our minds know is the appropriate one for the situation. That won't get rid of the feeling, but so what? You're no more *responsible* for the feeling than you are that your heart beats at the rate it happens to be beating at the moment. It's what you *choose* to do based on the *conscious, factual* information you have that's important, not what your feelings prompt you to do, or even what the feelings themselves are.

And, of course, since we don't have *absolute* control over our actions, if feelings get too strong and cause inappropriate behavior, then we must somehow try to get them under control. When psychotherapy is used with *that* in mind, it's a very good thing. But its function is *not* to make us "better adapted," or to replace the instinctive urges with other, more appropriate ones. Who cares if you feel guilty when you're doing the right thing, as long as you're capable of doing the right thing and you do it?

So don't be fooled by all this. You *know* that the way you feel is fundamentally irrelevant; and evolution, if looked at without the agenda driving it, would tell you this. Since instinct and emotions are genetically programmed into us, and since genetic changes occur only after enormous lapses of time, while the world, *because of our use*

of reason, is transforming itself every year, it seems, then it's colossal stupidity to listen to your feelings as if they were what you "really are" instead of to your reason, which can find out what you objectively are.

Interlude: Human Sexuality

Here we go. You're probably not going to like this, and so I'm going to ask you to forgive me if I approach the subject gradually. Let me start out by saying that I'm *not* going to be dragging religion into this, or doing anything but logic; but if there's ever a subject that people don't want to be logical about, it's sex.

First, let's take a look at Bill and Monica there in the Oval Office. She's servicing him, and asking him when he's going to do it to her, and he says that in the situation he's in, he can't, and he hopes she'll understand, and wait for the millennium.

Now what does this imply? First of all, *his* sexual urges are being satisfied, but *hers* aren't. Her sexual desires are probably being *aroused*, but any satisfaction she gets is either self-induced or is the satisfaction of knowing that you've pleased someone you care about.

Is it any wonder that the slang term for a dupe—someone who's

being taken advantage of—is a “sucker”? Where do you think the term came from? And consider another slang expression: When a person finds out that something he thought would be nice is the opposite, he says, “That sucks!”

You see? We *know*. But we follow the Third New Commandment and are “tolerant,” and so we refuse to admit to ourselves what we know. Sure, he made a sucker out of her—in every sense of the word. But, hey, if she’s willing, what’s the problem? She’s an adult.

So there’s nothing wrong with it because she was willing. Then what about the widow who’s handed over her life savings to “that nice investment broker,” who had some reverses in the stock downturn, poor man, and lost everything? She gave her money to him *willingly*, didn’t she? And he’s such a *nice* young man. So there’s nothing wrong with swindling people, as long as they’re willing to be swindled?

Yeah, but this is different. This is sex. Precisely. The rules of common sense no longer apply. Then why do we call her a sucker?

I hope I’ve broken through the shell a little and at least opened up the possibility that there might be something inconsistent in this kind of sex. Even President Clinton said he wasn’t having sexual relations with her; *she* was having them with *him*, but after all, he wasn’t touching her sexual organs. The mouth isn’t really a sexual organ. We laugh scornfully, but isn’t there a sense in which he was right? Interestingly, Monica seemed to agree with him; she told Linda Tripp that “having sex” only meant sexual intercourse—but her definition would exclude homosexuals from ever being able to have sex, wouldn’t it? Hm.

It seems, therefore, that a little investigation is in order. Let me approach it, however, through other acts of ours that aren’t sex, since sex is so emotionally charged. When is an act inconsistent with itself in its exercise?

Take lying. When you lie, you are *communicating as a fact* to someone what you think is *not* a fact. Put in that way, the contradic-

tion is obvious. The fact that the person (who might have a right to know the truth) is deceived is an *additional* evil connected with the act; but even if it doesn't happen, there's no way you can make the act of lying consistent with itself as an act of factual communication. It's pretty hard to escape this, which is why it's so universally held that lying is wrong.

But there are some things that are useful to notice here. First of all, there's nothing wrong with *not communicating* facts to someone (unless, of course, he has a right to know the facts from you); so not telling the truth (not talking at all) is not the same as lying. You don't have to tell the truth; you just have to avoid telling the opposite of what you think the truth is.

Secondly, there's nothing wrong with stringing words together that communicate nothing at all. 'Twas brillig and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe. (All right all right, I know that Humpty Dumpty gave that a meaning; but who's to say that *he* knew what the real story was? He's just an egg.) You're not exercising your ability to speak *for* any particular function it has; but it's not *contradicting* any function either. The same happens when you run on a treadmill and get nowhere.

Thirdly, it doesn't matter *how* you do the communicating, whether "naturally" by speaking, or by the extremely artificial, sophisticated method I am now using to you, where my fingers type words into my computer, which then translates all of this into magnetic impulses, which find their way somehow to a printer, and you finally "hear" what I am saying with your eyes. So the moral issue is not what is "natural" or "unnatural" in the "back-to-nature" sense of the term; it's what is *consistent* or *inconsistent* with the reality involved.

Fourthly, note that a lie *is* consistent with the speaker in many ways: it is consistent with his vocal cords, it is consistent with the language it is spoken in (supposing he hasn't made any grammatical mistakes), it is consistent with his *purpose* in gaining the advantage he

is seeking with the lie (in fact, it might be the *only* way to gain that purpose). It's only inconsistent with this *one* aspect of the act. So then, whether it's in proper English, whether it's using proper diction, whether it gets him what he wants or not, it's still the communication of a non-fact as if it were a fact, and that one inconsistency makes it wrong—just as the one little inconsistency that the drink you lovingly gave your rich uncle contained arsenic made giving it to him wrong.

So an act is morally wrong if it contradicts *any* aspect of itself, whether it fulfills all the rest or not. And we *know* this. It's only the deconstructionists, who say that the *only* function of speech is to get people to do things, who can say that lying is okay; since for them the truth is that there's no such thing as truth, only manipulation. But try lying to *them* and see what their reaction is. They *know*.

(I suppose I should point out that you can lie by *saying* what is factually true, if you do so in such a way that your manner of saying it *communicates* the opposite. For instance, suppose Mr. Clinton had said to a reporter, "Of *course* I had sex with that woman! Do I look like the kind of person who would seduce a subordinate?" The irony of the tone would communicate the opposite of what the words say. Also, of course, what is *legally* a lie—perjury—has its own special definition; but it's because of "lying-while-saying-what-is-true" that the actual deposition was required in Mr. Clinton's case, and not just the transcript. You had to hear the tone of voice and so on to know what he was trying to communicate.)

One final point before we leave lying. I said above that in a given situation, a lie might be the only way to achieve what you want to achieve. Let me add that *not* to lie in such a situation might be disastrous. For instance, if President had Clinton admitted that he had a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky, he'd have lost Paula Jones's lawsuit.

That, however, doesn't make the lie *right*. It's still inconsistent with yourself as a factual communicator. All it says is that it can be

good to do wrong, as I mentioned at the end of interlude after the Second New Commandment. And, as I said there, I'll handle this at the very end of the book. All I want to stress now is that the fact that something is *advantageous* (and even that not to do it might be disastrous) doesn't make it *right*. What's consistent is consistent, and what's inconsistent is inconsistent, whether it's to your advantage or not.

Okay, that's one act and how it can be inconsistent. But now let's look at an act that has two different functions, and see how consistency and inconsistency apply to it. Can you use the act for one of its functions and not the other? It depends. As I'll try to show, you can't do this if it means *contradicting* the other function.

Let's take the act that used to be called the vice of gluttony, and—now that we've grown out of terms like “virtue” and “vice”—it's the “disease” called bulimia. A person eats and then throws up (or purges) so he doesn't gain weight, and can eat some more.

Now, irrespective of the long-term effect this has on the digestive system, it's analogous to a lie, isn't it? You're eating, but eating has two functions: gratifying your taste sensation and assimilation of food. (Let's forget about a “hierarchy of purposes” here, because moral wrongness consists—as I said above—in contradicting *any* aspect of an act in exercising it, not just in contradicting the “most important” one.) So you eat *as if* eating had *only* the function of gratifying your taste, and you deliberately *thwart* the other function it has, and in this respect, you prevent it from doing what it does. True, the food *does* taste the same whether you throw up afterward or not; but eating isn't *just* the gratification of taste—and you know this, or you wouldn't throw up so that you couldn't digest the food. So what you're saying by doing this is, in effect “Eating is only for the taste,” while your act of throwing up shows that you *recognize* that it's also for nutrition, and therefore *not* only for the taste.

However, analogous to talking nonsense as opposed to lying, notice that there's nothing wrong with eating things that have no

food value and taste good, like some of these diet foods that are for practical purposes flavored cellulose that can't be digested.

What's the difference? In both cases, you're eating and gaining no nutrition from it. The difference is that the *act* in the second case is all that it is; it's just that it doesn't have anything to act *on*. Eating never digests *all* of the food that's taken in; in fact, one of the facets of digestion is that the body accepts what's assimilable and rejects what's not. In this second case, it turns out that all of what's taken in is the kind of stuff that the act rejects. So the act is acting consistently with itself.

But in the first case, you're taking in what *can* be assimilated, and what the act of digestion *will* assimilate, and you're *preventing* it from doing what it does—as if eating were nothing but tickling your taste buds.

Notice also that there's nothing wrong with skipping a meal if you want to. In fact, if you're obese and you want to lose weight, but can't resist eating because your hunger drive is hyperactive, you can take a pill to suppress your appetite *so that you don't eat* so often. There's nothing wrong with “technologically” suppressing the act *if* it means not exercising it—any more than there's anything wrong with sticking your fingers in your ears so that you can't hear something you don't want to hear. In this case, you haven't tried to exercise the act as if it wasn't what it is; you haven't exercised it at all. You could even have a doctor put a balloon in your stomach so that you feel full when you've eaten only a little; because in that case, the act is doing what it does (digesting what you eat); it's just that you take in less.

Oh, for heaven's sake! What difference does it make? Only the difference between a lie and the truth, that's all. It's hypocrisy to pretend that eating has nothing to do with digestion when you know that it does, and to try to make it what it isn't. If you will, it's the equivalent of the sex-change operation, where the man pretends he's a woman because he's had a hole cut in him.

Two final points: First, there's nothing wrong with eating something *just* because it tastes good, and not caring whether it's nourishing or not, as long as it's not something that will make you sick. You don't have to *want* all of the functions of the act. The act is still what it is irrespective of your intention in performing it. (I hasten to add that if your intention is evil—such as eating so that your companion will also eat the poisoned food you have set before him—then the situation, of course, contains an evil in addition to the act itself.)

In fact, secondly, you don't have to want *any* of the functions of the act; you can eat something that doesn't taste good, and that you don't need for nourishment, as when you eat the first cupcake your daughter burned—I mean baked. What isn't charred *can* be digested, even if you don't need it, and it *does* taste good as a first effort (remember, values and goodness are subjective, not objective); and so, while you're not performing the act for either of its "natural purposes," so to speak, you're not contradicting any aspect of it, any more than when you use your ears to hold up your glasses, which has nothing to do with hearing. That should be obvious. You're only being immoral if you *deny* that the act is what it is (you want to pretend that the act doesn't do what it does), not if you don't care what it does.

All right, then, with that out of the way, let's see how all this applies to sex. The sex act obviously has three aspects to it: (1) it produces a very strong sensation, which most people find quite pleasurable; (2) it expresses and causes love for another person, or at the very least involves another person (even people who masturbate have difficulty succeeding unless they fantasize about another person); and (3) it is a child-producing kind of act.

This third point needs comment. It is obvious that human sex is not simply "for" reproduction, because if it were, then either *every* act would be reproductive (and it isn't; the woman is fertile only one or two days out of a month, and sperm can live in her only a week or

so), or (like other animals) we would feel no urge to perform the act during the woman's infertile times. Let's be honest here.

But let's really be honest. That doesn't mean that the act isn't a reproductive *kind* of act. Whenever the act is carried to completion, the ejaculation of sperm indicates that there's this reproductive dimension to it—because what other sense does this aspect have? It's not food, as I said; it is the male component of fertilization. There are analogous things that happen in the woman, but they're not obvious. So, even though the act doesn't always *reproduce*, it's always a reproductive *kind* of act. (Go back to eating. Even though eating doesn't always in fact nourish you—depending on what you eat—it's always a nutritive *kind* of act. That's what I meant.)

Okay, then, what does this imply? First of all, on the first aspect, it's perfectly all right if you don't like sex. Most people do, but the sensation doesn't *have* to be categorized as “pleasure,” if you find it unpleasant. You are not being “inhuman” if you don't like sex any more than you're weird if you don't like chocolate.

Let me stress this a bit. We've been so bombarded with the Fourth New Commandment and the idea that the sex drive is what you are “really all about”—especially as a man or woman—that there are lots of people who feel guilty because sex just doesn't interest them all that much.

But it's a need of nature, isn't it? Sure, but so is urination. Do you feel guilty because you don't regard the relief in urinating to be a fun experience, and because you're not constantly looking forward to your next trip to the bathroom? And as to its being a “need” of nature, it is *not* necessary to the health or fitness of the individual organism, however necessary it may be for the continuation of the species. If you don't contribute to the population of the world, you don't need to worry; there will be plenty to take up the slack. I repeat: *There is nothing damaging to your physical or mental health in not ever having sex if you don't want to.* (Of course, if you're married, and your partner wants it, then this would contradict the agreement

you made when you married. But that's a different story.)

The point is that it's all right in itself not to engage in sex, just as it's all right not to talk if you don't want to. It's even all right, if you don't want to be bothered with sex, to take a pill or something that would suppress your libido and take away the urge; which would be like taking an appetite suppressant. There's nothing inconsistent here, because you're not performing the act inconsistently; you're not performing it at all.

Secondly, on the other side of this, it's all right to *like* sex, and there's nothing wrong with having sex just because it's fun—provided you don't *contradict* any other aspect of it—any more than there's anything wrong in eating a chocolate bar you don't need just because you like chocolate.

Thirdly, there's nothing wrong with taking Viagra or penile injections, or whatever, to assist you in having sex if you can't perform as you want to. In that case, the “technology” is just helping the act be what it is, as glasses help you to see better.

A propos of this, however, let me just remark that the sight of vast swarms of people my age storming the pharmacies for Viagra is a bit pathetic, don't you think? We've bought so thoroughly into this Fourth New Commandment that we think that if we don't perform the way we did when we were thirty, we've died (or we're sick with “sexual dysfunction”). I'm not trying to say that there's anything immoral about using these aids—and I can testify that young peoples' idea that the desire for sex dies at age forty is a lot of bunk. At the same time, there's a great deal to be said for acting your age; and not having to be distracted by insistent sexual promptings is a big help in doing things like thinking.

Fourthly, there's nothing wrong with performing the act for some other reason than one of its natural aspects—which is like eating your daughter's first cupcake solely in order to please her. Suppose you and your wife are both eighty, and in general the act is just too much of a nuisance any more. But it's your anniversary, and even though

neither of you feel particularly sexy, you decide to have sex just to celebrate it. The act isn't terribly satisfying to either of you, and since this is the case on both sides, you're not "giving yourself" to your beloved (in the sense of giving pleasure), nor is the act in fact reproductive any more. But it doesn't *contradict* any one of its functions.

Well then, anything goes, right? Wrong. Let's first consider cases where one of the functions is directly contradicted in order to exercise the act for one of the other functions.

First under this category would come *rape*. It is *not* consistent with the act of sex as involving another person (expressing love) to have sex with that person *against* her will *even in order to have a baby by her*. This is one of the fallacies of the "hierarchy of purposes" views of sex, which would seem logically to permit rape in this case—though I hasten to say I know of no ethicist who has ever said so. This would apply even to a man who is married to the woman. The end doesn't justify the means. You never have a right to force a person against her will, no matter how noble your purpose. (I say "her" because it's a little hard to imagine a woman raping a man to have a baby by him—though of course there are ways it can be accomplished.)

Second, however, it is *not* wrong to have sex with your partner when the other person is not particularly interested in having sex, but is not unwilling. Here, the act is *not* an act of love, because you aren't giving the other person any particular satisfaction; but you aren't *contradicting* the act as the kind of thing that expresses love for (recognizes the personhood of) the other person. You're not going *against* her will, even though she's not eager.

Notice, though, that the act becomes *more* an act of love when it is done more for the sake of the other person's satisfaction than your own. There's nothing *wrong* with it if you do it just for your own satisfaction, any more than eating candy just for the taste contradicts it as nourishment; it's just that *positively* speaking there's

nothing loving about your *intention*. But the *act* in fact gives the sensation (which is in itself satisfying) to the other person; and so it is still a loving *kind* of act.

The ideal of the sexual act in this respect, of course, is that each partner cares more about the satisfaction of the other than himself; and as each tries to satisfy the other as much as possible, each receives the maximum satisfaction. But generally, with most acts of most couples, one partner this time is more satisfied than the other; and sometimes one is not really satisfied at all. That's perfectly okay. After all, not every meal you eat has to be worthy of Escoffier. (You see how useful it was to use the analogy with eating?)

Third—here it comes—it's morally wrong to exercise the act of sex even as an act of love and *deliberately thwart* its reproductive dimension. Yes, contraception is wrong, for the same reason that bulimia is wrong, and for the same reason that rape in order to have a child is wrong. It doesn't matter what *kind* of contraceptive you use, whether chemical or mechanical, or whatever. The point is that you want to prevent a reproductive act from being reproductive when it's reproductive, and that's inconsistent.

That is, you only use a contraceptive when you *recognize* that the act you want to perform *might actually* result in a child, and you don't want it to do what it does. What I mean is, supposing you had a contraceptive pill that you didn't have to take every day of the month, but would prevent conception if taken within three hours of the act, and then would wear off (so that you'd have to take it again if you wanted to have sex without a child from the next act). Now, would you take it during menstruation, when you can't have a child anyway? Of course not. You'd only take it when you knew that it was likely that a child would result *because this is what the act does*, and you didn't want that to happen, but you wanted to perform the act anyway.

Sure, the contracepting act is an act of love, and it's a pleasurable act; you haven't changed those aspects of it, just as lying is consistent

with grammar and diction. But you try to perform it pretending that it's not reproductive, and it's *also* reproductive. And you know this, because you take steps to block its reproductiveness.

Put it this way: When the contraceptive fails, the act succeeds.

Oh, puh-*leeze!* What are we supposed to do, fill the world with our kids? No. In fact, you have a positive obligation not to have any more children than you foresee that you can bring up decently (obviously, because to cause to exist a human-being-that-can't-live-a-human-life is a contradiction). Then we don't have sex until menopause, right?

No. And this is the fourth point on this heading. It is not wrong to have sex during an infertile time of the month. As I said, sex is not a reproducing act, but a reproductive *kind* of act. You are not *contradicting* what it is when you have sex during an infertile time, any more than you contradict it by having sex when you don't particularly feel like it but your partner does. You don't have to *want* a child from the act; in fact, it is quite legitimate to perform the act and *not* want a child to result from it, if you can't afford the child. In having sex during an infertile period, the *act* is the same as the act during a fertile period; it is just that it can't in fact result in a child now. This is like eating something with no food value. But contraception is like eating and throwing up.

Remember, I'm only being logical here. Think it through.

And it's possible to be accurate, by using temperature and cervical secretions, and know when the woman is fertile, and so to know with accuracy what times of the month sex will be infertile and when it won't. And, if you can't have a child, then you can *permit* the incompleteness of the acts, and the fact that they're not as satisfying physically as acts during the fertile time, so that you can enjoy what's good about the acts without doing something that pretends they're not what they are. Because at these times, the acts in themselves are only satisfying and love-expressing. Sex is not fully itself without the child; but that doesn't mean that it's worthless without it.

Oh, come on! When you're doing this, you don't want to have a child, right? And so it's the same thing as using a contraceptive. Sorry, it won't work. Is it the same thing to walk to Los Angeles as it is to fly there, just because you get to the same place? Is it the same thing to wait for your rich uncle to die so you can get the inheritance as it is to lace his evening chocolate with arsenic?

Periodic abstinence recognizes what sex is, and is consistent with what sex is. Contraception is dishonest about what sex is. There's the difference. True, lying is more efficient at getting what you want than telling the truth; ask President Clinton. But a lie's a lie, for all that.

Let me leave you to mull over (fume over?) that, and move on to other forms of non-conceptive sex, like what President Clinton and Monica did.

You could argue that they weren't thwarting the reproductive dimension of the act in engaging in oral sex, because they didn't do anything to *prevent* the act from reproducing; it's just that the mouth is "infertile," so to speak. So how is this different from having missionary sex at an infertile time of the month?

The answer, of course, is that this *kind* of sexual act can't be construed to have *anything to do* with reproduction; it's not a reproductive *kind* of thing when engaged in in this way. The ejaculation of sperm makes no sense whatever in the mouth or rectum or anywhere else. Not to mention, as I said, that this kind of sexual activity satisfies the sexual desires of only *one* of the parties, and the other is a sucker. So it's wrong on two counts.

I might add that anal sex is also damaging. As Magic Johnson said in his book on AIDS, you have to use a condom every time in anal sex, because it's almost bound to cause bleeding, even if the bleeding isn't visible. The rectum was not built like the vagina, to have something pushed into it; its tissues are delicate. To pretend that this is a sexual act, even if both parties find pleasure in it, is to show how far we've come in blinding ourselves to what the facts are.

But that means that homosexuals can't have sex! Right. At least, they can't have *consistent* sex; and since this is (to a straight person, who doesn't have a powerful emotion clouding his vision) pretty inescapable, there's no real hope that homosexual sex will in the long run be regarded as "the same kind of thing" as straight sex, and just a different version of it. It didn't even get regarded that way in ancient Greece, where it was accepted for quite a while.

But you *can't* say that! What are they supposed to do? Wait a minute now. It doesn't follow from the fact that you have an urge, even if it's innate (which is problematic, but let's concede it), that you have a right to act on it. Jeffrey Dahmer simply cannot allow himself to satisfy his sexual desire to kill people and have sex with the corpses, and it doesn't matter where the desire came from. Pedophiles can't allow themselves to satisfy the sexual urge they didn't choose to have by having sex with children—and it doesn't matter how strong the urge is or how they got it. *We know* this.

Two points here. First, there's is nothing wrong with things like oral sex a married couple does to each other by way of foreplay (as long as one partner is not disgusted by it—which would violate the love-aspect—and as long as no physical damage is done). This sort of thing can be *part* of the complete act. What I'm talking about here is treating this part as if it were all that the act is.

Secondly, there's nothing wrong with homosexuals expressing affection for each other, holding hands, kissing, and so on; because they *do* have affection for each other. Unfortunately, to express this affection by an act of sexual "intercourse" that is inconsistent is to be dishonest about what the act is. I don't see how you can get around this.

And note that if you say that this kind of thing is okay, then you've got no logical grounds for saying that there's anything inconsistent about pedophilia, with having sex with a horse (as long as she doesn't object), or with the kind of "sex" that Robert Mapplethorpe so glossily depicted, in which a man's arm is up

another's rectum to the elbow, or one is urinating into another's mouth. This is *sex*?

I should also point out that it's *not* dishonest, and is perfectly all right morally, for a homosexual to marry a person of the other sex and have sex with her. It might *feel* "unnatural" to him; but this is the equivalent of saying that there's nothing wrong with eating olives even though they taste bad to you. The act *in fact* is consistent with itself, and (if he can perform it) he gets *some* satisfaction (at least the satisfaction of relief) from it; and as long as his partner knows the situation and is willing to put up with the fact that the act is not fully itself, there is nothing wrong with it.

But the homosexual was *born* that way; it's his *nature!* Now wait just a second. Suppose that's true (as I say, it's problematic). Some blind people were born that way too, and so are some cripples. Sure, it's the "nature" of a blind person not to see, and of a cripple to limp, but that doesn't mean that the "nature" is not defective. If we find genetic defects in just about every other aspect of human life, why should we not find people who are defective sexually? This implies no moral overtones. There's nothing *immoral* about *being* homosexual (i.e. having homosexual desires), any more than there's anything morally wrong with being blind. What is morally wrong is to act on these desires, as if the desire indicated the "true self." It doesn't, as I indicated. (We've got so screwed up on this that I heard someone who worked with the deaf say that deafness is as "normal" as hearing, and it would be *wrong* to try to cure someone's deafness.)

Finally, let me say a couple of other things that logically follow but will also make you angry. First *Artificial insemination* and all its variants to have a baby is also wrong because it pretends that the act (i.e. the act of inseminating the woman) is *only* reproductive and has no other dimension. That is, the doctor certainly doesn't want to arouse the woman he's impregnating, though he's manipulating her sexual organs for the purpose of getting her pregnant; still less does he want her to be sexually attracted to *him*. So the act is not

supposed to be pleasurable or to express mutual love in the couple performing it; it's purely and simply reproductive and nothing else. This is *sex*?

I should also point out here that, since a child has the right to be reared, and this right is a right against those who caused him to exist, then there is a confusion in who is the "causer" here. Is it the sperm donor, the doctor, or the husband of the woman? The child can have three "fathers," but no one of them is the father who can be singled out to *have*, whether he "accepts" it or not, the responsibility to care for him. That's an additional evil often connected with the act.

If you can't have a child of your own, then this is unfortunate; but there are plenty of children whose parents either can't or won't rear them. You can do a service to them by rearing these orphans.

Secondly, if you've followed me this far, you know I'm going to say that masturbation is morally wrong. I'll grant that it does no physical damage, but obviously it can't be construed to have anything to do with love or with reproduction. Even in what is now taught as "outercourse," where, as I understand it, two people watch each other masturbate, the *act* is not an act of love, whether or not the people who are doing this love each other.

I told you you wouldn't like this. I don't like it any more than you do. But if you believe there are such things as facts, then I don't see how you can escape the conclusions I've come to.

The Fifth New Commandment: Thou Shalt Limit the Human Population of the World

Well, I did my best. Unfortunately, however, as you can see from this New Commandment, we're not through with sex just yet. What we're dealing with here is actually a consequence of the Fourth New Commandment (not to restrict instinctive urges) coupled with reason's ingenuity: that if reason doesn't do something about it, the human population of the world is going to explode, and we'll outrun our food supply.

Here we have the first of the commandments that isn't simply a restatement of permissiveness. We must *do* something that prevents the disaster of having kids who can't be supported with the resources left in the world; and if you don't happen to like this, that's just too bad. "Family planning" is a must.

Note, however, that this imperative is not actually couched in

moral terms; as I pointed out earlier, it couldn't be, or it would appear as just one of those things that you can do if it feels right to you and you can avoid if you don't happen to like it. But population control for the New Moralists is far more serious than that. (Note this: for the New Moralists, what they want is far more serious than morality. Ironic.) We *can't* let people have all the kids they want; they're fools if they want too many kids; and even if *they* can support them, *society* can't. Practically speaking, it just won't work; if we just *advise* people not to have large families, there still will be too many of them who want to, and we'll be awash in human beings, and in the last analysis, in starving human beings. We can't have this. It's *compassion*, you see, *feeling* for the starving kids, that drives the New Moralists here.

So for them, it's not a moral issue, but a practical problem. We have to *do* something, or catastrophe looms. You will notice as we go along that the tactic is always to predict some dire consequence that demands immediate action to avert a crisis. But notice that there's an implicit *moral* evil lurking underneath this. What do you mean, "disaster"? People dying of starvation because there's not enough food. Wars because the starving are fighting for survival. All the rest of it. All right, but why is all this *bad*? Why? Well it's obvious, isn't it?

That is, there's the implicit command that we must avoid having human beings dying of starvation. But why? Just because. I mean, what kind of a person *are* you? You *can't* just sit by and let people die in this horrible way. How would you like it if someone else with a lot of food just sat there while you died of starvation? I see now; do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

What's wrong with that? Nothing at all. I'm just pointing out that the *basis* of the New Morality's command is the taken-for-granted notion that it's *inhuman* not to limit the population to those who can survive (and prosper, really) on the resources available. So once again, even this commandment rests on not doing what is regarded

as *objectively* inconsistent with yourself as human. I need to point this out, because otherwise you can't see the inconsistency in prescribing something inhuman to avoid being inhuman.

The insidious thing about this particular New Commandment—like so many of the New Commandments—is that it has a lot of truth to it. If you can't afford to bring up a child decently, with the result that he doesn't really have a chance to live a human life, then your act of causing this human-who-can't-be-human is inconsistent, and therefore inhuman. So you *do* have an obligation to limit the size of your family.

But, you see, different people have different notions of what a "decent human life" is, and different people have different resources, not only financial, but physical and emotional. Only *some* people think that life is not worth living without a cell phone and two cars. There are even those who would count it a blessing not to have a television set. As the Unabomber, a kind of saint of the New Morality, showed in his living in a shack, a human life can be deliberately chosen to have very little in the way of material resources. (One can argue, of course, that it's not very human to use some of those resources to make letter bombs to blow up the people you disagree with, but that's another story.)

But after pointing out to people that it's morally wrong to have more children than you can support, what's the problem? The problem is the *global* problem, damn it! If you let people alone and just "advise" them, we're headed for disaster!

That is, the Population Control Crowd recognize that lots and lots of people *think* that it's great and human to have lots and lots of children, and that "God will provide." But, they contend, these people don't seem to realize that in the real world, God *doesn't* provide, and if you have all the children you're physically capable of having, then, people being as stupid and short-sighted as they are, you're going in practice to have lots and lots of children who are forced into inhuman conditions. So even if you think that having

large families is a good and moral and human thing, you're objectively mistaken, and (a) you must be educated away from this false view, and (b) if that doesn't work, you must be stopped from following through on it, because what you're doing is *objectively* inhuman.

—According to this view of things, of course. So you have to *force* people to accept “reality,” and to act in accordance with the real, objective situation. In other words, you have to force people to follow *your* moral standards, even when theirs differ from yours.

But you can't *say* this is what you're doing (you can't even think it), because it violates the Second New Commandment, that no one should force his moral standards on anyone else—and then it's not only inconsistent with objective morality, it's inconsistent with *your own* moral stance. Therefore, you have to blind yourself to the fact that it's actually a *moral* standard, and claim that it's just common sense. Of course. And if you're fudging the truth a bit, what is truth anyway? Remember the First Great Commandment.

See how it all fits together?

But it gets better. How are you to reconcile this New Commandment with the Fourth New Commandment, not to restrict the sexual drive? The answer is obvious. Reason, which makes reproduction so very successful in humans, must now be employed to maximize sexual gratification and avoid its obvious consequence. Contraception must be aggressively promoted, and any attempt to say that there is something wrong with it must be discredited at all costs.

That is, when the Religious Right in its evil perversion presumes to limit family size, it does so by restraint, which, for the New Morality, is a direct contradiction of the essence of human nature, the reproductive drive. Hence, the Religious Right's reasons must be treated as fallacies—valid, perhaps, in medieval times when the world had too few people in it, but now not only foolish but pernicious.

An interesting facet of this attack on the Religious Right is that it is said to be “obsessed with sex.” This was one of the accusations

against Kenneth Starr, who as far as I know didn't have sex with someone while discussing affairs of state on the phone. But he's supposed to be obsessed with sex because he *doesn't* think that all sex all the time is a good thing. Once you presume to say that there are limits on sexual activity (as opposed to limiting the *results* of sexual activity), then you're obsessed with sex. I know. This is one of the things I've been charged with myself.

The idea is that you're not "obsessed" with sex if you think that it's just something like eating or urinating, that you do when you feel the need and then forget about it. The fact that you feel the need every fifteen minutes is not really relevant; it doesn't bother you, because you have your sex and then go on about your business. On this criterion, the alcoholic isn't obsessed with drinking, it's the ones who think maybe he ought to cut down that are obsessed with the subject.

In any case, we should promote both sex and contraception, because in this way we can obey both New Commandments: we can have as much sex as possible, in as many ways as possible, and at the same time ensure that there will be as few children as possible; and while we're at it, we have the bonus of the fact that "every child is a wanted child," and so we solve the problem of child abuse.

A world in denial.

I tried to point out in the preceding chapter how this view is inconsistent with what sex objectively is; and there might be some who say, "Well yes, even if for the sake of argument you're right; still and all, if you try to limit the population by preaching restraint, it's not going to work, and so we've got no choice; it's sex education or mass starvation down the road."

And this sounds fine in theory; but we've been trying it for a generation or more now, and look what it's got us. The reason is that logic has a way of working itself out in practice, and things have their *real* consequences—all of them, not just the consequences we'd like

them to have.

The flaw in it can be seen by a simple description of what it is: having irresponsible sex responsibly. That is, contraceptive sex, as I pointed out, is a deliberate attempt to divorce the act from the consequences intrinsic to the act: to have fertile sex without having to be bothered with the results of the act (since if the contraceptive fails, the act succeeds). So you “free” people to do whatever they feel like.

But the trouble is, you have to *use* the contraceptive in order to do this, and you have to use it *carefully*, or it will fail. If you don’t take The Pill every day of the month, then it won’t work, and you’ll find yourself pregnant. If you’re not careful using the condom, it might leak or rip, and then pregnancy follows. So instead of being careful in when and with whom you perform the act, now you have to be careful in *how* you perform it.

Because, of course, there are other inconvenient practical aspects to promiscuous sex besides pregnancy; we are awash in a sea of sexually transmitted diseases. And The Pill does nothing to protect people from these, nor does the IUD or Norplant or any of the rest of the contraceptives except condoms. So, having graduated from condoms to the “natural” methods of contraception, we’re now back to where we were when I was a kid—except that now, instead of thinking that sex with a condom is unnatural and wrong, we’ve transmuted it into the idea that sex *without* a condom is unnatural and wrong.

And, filled with this idea, we hand out condoms to kids, because “they’re going to do it anyway,” and we wonder why we have so many teenage mothers. Why? Consider this: We know that smoking is bad for people, because of the tar and so on in the smoke. We also know that filters lessen the amount of tar that gets into the person, and so they’re “safer” than unfiltered cigarettes. Further, kids, as is evident, aren’t listening to the advice that smoking is dangerous; they smoke in spite of our warnings. So why don’t we hand out filter cigarettes to kids, if they’re going to do it anyway? Smoking filter

cigarettes is “safer smoking.”

“But that’s ridiculous!” you say. Exactly. It’s ridiculous, because if you hand these things out to kids, then they’ll smoke *a lot more* than if you tried to get them not to smoke at all, and the “safety” of the filters is more than offset by the dangers of the increase in smoking which is bound to happen. You notice that no one—but no one—nowadays calls smoking filter cigarettes “safer smoking,” in spite of the fact that that was why filters were developed. If it’s advertised as “safer,” then that will encourage people to use these things, under the delusion that they’re safe, not just slightly less dangerous.

But then, if you grant that condoms aren’t a hundred per cent effective, and you hand out condoms to kids—and then you discover that there’s an increase in teen pregnancy when this is done, shouldn’t you have at least the *suspicion* that the logic you recognized with filter cigarettes applies here too?

Oh no! It’s because we haven’t done *enough* of it! It’d be much worse if we didn’t do this! Then why is it that the abstinence programs seem to lessen teenage pregnancy? They don’t. The studies show it. No they don’t. That’s just the agenda of the Religious Right. It’s a falsification.

You see what I mean by the title of this section: a world in denial?

Consumer Reports a few years ago had an article on condoms, in which they pointed out that condoms, used carefully, are very effective in preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The trouble with using them carefully, however, is that you can’t use them at all until you’re in the heat of passion; and when you’re in the heat of passion, stopping everything so that you can go meticulously through the five steps (or whatever it is) of putting them on right and using them with care is not what is uppermost in your mind. So in the real world, they cut down the transmission of disease by about a half.

Now everybody’s all excited about AIDS—which is understand-

able, since it's fatal and incurable. But as the article said, the chances of getting AIDS in (normal, heterosexual) sexual intercourse with an infected person (when neither have some other sexually transmitted disease which might cause lesions) are, as I recall, a tenth of one per cent—or one in a thousand—in any single act. If you use a condom, then, you reduce the chance of catching it from the infected person to one in two thousand.

Now personally, if I have 999 chances in a thousand that something—even something really, really bad—is not going to happen to me, I'm not going to be terribly worried about it. (And if I *am* worried about odds already that much in my favor, then I'm not going to take much comfort in the fact that I can up my chances to 1999 in two thousand.)

Not much (in fact nothing) was made of the fact that it's next to impossible to catch AIDS from ordinary sexual intercourse anyway (always supposing no other STDs as I said); but condoms *were touted as a way to be a lot safer when having sex*. (Remember what I said about advertising filter cigarettes as “safer smoking”?)

Interestingly, however, that same article mentioned that the likelihood of catching gonorrhea from an infected person was over 90 per cent in a single act with unprotected sex. Therefore, you'd *better* use a condom, they counseled—but neglected to mention explicitly that this reduces your likelihood of catching it, in real-world-usage, to about 45 per cent for each act with an infected person.

And here's where the laws of probability come in. That's the odds with a single act. Call it fifty/fifty for the sake of simplicity. Now if you have sex twice with that infected person, using a condom each time, what are the odds that you'll catch it one of those two times? Put it this way: the chance that you'll *avoid* catching it (i.e. avoid it both times) is one out of four (figure it out). If you have sex three times, the chances of avoiding it all three times is one out of six—and so on.

The point is, that having sex with a person infected with gonorrhea as few as five times using a condom every time gives you close to a ninety per cent chance that some one of those five times, the disease will be transmitted, and you'll come down with it. This is *safe*?

I wrote to the magazine pointing this out, and guess what? They didn't publish my letter. A world in denial.

Because, of course, the logic is the same as with advertising filters as safer for smoking. If you tout condoms as safe (or even "safer"), then people will think they're safe, and they'll use them. But they're *not* safe for many of the sexually transmitted diseases, and the more sex you have, the unsafer they get. And when people *think* they're safe (and they do; the dangers are always played down), then they'll have a lot more sex than they otherwise would if they were worried about getting a disease—and the "safety" is more than offset by the increased incidence of promiscuous sexual intercourse.

Do you wonder why there's an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases? Because we're being told we're safe from them if we have irresponsible sex responsibly.

Of course, also conveniently ignored is the fact that a poor man who can't support a family only feels like a *man* when he's actually made someone pregnant; and he feels more of a man the more pregnancies he causes. He doesn't need kids, of course; he can show his potency by getting as many girls as possible pregnant. And a poor woman feels fulfilled, not just by the act of sex, but by having a child she can mother, whether the kid has a father or not.

You can dream this psychological fact away, but it will be there no matter what you do, just as you can dream of a world where homosexuality will be regarded as just a different lifestyle, but it will never happen. New Moralists are so insistent on living in the "real world," but there's no ivory tower so high as the one they inhabit.

Similarly, in other cultures, where there's no social safety net, a large family is an asset to a couple, because (a) they've got kids who

can go out and work or beg and bring in money, and (b) when the couple gets too old to work, there will be at least one or two kids left alive to take care of them. True, large families in cultures like this are a *societal* problem; but it's insane to expect that an individual will cut his own throat for the sake of society's well-being.

So in our blindness we aggressively promote contraceptives all over the world, with no consideration at all for the diverse cultures we pressure (by threats to withhold aid, or worse) to use "family planning," like the officially Catholic and Muslim ones who think that this sort of thing is intrinsically wrong. There's no tolerance for *these* lifestyles. Naturally not, because they're overpopulating the planet, and we just can't have that. So the Third New Commandment goes out the window—or rather, shows itself for what it really is: tolerance for anything that doesn't violate one of the New Commandments, and vicious intolerance for anything that does.

And the New Moralists are actually blind to the fact that they're running roughshod over their cherished "diversity." The problem, you see, is that if you're honest about any of this, then the way to solve the population problem (to the extent we have one—the propaganda about it is part of the agenda) is sexual restraint; but this flies in the face of the Fourth New Commandment, and we're back to the old, inhuman morality of thinking that sex, like everything else, should have limits on its exercise. But sex according to this view, remember, is the very reality of the evolving human being. You can't allow the idea of restraint to creep back into the culture, not after we've made so much progress in eradicating it. Besides, what's a little suppression of the truth? Everybody lies about sex; look at President Clinton.

And still we wonder why we've got a population problem. Because we're (1) undermining the basis by which people will exercise restraint, and (2) ignoring the real solution to the problem: free enterprise, which will allow the poor to become prosperous, when children become a liability rather than an asset. Before you

laugh scornfully, let me point out what happened in poor countries like Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, and so on.

And while we're at it, of course, we pay farmers in this country not to plant, because we've got so much food we can't sell it anywhere in the world.

Why the New Morality is so interested in schooling.

The point is that instead of looking at what's actually happening and connecting it with what you would logically expect to happen if you encouraged sex and tried technologically to erase its consequences, New Moralists close their eyes and scream that all of the consequences are due to "poor sex education." This in spite of the fact that in the past thirty years there is no subject that has been more thoroughly instilled into everybody's mind—in season and out of season—as the fact that we should have all the promiscuous sex we can manage, and take the myriad of "precautions" to keep ourselves healthy.

This is the New Morality mantra: health.

So the New Moralists have turned our schools into sex-education factories first and foremost, making certain that their classes are "value-free"—which is to say, free of all values except the New Morality, that (a) sex is a fine, fun thing, (b) there are all kinds of sex, and no one is to be preferred over any other; it's just a matter of what excites you most; (c) any attempt to indicate that refraining from sex is healthy is misguided and false (and unhealthy); (d) your parents, poor things, were brought up wrong, before we knew all the facts—about health—that have been discovered in the last thirty years, and so don't listen to them; and (e) besides techniques, the only thing you really have to know on the subject is how to avoid disease by using condoms, and pregnancy by using all sorts of devices.

You see, it would be teaching "values" if you taught that contraceptive sex was as dishonest as lying; but it's not teaching

“values” if you say that if you don’t use a condom, you’ll get sick, and so you’d better use one. It’s not “values” if you say, “Well, of course, if you don’t *want* to have sex, that’s okay; but sex is not something to be *afraid* of as if it were evil; it’s a natural, normal, healthy thing.” That’s not values, that’s *health*. Oh? Health is not a value? Well, yeah, maybe, but health is a *value* value, not a “value.” I mean, there’s no religion involved in health. Exactly.

New Moralists react violently to abstinence education, because, according to them, it’s a back-handed attempt “to introduce religion into the schools.” Never mind that abstinence was promoted by people like Plato and Aristotle, who last I looked, weren’t religious preachers, and that abstinence programs work better at curbing the very problems the sex-is-great-but-be-careful programs are allegedly trying to solve. The reason is twofold: First, the agenda of the New Moralists is *not* simply to prevent STDs and pregnancy; it’s first and foremost to promote the Third to the Fifth New Commandments: tolerance for all “lifestyles,” sex, sex, sex, and as few kids as possible. Secondly, any moral system other than the New Morality is looked on as *ipso facto* a religious system, whether it mentions God or not. Why? Because it’s a *moral* system, and any moral system is ultimately religious. That’s another reason why the New Morality denies that it is a moral system, despite the fact that it’s a spelling out of the practical implications of the Darwinian view of human reality.

For this reason, education vouchers must be fought tooth and nail. If parents can send kids to whatever school they want, then they can send kids to schools that teach restraint rather than promiscuous sex, and that absolutely can’t be allowed. Separation of Church and State is the shibboleth that’s used, but what’s really going on is that vouchers prevent the New Moralists from getting their moral system embedded into the minds of the young, and putting the next generation “in tune with the way the world really is,” not the way these kooky fanatics dream it to be. If we allow vouchers, then we’ll have enormous numbers of kids who don’t know how to use

“protection,” and we’ll have an epidemic of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Beg pardon? We’ve got one *now*. And it got really serious once the New Morality took over “health education.” When the religious fanatics held their inquisitorial sway over these United States (in the 1940s and 1950s, for instance), the problem was a good deal less. Hm.

The effect on the family.

Once again, don’t misunderstand me. I am not trying to say that all this is a plot on the part of a bunch of people to introduce a new moral code into the country. It’s just that if you think that the *reality* of the world is that human beings evolved by chance because of their efficient reproductive systems, and that reason evolved precisely as the vehicle by which these systems became so efficient, then you have a mind-set that automatically works itself out into the kinds of things I have been talking about.

Similarly, the disintegration of the family is not something that was consciously and deliberately undertaken by the New Moralists, who very often like the idea of families. It’s just that the old-fashioned definition of “family” doesn’t apply any more to our more open (pardon, tolerant) world. “I love you, you love me; that makes us a family,” sings Barney, and nobody bats an eye. So Bill and Monica are a family, are they? Oh, I forgot, Monica loves Bill, but Bill only loves Bill. (Remember? She had sex with him; he didn’t have sex with her.) I see now.

The “traditional family”—in other words, the family family—existed for the regulation of sex that would result in children, allowing an atmosphere in which the children could be reared properly, knowing who they had rights against to supply the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social needs they had as they struggled to attain free and responsible adulthood.

But when sex is divorced from children, children become “options” for certain couples—those that want children. “Every child a wanted child” is the slogan. You *choose* whether you want a child or not; you don’t *accept the child* as the consequence of the *action* you perform. The child is “planned” or “an accident”; he’s not the *result* of what you’ve done.

So the family structure as it always existed applies now only to those people who want sex-with-children. For those who aren’t interested, then why should they be restricted in how they’re going to pair up? What’s wrong with same-sex marriages, with same-sex couples who bring up kids that are adopted or conceived by technology or by sex outside the “bond”? I mean, after all. This “bonding forever” is all well and good, but it’s unnatural and—here’s that word again—unhealthy. It might have made some sense when you could have a kid any time before menopause, but when you know that you’re going to have one this year and your second and last two years from now, why should you be stuck together your whole life long?

With this attitude, it was inevitable that “marriage” would be defined as “until love’s death doth us part.” It was also inevitable that, following the First New Commandment, studies would “uncover” the fact that kids from divorce do just as well as kids brought up with parents who constantly fight (never mind, of course, that the fact that kids do badly with fighting parents might create an incentive for responsible parents to cool it).

And when studies show that single parenting resulting from never marrying or from divorce creates a severe handicap for kids, who do well if both parents stick together or if one dies, then the studies are routinely rejected or downplayed. A world in denial.

Is it an accident that tax policy favors non-marital unions over marriages? I don’t think so. Again, it’s not a conscious attempt to destroy the family, but the attitude that marriages are really *passé* allows legislators to pass laws that favor people shacking up without

realizing that they're penalizing them for making a lifetime commitment. In that connection, am I the only one who has noticed that the old song (sung by Sinatra, interestingly) is significant? "Love and marriage/love and marriage/go together like a horse and carriage." Set to a mocking tune, "Ya can't have one without the oth-er," it inculcates the notion that marriage *used* to go with love, but that this notion is as out-of-date as horses and carriages.

In the interlude, I'll point up the contribution that feminism has made to all of this, but just let me finish here with another little bit of logic. "Every child a wanted child" is bound to work out in practice as an increase in battered children—and indeed we find, to everyone's surprise except mine, apparently—that there has been a marked increase in child abuse since the sexual revolution began.

Why? It's simple. In the old days, you accepted children as the natural consequence of your act, and you performed the act with the idea that you were willing to take the consequences: that what you were doing was a serious thing, that could involve you in years and years of hard work.

But when the sex act is divorced from the child, then the child is a kind of side-effect, which is welcome if you *want* the child, and a positive catastrophe if you don't—or at best an "accident." (By the way, how would you like to be considered an unfortunate accident by your parents?)

The attitude toward the child who was not wanted, but intruded himself upon the happy couple, is obvious, and needs no discussion. The New Moralists decry this sort of thing; but instead of saying that people should learn to live with the results of their own deliberate actions, they blame them for not taking precautions in the first place. It isn't that the child is a wonder whose very existence validates the effort spent on trying to give him a chance to live a meaningful life; it's that the child is a "product of conception," an acorn too many that the oak tree has brought forth, no different from an extra Barbie doll that came out of the machinery. For the New Moralist, there's

no immortal soul to think about; there's just a mistake. Don't make the same mistake again.

But New Moralists are surprised when the *wanted* children turn out to be battered. They shouldn't be. If I want a child, then I'm not thinking of the awesome responsibility of subordinating myself to another (extremely selfish) person's development, I'm thinking of how much more "meaningful" *my* life will be with a little kid running around.

That is, we want children now the way we want a dog. We see how the child can relieve boredom and provide a focus for our lives, as well as something we can buy presents for and show pictures of, and so on.

It isn't long, of course, before this wanted child begins doing things (like teething) that are not simply annoying, but intolerable. He wakes you up at midnight, and you have to get up at six to go to work; and it's your turn this time to soothe him and get him back to sleep. You pick him up and rock him in your arms and coo at him, and he finally calms down, and you put him back in the crib, and all is well.

Until two o'clock. So you get up again and blearily rock him and calm him down again, and put him back, and then stagger back to bed again. Until fifteen minutes later. And this goes on, night after night. And that's just the *first* tooth, and what you didn't realize is that children have five thousand three hundred teeth coming in one after another.

Is it any wonder that after a month or two of this, your picking up the child you wanted is apt to be a *bit* less gentle than the first time you did it? And it doesn't stop with teething, of course. By age two, the child has learned (from listening to you so often) the meaning of "No!" and is practicing it at times that not even Einstein could have devised as being more inconvenient.

You know the story. The only way you can survive in all this is if you forget yourself and consider the child's needs as far more

important than any convenience or desire that you personally have. And the mystery of being confronted with a new person who blossoms before your eyes into something far, far greater than anything *you* could have produced is enough to make Old Moralists out of the vast majority of us. (I am reminded of what Whittaker Chambers said in *Witness* that brought about his conversion from atheism: he looked at his daughter's ear, and realized that chance couldn't have produced something so perfect.)

But of course there will be some who will be true to their New Morality upbringing; and the result will be a battered child. And we can expect more as the New Morality takes a stronger and stronger hold on our culture.

Notice, however, that New Moralists are always talking about doing things "for the children." Of course. This is conversion-propaganda. You can win over the traditionalists to any program you want by invoking the thing they consider as more important than themselves. But the actual policies are destroying the children.

Interlude: Feminism's Tragic Turn

Up to now, I haven't really factored feminism into the equation. It wasn't just a result of the sexual revolution; in fact, the impetus behind feminism was there before even the Civil Rights Movement, and once this and the sexual revolution hit our culture, feminism blossomed.

But to see how it happened, we have to go back quite a bit, to the days of my childhood and before.

If you read books like *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, you find the women there actually pitying the men for having to go off to the office and be bossed around, while the women could stay home (or in the beach cottage) managing the household.

I realize that the feminists are already bristling at this, because the book was written by a man, who according to the Third New Commandment couldn't possibly know what life was like from a woman's point of view. But for those of you who haven't been

totally brainwashed, bear with me a bit.

Even in the animal kingdom, the male is the aggressor, but the female is the one that has control. (I feel Edward Wilson consiliently nodding his head at this.) We decided to let my dog have a litter of puppies before we spayed her, thinking it would be healthier for her. Well, she went into heat, and the yard was full of panting males. She stood there and snapped at this one and growled at that, turned away from one and bit another, until the field finally got narrowed down to this ugly Doberman-mix—and to this day, I can't for the life of me figure out what she saw in him. She let him sniff her, and wagged her tail; but when he moved around behind her, she would sit. As I recall, this lasted almost two weeks, with the poor Doberman backing off and pawing the ground in frustration; but finally Luthien was ready and let him have her. (She wound up with thirteen puppies, by the way, which made me regret my decision.) The female had the control.

What we don't see from our vantage point is that a century ago—until the Second World War, in fact—a woman's life was a pretty fulfilling one. She managed the household, which in practically all cases meant supervising the servants, giving orders to the butcher (a man, by the way), the grocer, the draper, the furniture salesman, and on and on. *Little Women* begins with a “poor” family that suffered under the burden of having only one servant. Families in those days who didn't actually have servants had “help” that came in. My mother, the wife of an anything but affluent piano tuner, kept boarders to make ends meet; but she had Mrs. Butler come in to help out in the housework and to take care of me. Even servants (if not live-in) sometimes had servants when they went back home. The really poor, of course, didn't have servants, but used their children as servants; it was expected that by the time you were ten, you took care of chores in the house, and it was Mom, not Dad, who assigned them.

The second thing to notice is that the woman of the house took

no orders, but gave them; *she* was the one who decided what was to be eaten, how it was to be prepared, when the washing was to be done, and when the ironing, how the clothes were to be folded and where they were to be stored. (I remember a really bitter dispute my mother had once with one of the “help” over the folding of sheets.) If she decided she was tired, then she took the day off, and no one had anyone to complain to—no one dared to think of complaining.

Also, if you want to look at who has control of something, look at how the money is *spent*, not at who earns it. And the money of the family, brought in by the father, was spent on household things and on dresses for the lady of the house. These dresses, by the way, were often made so that it was impossible to *do* any work in them, with their enormous skirts that kept you three feet away from everything. Even the very buttons were so arranged (opposite to the man’s, who often put on his clothes himself) so that the servant could fasten them easily; and they were located in places where only a servant (or a husband) could fasten them at all.

True, the woman was “bought” with her dowry. But the dowry, really, was her contribution to the finances of the family; the husband’s *income* was the family’s money, and it was spent by the woman. Even as far back as 300 B.C., Plato remarked in the *Republic* that one of the advantages of his proposal of abolishing the family would be the avoidance of “all the little tricks they have to resort to to scrape together what they just hand over to their wives and servants to spend.”

And men in fact did not regard marriage as a convenient way to have a live-in cook, housekeeper, and prostitute rolled into one. They all knew that it would have been a hell of a lot cheaper and less hassle to hire the three of them, and marriage was thought of as a trap.

Then why did they marry? For two reasons: Back in the days of horse and carriage, the old song held true: you couldn’t get anything but disgraceful, dangerous sex without marriage. And secondly, men *did* fall in love. They still do.

It never ceased to amaze me as I used to look at one of these young tiny “oppressed” things walking down the corridor of my college with the huge football player panting after her, writhing and twisting around that delicate pinky. How can they not know what power they have?

Put it this way: was there ever any oppressed group in history except women who woke up one day and said to themselves and their men, “You know what? You’ve been oppressing me! Stop it!” and had their oppressors say, “Really? Honestly, Hon, I had no idea. What do you want me to do?”

But if all this is true, what happened to bring us to where we are now? Basically, the Second World War.

I remember it vividly. Once the War started, all the young men were in uniform (I was still a child), and so Rosie the Riveter had to take their place in the factories. Rosie suddenly discovered that (a) she made a *lot* more money than she did as a servant, and (b) the boss at the factory was a *lot* easier to work for than her mistress. You did your job, you didn’t get second-guessed at every move (no arguments and tears over how you fold sheets), you got paid, and you went home. Terrific.

So the pool of servants dried up faster than a shower in the Sahara. Which, of course, meant that the servants’ work now devolved upon the woman of the house. And *that* rapidly meant that the family money was now spent on labor-saving devices: first, the vacuum cleaner, next the washing machine, the refrigerator, then the washer with a spin-drier, followed rather closely by the drier itself, permanent press, then the dishwasher, the blender, the microwave, and so on. Carriages, which needed grooms to care for the horses and footmen and all the rest, gave way to automobiles.

And since the woman had the car now (the second one, if she didn’t drive her husband to work), she could do all the shopping for a whole week much cheaper at the single supermarket. But at the supermarket, you don’t talk to anyone; you just pick out the stuff

and go home. To what? Not to servants any more; to the kids and the machines.

But these labor-saving devices *did* save labor. In the days of servants, the washing used to take a whole day, rubbing the clothes against the washboard and then rinsing them in the other tub, and hanging them outside; and the ironing took another. Now it takes three hours max, and most of *that* time, you're free to be doing something else or watching the soaps.

So what was the problem? That these machines were monotonous to use, and were, after all, machines and not human beings; very few people spend time in conversation with a washer, whereas before, you could relate to the servant—with the special added attraction of being condescending. But the only actual people the women of the Forties and Fifties saw were their own kids and the neighbor over the back fence—but mostly the kids, who are lovely in their way, but not really stimulating to talk to. Besides, kids are absolutely horrible things to give orders to; unlike servants, they tend to resent being bossed around and drag their heels and in general make it more effort to get them to do anything than to do it yourself.

The result was that women, especially intelligent women, were understandably bored right out of their minds. Then when the Civil Rights Movement came along, and victimization got prominent play, women began to see themselves as victims, and instead of looking with pity on their husbands who went off to work, they realized that their husbands were actually interacting with *adults*, and on some semblance of an intellectual level that didn't have anything to do with diapers and how to run the dishwasher.

And then came The Pill. Women saw that by using it they could be the equivalent of men in sexual promiscuity—and this made them realize how “inferior” they were sexually in the old days, and this brought forth books like *The Second Sex*.

So they took the tragic turn. They decided to be just like men, on the idea that to do what men did was to be their equal. Note the

irony here. The man was the ideal, something to be imitated; no longer were the distinctive feminine differences, which had once given women (in their minds at least) a sense of superiority, looked on with anything but loathing as signs of how oppressed previous generations had been.

A nation without fathers.

But it all backfired, though you'd never know it listening to the feminists. The institution of the indissoluble marriage was designed to protect the *woman*, really, who was biologically and emotionally bonded to the children in a way men aren't. Men tend to look on their children as their "product," so to speak; "Look what *I've* done!" and either to ignore them or to push them to be worthy of so great an ancestor, while women focus on the person and love and nurture him for all his faults.

Okay, so I'm making generalizations and using stereotypes. The problem with stereotypes is that you can't apply them blindly to individuals; but the reason they *are* stereotypes is that they tend to be verified so often—more of the stereotype in some cases, and less in others. It doesn't follow that a given woman is nurturing; but it's absurd to say that women aren't on average much more nurturing than men are.

And don't cloud the issue with "But that's the way they were trained." Biologically, it's what you would predict from an instinct that gave the mother working breasts and infants that needed years of nurturing before they could survive on their own; and attempts to train women out of this (and why would anyone *want* to? Think of that.) have found them reverting to type. Well, surprise, surprise.

But one of the other stereotypes that men still believe but won't say any more is contained in the phrase, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." Women, probably just *because* they are stuck for years with the "products of conception," tend to be very single-minded and determined when they have made up their minds. Men

used to laugh at women for how they vacillated, because women don't make up their minds lightly; they can't afford to. But once they do! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my will shall never pass away! A man, unless he is a complete brute, is totally helpless when faced with a determined woman—and men have recognized this for ages.

—And now I've alienated the three readers who have agreed with me up to this point.

But for the rest of you, concede that it's conceivable that there might be a germ of truth in what I say, and look at what happened. The first thing was that the Civil Rights movement got stood on its head, once the feminists took hold of it—which was almost right away. Equality based on ignoring a totally irrelevant characteristic turned into the pseudo-equality that pretended that women were just as good as men as firefighters and combat soldiers; it was just that the standards were too rigid and “irrelevant” to the tasks. Strength requirements were “obviously” designed to eliminate women, by analogy with the ridiculous voting requirements that disenfranchised blacks. Group rights replaced consideration of the individual; and so now we regularly discriminate—in *favor*, of course, of the oppressed groups—in the name of not discriminating.

The very language was looked on as a tool of oppression, and the most idiotic ukases were passed to remedy the evil—ukases which the men meekly went along with. I remember one time years ago in a meeting I had the temerity to say, “But the members of the humanities faculty opposed this to a man!” and a priest replied, “How dare you! We have a woman in the Theology department!” I answered, “I am not going to be lectured to by you on how to use the English language.” (Anyway, what did *he* know? He was a celibate man—pardon, “male.” Isn't it interesting that men are now identified by their crotch, even though “man” is supposed to be a term that applies only to them?)

It was a pure decree from On High that “lady,” a term of respect

from time immemorial, was now demeaning because of the phrase “ladies of the night” (which would make “gentleman” a pejorative term because of calling tramps “gentlemen of the road”—irony is totally lost on these people); “chairman” had to be replaced by “chairperson,” and “chairpersonship” invented, showing that the “man” was still behind the thought, since the abstract of “person” is “personhood,” not “personship.” Somehow, it was an insult to call someone Mrs. or Miss, and you had to use Ms. And how do you now write the salutation of a letter when you don’t know the “gender” of the person you’re addressing? As to “gender” itself, a word taken from words and applied to sex, I say no more.

If you don’t bristle at this mangling of the language I love, it shows what a determined campaign which takes no prisoners will do.

“Sure, go ahead! Blame the women for all this!” I’m sorry; I am not going to be swayed by the feminine ploy of forcing people who disagree into a guilt-trip. I don’t *blame* the women; I understand why they took the reins the way they did. But the only *solution* to the mess has to come from the women; the men, as I said, are completely helpless when the women are determined, because a determined woman will not see anything that does not reinforce what she wants done, and will not rest or allow any rest until it *is* done. This is not necessarily a bad thing, unless it is applied badly, by the way.

But the point is that unless the women wake up and shuck off the postmodernism they are so responsible for foisting on us, they won’t be able to realize that what in fact has happened as the result of their “liberation” from male oppression has been to free the *men*, and to make women and especially their children victims a hundred times worse than they ever had been in the past—and unless they do, we are all doomed. Men simply can’t do it; women have to; and ironically, it’s mainly in their interest if they do.

So let me veer away from stereotypes a minute, and explain what I meant by the title of this section: A country without fathers. I didn’t mean that more and more men are refusing to accept their

fatherhood; I mean that there are *no* fathers in the sense of “male human beings responsible for their children” in the contraceptive culture, especially when abortion is brought into the picture.

I’ll do some analysis of abortion in the next section, but for now I need the fact of it to establish my point. The first thing to note is that a person is *responsible* for what he has control over: what could have been different had his choice been different.

Given that, then who has control over whether a child results from sex, in a contraceptive culture? (1) If a woman wants to get pregnant by a man, she can have sex with him telling him she’s on the Pill, and how is he to know she’s lying? (2) If she *doesn’t* want to get pregnant by him, all she has to do is be on the Pill (or whatever), and how is he to know that she’s lying? (3) If a man wants to make a woman pregnant, and she doesn’t want to get pregnant, then with contraceptives, there’s no way he can make her pregnant; and (4) if he *doesn’t* want her to get pregnant and she wants to become pregnant, then even if he uses a condom, it’s not all that difficult for her to have his baby, if he has sex often enough with her.

Do you see where I’m leading? In a contraceptive culture, sex “in itself” is not supposed to have anything to do with reproduction; as I mentioned, the contraceptive mentality regards the sterile sex act as the “reality” and the child as a side-effect that *can be attached* to it if one wants, without being something that “belongs to it as such.”

But the one who does this “attaching” is the woman, not the man. Reproductive freedom is totally hers; both she and the man are *sexually* free to do what they please nowadays; but the man has no say in whether the sex is reproductive or not—or rather, if he has a say, it is to express his wish, which the woman then takes under advisement and either vetoes or goes along with.

It follows from this as night follows day that it is the *woman* and *only* the woman in the contraceptive culture who is responsible for the child. The man is now a mere condition for her to exercise her reproductive freedom, since the sex act *itself* is not something

reproductive. True, the man is a *conditio sine qua non* for reproduction; but notice that even here, the man's *action* or contact is not necessary, given sperm banks. We have lesbian couples who decide that one of them will have a child. The man and his sexual intercourse are no more a *cause* of the child than I am the cause of my grandchild, on the grounds that if I hadn't fathered my daughter, she couldn't have become a mother by her husband.

This is made even more evident when abortion is factored in. (5) If the woman becomes pregnant and the man doesn't want her to have the baby, there's nothing he can do to stop her; and (6) if she becomes pregnant and doesn't want the baby, the man can't force her not to have an abortion on the grounds that she's killing "his" child. It's *not* his child; it's *her body*, the culture says, and she can do whatever she wants with it.

And so there are no fathers any more. In the contraceptive culture, the father has no choice in being a father; all he decides is whether to have sex or not. But to have sex is *not* to make oneself potentially a father; sex, remember doesn't have anything to do with children in the contraceptive culture.

Is it any wonder that more and more men are saying, "Look, it's not *my* fault; all I wanted was a good time, and she told me that she was on the Pill. And then I asked her—I pleaded with her—to have an abortion, and she told me Nothing doing. So don't blame *me*."

Women, of course, will have none of this. When they don't want to have a child and their man wants one, it's too bad, Buster; it's my life and you have nothing to do with it. But when they *have* a child, then suddenly the man has everything to do with it.

But you see, men don't have to go along with this nonsense. They can just walk away. The women have freed the men from commitment, thinking that they were freeing *themselves* from oppression. And when the men discover that they've been diddled, they don't rant; they just walk away. If they have no say in the matter, then they'll *say* no say; they'll find somebody else.

And we've discovered that this doesn't really bother the men all that much. Sure, they love their kids; but it's that funny kind of love that's not too unhappy with not having to change diapers and wipe noses, that likes simply watching from a distance as former Junior grows up. It'd be nice if they could to steer him into football or rocket science, perhaps; but it's pretty easy to just let bygones be bygones. Besides, the new woman really *is* on the Pill, and she's a lot hotter than Martha ever was.

Meanwhile, Martha has the diapers and the runny noses, and has to get a job or another pig of a man who's willing to take over that rotten Henry's role. Which he never can do, of course, because the kids aren't fools; they know that he's not Daddy; Daddy's over there with the new babe. And that's pretty cool, if you happen to be a dude yourself, even though he *is* a rat. Ask Dr. Laura. I had a black student once who told me that when he was seventeen, he went to the office downtown to see his father, and to chew him out for abandoning his mother and himself. He told me another time that he had a son by an old girlfriend he didn't care about any more, and "was going to take him away from her one day when he settled down and raise him as his own kid." Sure. Of course.

Who's free and who's oppressed in this picture?

And women are discovering what men knew all along: that work is not all that fulfilling. Take the most exciting, creative job you can think of, say something like Rex Harrison's playing Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*. Exciting. Creative. Fulfilling. Having done some acting myself, I know what it's like to say exactly the same thing in exactly the same way with exactly the same excitement and exactly the same gestures day after day—and he did it week after week, for years on end. The only thing that makes it bearable is that every day you have a new group of people to convince that Henry Higgins is last century's Bill Clinton: likeable but rotten to the core. (I love playing Higgins, by the way.)

The same goes for teaching, my profession for thirty-five years. If

you're honest with the kids, you'll keep your presentation fresh and exciting to them, but you won't just add frills that entertain *you*, and you'll stick to the stuff that these kids need to know, just as the kids last year and fifteen years ago did. What makes all this monotony (after all, you *know* this stuff, forwards, backwards, and upside down) worth while is that the *kids* don't know it, and they're wonderful kids, and they need to know it.

Any job, when you look on it as what it gets *you* besides salary, is a boring kind of thing; it's what you're doing for *others* that redeems it. When you've put the last stitching on your fifteen thousandth Tickle Me Elmo doll, you think of the kid who's going to laugh along with this Elmo that you produced, and you smile. Otherwise, you complain about carpal tunnel syndrome and demand more money.

But this is just a pale phantom of what women *had* when they managed the household and raised their children and bettered and tamed their men. And they gave it up for this! No wonder they feel cheated; but they've cheated themselves.

Don't get me wrong. Unless we could find a supply of servants, and mom-and-pop corner butchers and bakers and greengrocers, there's no way that women can go back to the days when "women's work" was the envy of the men.

The point is that the women had a real problem, back in 1950. But they tried to solve it in the worst possible way: instead of forcing men to be responsible for their actions with them—instead of holding on to the notion that sex is a joint venture that involves the possibility of a child, in which both partners cooperate in the act and take *all* of its consequences, without trying to pretend that it's just part of itself—instead of this, they tried to be as irresponsible as men are biologically. And they can't be. And the result is that *they* and their children are the ones who suffer. And, I might add, the men they allow to become Bill Clintons suffer just as much as *men*, because they're trapped in the perpetual adolescence that our affluent

culture not only allows but promotes. Whatever you think of Clinton as President, he's a pretty sorry excuse for a man.

There's got to be a better way. But it's only the women (Hillary take note) who can bring it about, because the men aren't going to give up the freedom they're permitted to have. But the women still have the power, because men still need sex, and still fall in love, and are still no match for a determined woman.

The terrible disaster of abortion.

And in all of this, I haven't mentioned the real tragedy of this tragic turn: that in order to be as sexually irresponsible as men biologically are, women are faced with killing their own children. Many women even recognize this (since it's becoming so very, very hard to ignore it), but they accept it as just a fact of life, of being a woman; you have to make hard choices sometimes. The choice to dismember your own child!

Oh, come on! You talk as if it were a two-year-old. You see? Once you've bought into the lie that there's nothing amiss about contraception, then all the other lies are simple to swallow.

So let's do some more logic. I'll give you the standard items of "evidence" that abortions are okay, and comment on what each implies. Judith Jarvis Thompson years ago gave the argument that even if the fetus were a person, he had no right to use your body, any more than an intruder has a right to use your home; and so you can "unplug" yourself from him even if it kills him. This would imply that if a person breaks into your house and offers no threat to your life, you can kill him to get him off the premises. I wouldn't try that if there's a policeman nearby; it's called "murder."

But more to the point, what of two Siamese twins, who happen to share a vital organ? When they get to be twenty, John suddenly says to James, "You've been using my heart long enough; I'm going to separate myself, so say your prayers." To which James replies, "What do you mean, *your* heart?" Which one has the "right" to

“unplug” himself, and which one has to let himself be killed?

Obviously, that ploy won't work. But still, “a woman has a right to do what she wants with her own body.” I would be willing to concede this, if you added, “as long as she doesn't do harm to anyone else.” If you want to make this into a right to an abortion, you have to add the silent premise, “and the fetus is a part of the mother's body, not a distinct organism—or at least, not another person.”

The trouble with this, first of all, is that biological parts exist for and act for the good of the whole. But from the very beginning, the embryo and fetus are taking from the mother (often, early on, making her feel very sick) for their own benefit at her expense (which is why she has to take extra calcium, for instance, or *she* will suffer as the fetus leaches the calcium *he* needs from her bones). Mothers' bodies reject implantation of the embryo, which the embryo thwarts in a way analogous to a tapeworm. Clearly, the biology of the situation is that a pregnant woman is *two* distinct organisms, one of which happens to be inside the other, and is a parasite on the other. So that won't work.

But “the embryo or fetus are no more a human being than an acorn is an oak tree or a caterpillar is a butterfly.” The trouble with this argument is that caterpillars are organized in a totally different way from butterflies, and until metamorphosis grow into bigger caterpillars, with their own organs, metabolisms, and life. Similarly, the acorn stays an acorn forever, unless it's planted (or unless water gets into it), when it is totally reorganized, and now must be an oak tree or die. And one of the first visible organs to develop in the human embryo is the eye, which is of absolutely no use for life inside the womb; and in fact, *all* the organs which develop remarkably early (by the time the second period has been missed) are adapted for life *outside* the uterus, not inside—with the single exception of the umbilical cord, which, when all is said and done, is nothing but an IV tube. So *that* won't hold water. The fetus is clearly organized as

the same kind of thing it is when it's two months out of the uterus, or twenty years out of it. It's a human being, from the very beginning.

"No, wait, now. At the earliest stages, you can separate the cell mass in two and you get twins. That proves that it's not *an* organism, but just a mass of tissue." No it doesn't. You can cut up a starfish into a dozen pieces and throw them all back into the ocean, and every one of them will turn into a new starfish; but no biologist holds that the starfish is a "colony of cells," any more than a geranium is, in spite of the fact that you can cut off a branch and grow it as a separate plant. So that's out.

"Well, but even if it's a distinct organism and a human organism, it's not a *person*, for heaven's sake. It doesn't interact with others." Tell that to the pregnant woman who happens to be annoying Junior inside her in her hurry to get to the airplane. Or who gets kicked in the stomach every time she eats something cold like a popsicle. Anyway, if you had to be able to interact with others to be a person with a right not to be killed, then sleeping people could be killed. Nope. It won't work. If something is a human being, it's the *kind of thing* that makes choices and controls its life, even if because of the circumstances it can't actually do this at the moment.

The point is that if you want to hold that abortions are okay, then you have to blind yourself to the facts—or subscribe to the First New Commandment and say that the fact is that there *aren't* any facts.

Well, but what about an abortion in the case of incest or rape? Well, let me give you this scenario: A woman has an accident and is in the hospital unconscious for three days. During that time, a man comes in and rapes her unconscious body. She recovers, having no notion that this happened, and returns home to her husband, and to her joy a month later, she finds herself pregnant, thinking (of course) that she's carrying their child. The child is born, and grows to two years old, and then for some reason has a DNA test, and it is discovered that the woman's husband is not the father—and let's say

that investigation proves that there *was* a rape while she was in the hospital.

Now. Can she kill the two-year-old because she can't deal with the fact that he's a child of rape? If you say, "Well, she can put him up for adoption, so she doesn't have to kill him," my answer is, "What if the procedure takes nine months? Can she kill him to get rid of him tomorrow, or does she have to wait the nine months?" I *hope* the New Morality hasn't so blinded you that I have to spell out the answers to these questions.

And, of course, the case of incest is the same; if the woman is a female Oedipus, who doesn't discover until years later that the man she thought was a stranger is actually her long-lost brother, does that give her the right to kill nine-year-old Junior, who resulted from this incestuous union?

Then if not, and you can have an abortion for rape or incest, you're saying that the fetus is not the same kind of thing as the born human being. And I just pointed out that there is no objective evidence to support this, and all kinds of evidence against it.

"So you're saying that women who have abortions should be prosecuted for murder, right?" No. It's a homicide, but there's generally no deliberate intent to kill a human being; and mercy is the order of the day, because any woman who would kill her child has got to be emotionally so overwrought (or intellectually so blind) that this mitigates the evil greatly. The *abortionist* who encourages and abets this sort of thing has a lot more to answer for.

(By the way, bombing abortion clinics or killing abortionists "to protect the babies" is morally wrong. You can't use a death *as a means* to protect life; it's a direct contradiction of what you're trying to do, even if you're "protecting" *many* lives. You can only kill someone in defending another's life *when your action of blocking an actual attack on that life happens unfortunately to result in the death of the attacker*. That doesn't obtain in killing the abortionist. You're not blocking his *action*, you're stopping *him*.)

Abortion is a terrible, terrible wrong. We have killed over thirty million human persons since *Roe v. Wade*, and done it often for what were thought to be the best of reasons. But the end never justifies the means; and the cheapening of life we see all around us is the result of it.

From the lie of thinking that contraceptive sex involves no contradiction, it is a tiny step to the lie that abortion is just an “option” when the contraceptive fails, that it’s just another form of contraception. Partial-birth abortion, when a baby’s brains are sucked out of his skull in the very act of being born, is even justified (by the Supreme Court, no less) on the grounds that there’s no logical reason for outlawing this and allowing any other abortion. But rather than follow the logic, we arrogate to ourselves the “right” to decide when *someone else* is human or not, irrespective of the facts—and that leads to “physician assisted suicide,” and as no-longer-thank-God-Dr. Kevorkian has just demonstrated, to “physician killing of the willing,” and, as we have in the Netherlands, “physician killing of those who *ought* to be willing.”

It’s due to the tragic turn feminism took, and there’s only one way to remedy it. Women have to face the facts of what they’re doing to themselves, their men, and especially their children, and once again force men by social pressure to be as responsible for what they do (they used to be, after all) as women have always been and always will be. In some cases, biology is destiny. But we aren’t *just* biology; and women *can*, as they have in the past, bring pressure to bear on men to make *reality* be destiny. If they don’t, the New Morality wins, the Clintonian version of sex is as much the real thing as anything else, and humanity loses.

Abortion is the *pons asinorum* of the New Morality, as can be seen from the fact that Bill Clinton, who was all over the place on almost every other issue, never wavered on this one. If abortion goes, then it goes because there is a return to objective truth, and because the facts matter more than the agenda. If that happens, then the

sexual revolution is over, because in fact sex is the opposite in many ways of what the New Moralists say it is. In that case, the First New Commandment has been shown up for the sham that it is, and agenda-driven “science” will be laughed off the world stage, and we will once again be oriented toward finding out what the facts really are, rather than manufacturing “facts” that support our moral prejudices.

President Clinton was smart enough to see this; and so like a true New Moralist, he went on public television to defend the grisly partial birth abortion procedure, having with him on the dais four women, whom he claimed would have died had they not had it. All four of them subsequently admitted that their lives were not in danger, that the abortions were elective. And this would have to be the case; if the doctor's hand is already in the birth canal around the head of the baby, then clearly the baby's head can slip out without any further trauma to the mother. But then you have a baby, not a “tissue mass resulting from conception.”

But hey, what's a little lie about sex? Besides, it was the *truth*, wasn't it? It promoted the New Morality and kept the Religious Right from destroying the freedom of women to kill their own children with impunity, even during birth. So the agenda was the right one, and that's what truth means in the New Morality. There *are* no facts, remember.

Keep this in mind as we go on and find more about what the New Morality is forcing upon us. Agenda is all. Facts don't exist. That's a fact. Oh yes?

The Sixth New Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Harm the Environment

Here's another of those commandments that are imposed on everyone, whether they like it or not. And, like the one to limit the family, it seems so reasonable and innocuous—who would deliberately damage the environment?—until you have a *reason* for doing something that the New Moralists think is harmful, and then it's Katy bar the doors.

What I want to stress here is that this New Commandment doesn't say that *it's a good thing* to preserve the environment; it says it *must* be preserved—at all costs, even if it involves human suffering. Remember the spotted owl and the loggers' jobs? After all, who are *we* to put ourselves above the good of the planet?

And here's where Darwinism and the morality that follows from it rears its head once again.

What's behind this New Commandment.

You see, if we are nothing but a species that has evolved by chance, then we aren't essentially any different from any other species on the face of the earth; everything, including us, is just a more or less complex mechanism whose basic function is survival and reproduction.

But there's a slightly new aspect of evolution behind this particular New Commandment: the fact that, for some mysterious reason—or rather, for no reason at all, but just by chance—the organisms that evolve *cooperate* with each other. The evolutionist would say, because it's easier to survive if you're in harmony with the environment rather than against it. Of *course* they say this, because there's nothing else they *can* say without bringing a plan into the picture, and this goes directly against the agenda that is driving evolutionism: the idea that there can't be a God. So cooperation has to be just a condition for survival.

But the point is that it follows that, insofar as human activities harm the environment, they go against the basic (cooperative) essence of what we are, and so they must be stopped.

But that's just part of it. The rest of the story is that it's *technology* that's doing the damage; and technology is the use of human reason as divorced from instinct: a cold, mathematical, calculating, unfeeling use of reason, setting abstract goals and computing the most efficient means of getting to them, with no consideration whatsoever of our instinctive desire to fit in and become one with the rich, diverse macrocosm we find ourselves immersed in.

Remember, reason's *reality*, on this view, is that it is just the tool by which we serve our emotions, particularly our reproductive ones; and therefore, science and technology are a gross abuse of reason, paving over the lush landscape, spewing noxious gases into the atmosphere, stripping whole mountains of their trees and even their soil and soul to get at the coal beneath the surface—only to use that coal to heat the globe and pollute the very air we and all the other

creatures around us breathe.

Walk down Fifth Avenue in New York, and all you see is blacktop, taxis, glass, and concrete. Such a thing as a tree barely grows in Brooklyn, and in Manhattan you're as likely to see one as you are a spotted owl. Instead of the sound of birds and the stridulation of crickets and cicadas, you hear car horns and street drills. Instead of people sitting on the grass contemplating hawks making lazy circles in the sky, you find pedestrians and roller bladers speeding by, all with identical frowns of concentrated depression, most with ears covered with headsets, drowning out the cacophony with their own private cacophones. Let the day be too hot, and the air conditioners overload the electrical grid, and whole states grind to a halt (as in California in early 2001), with people stuck for hours in stifling elevators, and thousands, without so much as a candle, cursing the darkness.

All this because we have lost our true identity. We have forgotten the heritage of the Native Americans who preceded us, who were one with nature and the environment, who would apologize to the deer and the antelope who so unselfishly gave their lives so that the human race also could live; and the human race gave back to nature as much as it took, until it was invaded by the technology of the white man from across the water, and its land was not only stolen from it, it was systematically and ruthlessly trashed, in the name of enlightenment and Reason as the Master of the Universe.

It has gone far enough. It has gone far too far. It must be stopped, and not only stopped but reversed. It is not simply that we are destroying our world, we are destroying our very selves. We spend our lives sitting in front of computer screens, using our magnificent muscles to tap out nonsense on keyboards, giving us carpal tunnel syndrome, eyestrain headaches, and stiff necks. But more than this, we are destroying our souls, turning them into slaves of the very machinery we claim to be using, and instead of letting our hearts roam free over the beauty and magnificence of nature, we

bottle up our emotions for days on end, and wonder why we spend so much on therapy.

And the way to reverse this before it is too late is to reorient ourselves toward our true reality, which is the reality we have as part of nature; instead of subordinating ourselves to machines, we should swallow our pride and subordinate ourselves to the planet, to which we are in fact subordinate, and recognize what a magnificent thing it is, and how insignificant we are. Once we do this, peace will once again reign in our hearts, just as it did in the hearts of the aborigines we so heedlessly tore from their habitat and discarded on the dump of the reservation.

—Sound familiar? Sound noble and uplifting? Doesn't it make you want to get out and tear your clothes off and be *genuine* for a change! Just be careful not to do it in January.

My problem with all of this is that I go back to the days before a good deal of this technology. My parents didn't have a car when I was a kid, and so we used that wonderful non-polluting, electric public transportation, just like everybody else. I remember that we had a choice to walk up to Mount Auburn Street, ten blocks away, to the trolley line (they still use trackless trolleys on that line; it's the Boston area, after all) that went into Harvard Square (padon me, I mean Havad Squaya), where the trolleys came every fifteen minutes, or to walk three or four blocks down to Arsenal Street and hope you were lucky, since the trolleys there were twenty minutes to an hour apart. And, of course, you always chose the closer stop, and you always just missed the trolley, and you had to wait and wait and wait—and then stand up all the way (because everyone else before you had been waiting too) to Central Square, where you could get a transfer and go down into the subway to get into Boston, where you'd come up out of the underground and walk fifteen or twenty more blocks to get to your destination. The whole trip (some fifteen minutes by car) only took a couple of hours.

But we had clean air back then. We did? Everybody burned coal

in those days—well, my father burned coke. The truck would come up and dump the load into the coal bin, and he would break his back shoveling it into the furnace every morning, and air would blast up through the registers, and soot would blast up into the sky, covering the trees, the sidewalks, the clapboards and everything else with fine grit.

And every fall, there was the delicious smell of the pollution of burning leaves, huge piles of them in front of every house on the block. You could smell it for weeks on end. And every spring, the little truck farmers outside the city would burn whole fields to get them ready for planting, and so the pleasant aroma would appear once again.

But since there weren't cars in the street, at least you didn't have noxious auto exhaust to drown out these smells. No. You could even play in the street, if you took a little care to step around the horse buns that remained until the street sweeper came by with his little cart. They added to the atmosphere of the cities, giving them a bucolic tinge.

And the farmers, attuned to nature, came by with their little wagons, loaded with live hens and produce, I remember. You'd order a chicken and pick it out, and the farmer would wring its neck before your eyes, and hand it to you, still squirming in post-death spasms. I don't recall his apologizing to the thing before he throttled it; but then, he wasn't an Indian, I guess. Frankly, I'd rather be confronted with the packaged chicken breast, all plucked and skinned—that doesn't even *look* like an animal—than deal with this. But of course, the answer to this is to be a Vegan and not kill the poor little chickens at all; just slaughter the celery.

None of this sissy air conditioning back then either; when summer came, you sweated. Or you went to the ice box after the iceman had lugged his hundred pounds on his back up the two flights of stairs and put it in the top of the box (where it would drip and fill the pan you'd have to empty or have a flood) and chipped off

a piece of ice, and you sucked it and pretended that your frozen mouth made the rest of you cool, as if you were a dog. On really hot days, you spent time down in the cellar beside the coal, communing with nature in the form of black beetles and spiders, trying to read by the single 40-watt bulb in the center of the room, with the octopus arms of the furnace groping upwards all around you.

Those were the days. Thank God they're gone! If you think you're a slave to machinery now, that's nothing to being a slave to the environment. Imagine waiting three quarters of an hour in the pelting rain for a trolley that never comes, or walking fifteen blocks to school through six inches of snow. That's the time to get back to, because that's being *real!* Real stupid.

—And by the way, this Native American we rhapsodize about who was corrupted by the white man and his technology may have apologized to the bison he killed on the plain—but he'd kill a whole animal and slice off a hunk or two of the hump, which he would then eat, leaving the rest of the carcass lying there to rot. Rather than go back to his kill the next day, he'd kill a fresh one. Why not? They were all over the place.

And the reason the Mayans have left so many cities in the Yucatan is that they'd build one and farm the life out of the surroundings, and then just abandon it and move on to build a city somewhere else. Oh, it was just great back then. Francis Parkman in *The Oregon Trail* remarks at what terrific shape the Indians were in. Well, they had to be, didn't they? Hunting and gathering are back-breaking. It's no joke, you know, picking up your tepee—your whole house and everything in it—and moving it along to follow the herd as it migrates; and if you don't, you starve.

Sure, I sit at my computer, staring at the screen. And when I make a mistake, I move the cursor back and correct it, before ever I print out a page. Back in the good old days, I'd write things out longhand and cross out and insert until I couldn't read the page any more; and then get disgusted and write it out again as fast as I could,

and three days later try to figure out what it was I had put down. And then I'd take it to the manual typewriter—*there* was finger exercise for you!—and pound out a “fair copy,” messing up my fingers with maybe two carbons, the last of which you could barely see (especially the letters you made with your pinky), and read it over and realize I'd made a typo in the middle of the page, and spend fifteen minutes debating with myself whether it would make a worse impression if I let it stand or if I penned in the correction, or whether I should go through the effort of typing the whole page again. And corrections that would alter subsequent pages were simply out of the question. I remember spending hours trying to find a way to add a sentence and cut what I'd put on the rest of the page so that this would be the only page to retype. It was great practice in learning how many ways the English language can be manipulated—but the motivation wasn't finding the best way to say what you wanted; it was to get it to fit the space.

Thanks, but I'll take the computer screen. And when *I* walk down Fifth Avenue, I see the beauty of the buildings stretching up to the stars, stalagmites more awesome than any in Mammoth Cave. Much as I love the Grand Tetons and Yosemite, there's a lot to be said for New York; it just takes some getting used to before you really appreciate it. I know; I lived there many decades ago for a couple of years, and I still remember it fondly. As my son has discovered (he owns an apartment in midtown Manhattan), New York is a great city to live in, but you wouldn't want just to visit there; while Yosemite is the place to visit, but don't try to live in it.

—You see how easy it is to come to any conclusion you want, if you let your heart lead, and find reasons to bolster your feelings?

How true to nature is environmentalism?

So let's take a look at this cooperativeness in nature and see if it supports what the environmentalist wackos read into it.

Now it's true that organisms (in their natural habitats) *do*

cooperate with each other. But there's no *a priori* reason why Organism A is better off because it happens to be helping Organism B. The only thing you can answer to this is that if it *didn't* help Organism B, then Organism B wouldn't be around, and it *is* around, isn't it? So it has to be the case that the organisms we find among us today have the characteristic of cooperating with each other. But that's still *post hoc ergo propter hoc* reasoning. It still doesn't say *how* it helps Organism A's survival that it benefits Organism B; all it says is that without Organism A, Organism B wouldn't be here.

The reason this is significant is that when you take an organism out of its natural habitat into another ecological situation, it can be horrendously destructive; even something as benign as the rabbit, once introduced into Australia, wreaked havoc with all kinds of other organisms there, because it didn't have natural enemies to keep the population in check. In themselves, organisms are aggressively rapacious; *they* don't care what they do to the environment, as long as they can flourish and multiply.

So there's no built-in drive, so to speak, to cooperate with other organisms; from what happens when organisms are taken out of the place where there's a balance because the surroundings happen to be partly benign and partly hostile, and put into a place where the balance tips toward the more benign than hostile, they gobble up the benign part with no qualms whatever. It's just, of course, that eventually, no matter what the environment, they kill off enough of the things they're destroying that they run out of food, and then their population stabilizes at this new level—but in an environment now depleted of the organisms they've destroyed. Look at the kudzu plant in Georgia—and believe me, it won't be hard to find; it's all over the skeletons of the trees it's choked to death.

But it's not just human beings that bring in foreign plants and animals. The Galapagos Islands, Darwin's inspiration, though practically on the equator, were populated by penguins without any human agency. Storms carry organisms out of their natural habitats

into new ecologies, and they mess up the new situation until things more or less settle down, when some new disruption comes along to change everything again.

After all, dinosaurs roamed the earth at one time, and there was no white male human in his caravel coming over from Europe bringing to them gifts of venereal disease; something happened that wiped them all out, in spite of their foot-long teeth. The latest theory is that it was a meteor that polluted the whole world for a fair-thee-well and blocked out the sun and iced up the earth, and all the rest of it. Something that could happen tomorrow, without anything human bothering to intervene.

What I'm saying is that catastrophes like that wrought by El Niño and the 1998 hurricane in Nicaragua are *natural*, and as consistent with the way things are as anything else that's ever happened. But they do damage thousands of times greater than anything we puny human beings can hope to accomplish with our buzz-saws. Sure, we can cut down the jungle—excuse me, the “rain forest”—in Brazil, but all you have to do is stop cutting and wait five years—one year—and the jungle (a different one, to be sure) comes back at you. In Chichén-Itzá, they must constantly beat back the jungle, or it will take over again.

But all that's all right, of course, because it's natural. We have city-owned parkland across the street from our house, and it's been let to “go natural” because the city never got around to taking care of it; and the grapevines are doing a good imitation of kudzu, and the wild honeysuckle are turning the undergrowth into a miniature jungle; in short, it's full of garbage plants and the ruins of what they killed. It turns out that Xavier University down the street decided to use the land behind this pristine scenery, and part of their master plan was to maintain the strip of park, and make a nature trail through it. When I asked if they'd take down the eyesore vines that were choking the sycamores and oaks, the biologist in charge told me, “Well, if they're not native, we'll remove them, but if they belong

there, like wild grape vines, then they'll have to fight it out with the trees." See? It's *real*. Just like the little patches along the expressway full of ragweed and goldenrod that have little signs that say, "Natural wildflower area: Do not mow."

I'm reminded of the story of the preacher meeting a farmer who had taken over an abandoned farm three years before. "I see that you and the Lord have done a great job here," said the preacher, and got the reply, "Yeah, well you should have seen it when the Lord had it by himself."

I'm sure you know horror stories of how the EPA makes ancient Draco look like Pericles, and how the environment is really just an excuse to make trouble for technology. Just last week, I had to take my car in for what they call an E/Check (that's right, with the little sign), and let it idle for fifteen minutes (because you're told not to shut off the motor while you wait) causing, along with the other cars in line, untold pollution while I waited to get in, whereupon they put the car on rollers, revved up the engine to autobahn speed, and rolled a fan in front of it and put an exhaust-collector behind the tailpipe—and charged me twenty dollars. This is supposed to purify the air, never mind that pre-1980 cars, which are the real polluters, don't have to measure up to the standards for the new cars, which don't pollute anyway. And diesel trucks are totally exempt. Ever been behind one of these non-polluting diesels?

But they're *trying*. They're *doing something*. And if Cincinnati doesn't meet the clean-air standards, then by golly, they'll do *more* of it, and get every car E/checked every year instead of every two years. (I was lucky; the machine didn't wreck my car, the way it has some.)

Just like condom distribution, it doesn't matter if it works, or even if it's counter-productive, as long as we've *done* something, and the more damaging to technology and Big Business the better.

For instance, a while back in Kyoto, we signed the accord that's going to make us reduce our "greenhouse" emissions by thirty per

cent, in spite of the fact that the latest evidence is that there's no global warming at all. (Oh yes there is! That's Religious Right propaganda!—I write this in the coldest winter on record, both here and in Siberia, where we just got word that the computer programs are predicting *much* quicker warming. Oh yes? They must be like some programs I've made.)

Of course, the good guys, like China and the third world, who are by far the greatest polluters, get off the hook, since they're free from Big Technology. A few years ago, the Clinton administration concluded the Argentine phase of this farce, bribing some of the Latin American countries to come out in favor of the standards. And they agreed. Why shouldn't they, if all they have to do is make noises, and they get billions in aid? This in hopes of swaying more Senators to ratify the treaty.

Do I have to mention the agenda-driven junk science that's fully worthy of Clinton at his slickest that justifies this scare-mongering to promote this New Commandment? The actual data show no global warming, but, as I said, the computer models do. So (a) you fudge the data by leaving December out of your calculations of temperature or ignoring the ocean—"extrapolating" over it, not measuring it, or (b) even if there's no real evidence, shouldn't we be on the safe side? Computer models thirty years ago, by the way, were predicting the coming ice age. They also foretold back then how by this time, there'd be no oil, or copper, or anything else you want to name.

Computer models are the polls of New Morality science. They're fine in their place; but their place is a very small one; and when used for something like predicting what the world will be like in twenty years, they're about as useful as a yardstick for measuring distances inside the atom. You'll notice that weather reporters won't go farther out on a limb than five days or so—because they know (a) that you can remember what they said five days ago, and (b) that the weather is too complex a phenomenon to be able to get all the variables into even the most sophisticated computer—not to mention that, as

catastrophe theory shows, unpredictable results can occur from insignificant causes.

But for some reason scientists get mesmerized by the fact that these models of theirs actually produce numerical results. Scientists worship numbers. I was once called in to the Dean's office years ago, to be told by an ex-physicist that I had to shape up, because my teaching, according to the student evaluations, was below average. "Wait a minute!" I said. "You've got it right down here that the average score they gave me is a 4.3 out of 5; that means that they thought I'm pretty far *above* average." "Yeah, but" he said—I kid you not—"the average teacher scored a 4.5; so you're not *as* above average as the average teacher. So you're really below average." (There are some of you saying, "Well, what's wrong with that?" I can hear you.) Since I was in physics before I got into philosophy, he didn't intimidate me, and I pointed out to him what madness this was, but made no headway. He had the number, and numbers don't lie.

But the real difficulty with environmentalism as consistent with evolution is that *all life, simply because it is life, harms the environment*. It can't help it. A living being, as I said, exists at a super-high energy level (its biological equilibrium); and in order to do so, it has to take in energy and material from the environment. And since living bodies don't actually repeal the Second Law of Thermodynamics, this means that the energy that was locked up in the environment is released, and only *some* of it goes into the living body; the rest is dissipated into that heat-sink called the universe.

Of course, it's also true that living beings, in their proper habitats, turn out to be extremely efficient in their use of energy, so that, in comparison with man-made machines, very little energy is lost; and, as I said, the waste of one organism is used as the food for another, with the result that the environment tends to deteriorate very slowly.

But it's *still* the case that they *do* use up the environment; they have to, to survive. So the goal of preserving the environment, as if

it were commanded by evolutionary nature, is a dream and a chimera.

And this is reinforced by the fact I was mentioning above, that the deterioration of the environment is accelerated hundreds of times over when an organism (by human or natural accident) is brought out of its ecological niche into a foreign set of organisms. But that too happens in the course of nature, and is not something that is contrary to the reality of evolution. Evolution is just chance, remember.

So where do we get this New Commandment? From thin air, and hatred of technology. To the superficial, it *looks* as if evolution is commanding respect for the environment; but evolving creatures in fact have no respect for it whatever; it just *happens* that they cooperate. But that's just an accident; **cooperation is not a purpose in evolution; it simply happens—so far—to be a result.**

So you can't make a natural imperative out of it; and therefore, this Sixth New Commandment is a pure *moral* imperative. You must preserve the environment. Why? Just because. Because you're not being true to yourself unless you fit into nature—it's *inhuman* not to—and *help* nature rather than *hurting* the poor thing as if you were its Master. And we will pass the most stringent laws to see that you do this whether you want to or not.

The inherent contradiction in this is twofold: first, any evolving being is for itself and to hell with the environment. *That's* its nature, as we can see when we remove the being from its natural habitat; the cooperation is just something that happens to occur, and from the point of view of the organism, it's unnatural. Do you think rabbits *want* to be eaten by hawks and coyotes?

But secondly—and this is what is galling to the New Moral-ist—man is *in fact* master of the world around him, from the lowliest virus to the great Leviathan that swims the fishy deep. Evolutionistically speaking, we're just another organism, not very well adapted by tooth and claw to making our way in this world; but

we had that pesky reason develop in us, and we made teeth and claws of flint and iron, and the result is that nothing is a match for us. There's no environment we can't thrive in; there's no other organism we can't subdue—there's none we *haven't* subdued, making some of them, like horses, cows, and dogs, into fawning slaves at our heels. Even the raging bull is docile as a lamb once we've put the ring into its nose.

But New Moralists can't admit this, because it sounds too much like *Genesis*: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth." No no no! Gaia save us! "Multiply and fill the earth!" Horrors! "Have dominion over everything!" We're just something that happened along by chance during the course of evolution; we *must not* arrogate to ourselves a special place in the world! (Excuse the exclamation points; but New Moralists start pounding the table when you suggest anything else.)

But the fact is, we *have* a special place; whether God gave it to us, or whether we got it in the course of evolution, we *have* one, because of our reason.

Well, then, say the New Moralists, we've got to *use* reason not only to thwart the reproductiveness of the reproductive urge, but to thwart reason's tendency to make life easy and pleasant; life is *supposed* to be hard, a struggle with nature (always cooperating, of course, you understand) for the survival of the fittest. Well, we *are* fittest; and we're surviving very nicely, thank you.

Precisely. That's what we've got to reverse.

Preserving species from extinction.

Think of all the species that have gone out of existence because our technology has destroyed their habitat! We can't let that happen! We can't? Why not?

Well, because! Because it's obvious! You lose a species, and it's gone forever! So what? Well, you *can't* do that! Why not?

I'll bet you never thought of that, did you? You've been carefully taught in our schools, which no longer teach anything but the New Morality. Why should species be preserved? The New Moralists argue that if you lose them, you lose them (and the information encoded in their genes) forever. Okay. And what's so bad about that? A world without smallpox forever and ever is a world I don't mind living in. For that matter, I wouldn't weep if mosquitoes vanished from the face of the earth. Let the frogs eat flies instead; I can live with flies.

The answer is twofold. First, if you destroy a species, you destroy all the other species that depend on it. You do? If the species is endangered, how are these other species managing? Secondly, you never know when that species is going to turn out to be useful. Oh, please! That's like the argument of the old lady who clips out interesting tidbits from the daily paper and stores them in the closet, "because you never know when I'm going to need to refer to that some day." The closets are jammed with bits of paper that she'll never refer to because there's no way she could get to what she needed, even if she remembered what it was—which she won't. And who's to say that if we let one species die off because we've changed the environment, we won't be providing the conditions for some other species twenty times more useful to emerge?

But these arguments are really beside the point; in fact, they argue *against* the environmentalist position, because the "usefulness" of the species looks to *humans* as what the species is to be used *for*, which directly contradicts what's behind this New Commandment: that the human is just one organism among the many, and has no special place, and is definitely *not* the purpose for which any other organism exists.

But more than that, it is *consistent with evolution* that maladaptive species die out. Of *course* it is. Haven't you heard of the survival of the fittest? But obviously, an endangered species is by definition maladaptive to the environment it's in. So why not let it die out?

Because the damn environment is the *artificial* one technology

has created, you fool! We're changing the environment so fast that *no* species can keep up with it! If technology goes on like this, we'll wipe out the whole planet, and then die off ourselves! You Right Wing Religious Fanatics have got to be stopped before it's too late!

—But didn't we evolve? And didn't reason evolve with us? And you want to use reason to thwart the reproductiveness of the reproductive urge, which is clearly against what the reproductive urge is all about. So why can't we use reason to build for ourselves a world we like to live in; and if a snail darter or a spotted owl has to become extinct, well, that's the price they and we have to pay, that's all.

You see? You *see*? *That's* why we have to have laws against you people! You'll just *wreck* nature with that attitude! If we can't teach you the *truth* about nature, we'll just have to *force* you to conform to it!

But the trouble is that environmentalism is inconsistent with the principles it's supposedly based on; that's what I've been saying in this chapter. Chance evolution provides no basis whatever for imposing any restrictions on what human beings (who have evolved, after all, out of nature) do to the environment. If we're part of nature, we're part of nature; and if nature is for itself, and it's pure chance that cooperation occurs, then what's unnatural with our being for ourselves?

Environmentalism as a moral imperative is just a pure emotional reaction that has no reason behind it at all—which is consistent only with the New Morality's repudiation of reason. But that repudiation itself, as I said earlier, is inconsistent, because it supposes that reason has concluded that reason can't get at the truth, and only emotion really "knows."

So don't let these people know that water tends to collect in your back yard if you want to install drain pipes to get rid of it and the mosquitoes that breed there every spring. They'll claim it's a wetland, and get the Feds after you. (Notice the difference between a "swamp"—which has the adjective "pestilential" attached to it—and a

“wetland”? It’s the same thing, but it’s amazing what words will do, isn’t it?)

Environmentalists will deny left and right and up and down that they’re trying to force their moral standards on the rest of us; but what other explanation is there for what they’re doing? There’s no tolerance here, there’s no room for debate and honest disagreement when it comes to Saving the Planet. It’s greater than all of us, and it must be yielded to; and if you won’t yield, then be prepared to pay the price.

I hear you saying, “Well yes, but . . .” That’s the next chapter.

Interlude: Stewardship

I probably sounded in the last chapter as if I was totally against any protection of the environment, because the New Morality subscribes to something somebody said centuries ago, “He who is not with me is against me.” And after all, if you repudiate the environmentalist agenda, then this has to mean that where you’re coming from is the Big Business, Republican, Religious Right, sexist, homophobic, racist agenda, and we know what *you* people are all about! In fact, Alan Dershowitz during the impeachment mess let the cat out of the bag when he ranted against those who were for impeachment: “It doesn’t matter whether he wins in the Senate or not. We *can’t* let those people who are *evil*—really *evil*—score a victory and impeach him after we’ve got this far!”

There it is, out in the open. It isn’t that New Moralists disagree with traditionalists. There’s no tolerance for them whatever—the Third New Commandment, in spite of its wording, doesn’t allow it—and once the exemplar of the New Morality got hold of the reins

of power, anything was legitimate to keep him from being knocked out of the saddle. Remember, truth for these people is agenda and nothing more. And if they didn't defeat this move, the Old Morality might come back, and that must not happen! Think of the environmental catastrophe, for just one thing! It's okay to trash the White House when you leave it, apparently, but the environment is another story.

Still . . .

The fact that the New Moralists have an agenda shouldn't blind us factualists to the reality of the situation. If you look at the living world around you, it smashes you right between the eyes that the organisms cooperate with one another, in spite of each one's tendency to be for itself against everyone else; it's the most irenic and pacific warfare ever waged.

What I was arguing in the preceding chapter is that this cooperation can't be deduced from survival of the fittest plus chance; these would predict exactly the opposite of what we see. Therefore, the cooperation must have been *imposed* on the world by the invisible hand that's manipulating the progress of evolution in the first place.

And that, and the manifest mastery we have over the world we have contact with, should tell us something: (1) that this is the direction the world should take, based on the Creator's view of things, and (2) that now that we're in charge, it's our job to manage the world consistently with this direction.

Stewardship and love.

This is stewardship. In one way, it's quite similar to New Morality environmentalism, and in another it's poles apart from it.

First of all, human beings are the first bodily creatures to have been endowed with the ability to think objectively (to understand relationships), as I sketched in the interlude after the First New Commandment; so we are the first to be able to know who we are, and how we fit into the world, rather than simply being objects

which react to the world they live in (however complex that reaction might be).

We are also the first beings who can set goals for ourselves and work to see them realized. But because we can see relationships, and think objectively, not everything we do, and not all goals we set, have to be self-centered. I can realize, for instance, that my wife has her own goals, goals which I can help her achieve (she's writing a book in English, for instance, and I can proofread it for her and correct the understandable mistakes and oddities of phrasing that a non-native-speaker is apt to make). Because I can think objectively, I don't *have* to say, "What's in it for me if I do this?" I can put *her* goal as the goal of my actions and work for it, irrespective of whether it advances me toward my own (or even gives me any satisfaction) or not.

And here is where I part company with the Ayn Rand type of rationalist, with whom I am much in sympathy in many ways. Rand, having come from Communist Russia, was so repelled by the Russian notion of "self-sacrifice for the good of all" (which traces itself back beyond Marx to Auguste Comte) and the soul-destroying tyranny of Communism, that she had a mental block against *all* forms of altruism, which blinded her to the validity of any argument for God's existence, because that would lead to love as a virtue. Unfortunately, in this she was agenda-driven, and fell into the very trap she was trying to escape.

You see, when I help my wife with her book, I'm not *harming* myself in any way; in fact, since she's a very good Plato scholar, I've learned a lot that I wouldn't otherwise have learned. But that's not the point. The point is that my reason allows me to prescind from my own interest, and look at her interest, and make her interest my own.

This is love. Humans are the first beings on earth to have evolved capable of love. Now love implies, more than anything else, *respect* for what one loves; a subordination of one's own goals to the goal in something else—though *not*, I hasten to add, a *repudiation* of one's

own *reality* in pursuing the other's goal. This would be a contradiction and immoral. Morality, after all, is acting consistently with what you are; and while it is consistent (because we can think) to act for the good of another, it is clearly inconsistent to do *damage* to yourself in pursuing the good of another. This is what Rand railed against, and she was right. It's just that she thought *all* love entailed this.

You have to put this together with what I said earlier about goodness and badness, or you'll misunderstand it. Remember, goodness consists in having the facts match the ideal you constructed in your own mind, and so there's no such thing as "objective goodness," as if you could discover what the ideal *is* "out there."

Then how can we love, if loving means doing what's good for someone else? Isn't this imposing *our idea* of goodness on the other person (or the other thing in general)? No. That's the common notion of love, but it's a mistake. Many is the wife or husband whose life is made miserable because the spouse "knows what's good for him" (excuse me if I write this from the man's point of view; it works both ways) and is busy trying to make him over into that ideal image she's conceived of what he "really is" if he'd only put his mind to it. That, in the extreme, is the very opposite of love; instead of *helping* the other person and subordinating yourself to the other, you're subordinating *him* to *your* idea of what he "ought" to be, and he becomes your slave, however much you might tell yourself it's "for his sake."

No, *since* there is no objective meaning to what is "good for" someone, then loving the person consists in *finding out* what goals the person has set *for himself*; and *these* then become what's good for him in the only meaningful sense—and you then make these goals *your* goals, and so his "true reality" (the reality he has conceived as his "true reality") becomes part of *your* "true reality." It isn't that this is what you're trying to do; it's just that because his happiness as an independent individual is now (as a goal in your life) a component

in your happiness, you are spiritually “with” him in a way you can’t be if you try to subordinate his reality to your *a priori* notion of what he “ought” to be. In that latter case, *you* are really the sole goal of your actions; in the former, *he* is the goal, and that makes both of you a “we” instead of two “I”s that just happen to be in the same place. Loving is making another’s goal a goal of your own life. If you want to put it this way, it is a willingness to be used by another—though not, as I said, a willingness to be abused—and its paradoxical result is spiritual togetherness and the absorption into one’s personality of the other—but always as an independent other.

No doubt this sounds very existentialist and metaphysical. So be it. It just happens to be true; and it follows from the fact that we’re beings who can think. Contrast this with the New Moralists’ view of love as instinct—expressed, for example, in the “love” that is involved in the Clinton-Lewinsky liaison. There’s no love there, in the sense I’m talking about it, on either side. Each of them subordinated themselves only to *their own* satisfaction, really, using the other for their own purposes; and those purposes, in the last analysis, were nothing more than the immediate gratification of an urge—hardly different, as I said, from urination.

But what’s all this got to do with evolution and environmentalism?

Loving a person might be called the highest sense of love, because you’re submitting to the other person’s freely-chosen definition of his “true self”; only persons can freely choose their own goals. Still, every other living body *has* a goal, because every living body has a biological equilibrium which as an individual it actively heads toward in growth and strives to maintain in its mature state. But in a living body, this “goal” is no more specific than the mature state; what the animal or plant *does* while mature is basically just adapt itself to its changing situation so as to maintain this mature state as long as possible.

But, given that there *is* an objective goal involved here, you can,

if you want, try to discover what this goal is, and you can make as a goal in your own life helping this corner of the world be what it is trying to be. There's no law of human nature that says it's inconsistent to subordinate yourself to the good of things beneath you. And when you do, these creatures become part of that expanded reality you have because you have made something other than yourself a goal in your own life, and submitted to it.

And you *do* submit, when you inconvenience yourself for an animal or a plant, cooperating with it so that it will be all that it can be. I remember that, when my dog Luthien was alive, I would sometimes pass a neighbor as each of us was doing his daily chore of walking his dog. As the dogs sniffed each other one evening, I remarked, "Isn't it fascinating how we're servants of our own slaves." He laughed and agreed with me. True, in the long run I got a lot more out of my "relationship" with Luthien than she did; because while both of us got affection, I also learned a good deal, while she only adapted her instinct in ways that served my purposes. You do the same thing, to a lesser extent, when you dig and plant and weed the garden so that the flowers will prosper and give you the pleasure of seeing and smelling their beauty.

(On this point, the Lord's opinion of sex can be discovered from a fact I'll bet you never thought of: flowers are plants' sex organs, and see how they flaunt them! Think about that; that's profound.)

You can't *love* the planet itself or anything inanimate in this way, because as inanimate it doesn't have a goal in any meaningful sense. When it's in equilibrium, it just happens to be at the lowest energy-level it can have, and can't "go anywhere" because it can't give itself energy, and it can't lose any because it's already lost all it can lose. And it doesn't actively resist any energy that falls on it; if the outside energy can change it, it changes.

Thus, there's no way you can project a meaning for "good" and "evil" onto it, the way you can for a living body, because with a living body you can see what it's trying to do. The inanimate object

isn't *trying* to do anything, really. So if you burn hydrogen, the *unstable* mixture is "trying" to be water; but if you pass an electrical current through water, the unstable water is trying to become hydrogen and oxygen again. Which is "good" and which is "evil"? It depends on what *you* want, not what the object wants; it just mechanically, mindlessly seeks the lowest energy-state.

Still, there's a sense in which you can *respect* the reality of an inanimate object, and cooperate with it instead of fighting it. Take your car. You can turn on the ignition and immediately burn rubber as you zip out of the driveway onto the street at fifty miles an hour. You can stop on a dime and corner on two wheels and all the rest of the things teenagers like to do, and you can neglect to change the oil—and then wonder why the car won't run after twenty thousand miles. A car is a wonderful tool for getting you from Point A to Point B in comfort beyond the wildest dreams of Louis XIV; but it has its own way of doing this, and you are wise if you submit to its reality, so that its reality will serve you to the best of its ability. Is this love for your car? My wife sometimes wonders if she should sue Mitsubishi for alienation of my affections, so I guess you could call it a kind of love. Guys will understand.

Environmental values vs. environmental morals.

So yes, you can love the world of inanimate and living objects, even though they're not people. But there's this difference between these things and people: *only people have rights*. And here's where a factulist parts company with the New Moralist environmentalists. They want you to subordinate yourself to The Planet and to Nature because you're being inconsistent with yourself if you act as their master, since all you are is a product of evolution, which is the *real* reality. Hence, for these people, "loving" Nature is a *moral* imperative; you *must* cooperate with the world you live in; and if you don't, you can be forced to do it, because if you don't, you've violated the

right it has against you.

But this is nonsense. As I said when discussing the Second New Commandment of not forcing your morals on anyone else, and especially in the interlude after it on freedom, values, and morals, it is *persons* who have rights because they *set* goals and can work to achieve them, and it's inconsistent to use your self-determination to prevent another self-determining being from determining himself.

But animals and plants, though they *have* goals, don't *set* them; they're not persons, and (not being able to think and see the relationships between themselves and others), they can't enter the reciprocal arrangement that rights imply: I'll let you alone if you let me alone. They are at the mercy of their instinct, as we are not, unless we *choose* to be.

Further, as I mentioned, the only meaningful goal a plant or an animal has is its mature state, not any specific action. Animals and plants have no *ambition*: no drive to "better themselves" once they reach maturity. A drive toward the future only occurs in the growth phase of their lives, in the early part; after that, though they are open to all sorts of action, and can be trained to do wonderful things, they have no built-in tendency to use these talents unless a situation comes up in which they're called for.

For this reason, there's nothing inconsistent with making a slave of an animal; it has no "will of its own"; it just has all these potencies which can be trained—and turned to *our* purposes

(I know, I know; the New Moralists rant and rail that this is all we are, too; but all you have to do is open your eyes to see the difference, once it's pointed out to you. You train an animal, not because it has a "love of learning" you can tap into, but because it wants to be fed, or has a pack instinct you exploit. But as Maria Montessori and every human educator worth his salt has known from Plato on up, you educate humans by opening up vistas of possibility before them, and their innate urge to "make something of themselves" leads them on to heights you (and they) didn't know they

had in them. The sad thing about contemporary education, New Morality style, is that, with its emphasis on “self-esteem” rather than ambition, it’s actually training kids as if they were animals, and the kids are responding like animals: waiting until the treat comes and caring nothing about what they’re learning.)

It’s interesting that the New Moralists, who would degrade us to Clintonian sex-machine status, at the same time have fallen for the Disnification of the animal kingdom, having Bambi and Thumper talk to each other, foresee the future and worry about it, and think in terms of good and evil. But Robert Burns was right in his ode to the mouse (you know the poem, the one that ends with “the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley”). He saw the mouse run away in terror as he slashed its nest in mowing; but the mouse only reacted to the present, while he looked into the future and foresaw and feared all kinds of things that weren’t there. We’re the same as animals only in a superficial way; fundamentally, we’re totally different, precisely because of this trait we have.

The animal-rights people don’t realize what they’re doing when they claim animals have rights against us. If they have rights, it can only be because they can set goals for themselves; and if they can, then the fundamental right they have is to *freedom*: to be able to pursue the goals they set for themselves. If they have rights, they can only be restrained from doing what they choose to the extent that they are doing damage to the *actual reality* of other persons.

It follows from this that they can’t be tied up, they can’t be restrained from having sex with any other animal they want to have sex with, they definitely can’t be neutered, they can’t be “put to sleep” when they get old or sick, and on and on and on. If what they do is self-destructive, then, provided they want to do it, they can’t be prevented from doing it; *their* notion of what is good for them is to prevail, because, insofar as they are persons, “good for them” means “the goal they choose for themselves.”

But as usual, people who take New Morality positions want it

both ways. They want to be able to dictate what *they think* is good for animals as well as for the rest of us unenlightened people, while *they* want no restraint on what seems good to *them*, because we traditionalists don't understand the *true* reality of what we are; we think we can *think*, and we don't realize that instinct, as it always does, trumps thought. That they got to this by thought and not feeling doesn't matter; they've concluded that thought is subordinate to feeling, and therefore, it's a fact, and the rest of us have to submit to it.

But once you recognize the difference between the human world and the non-human world, then love in the sense of respect for the non-human does *not* mean subordinating oneself to its "will," because it *has* no will. We are free to set goals for creatures, and they are as perfectly fulfilled (or rather, as fulfilled as they can be) by pursuing the goals we train them to work for as they are if we leave them alone and they simply sleep and eat and reproduce.

And this implies that our relation to the environment is *not* a question of *morals*, but of *values*. We *can* submit to the reality of nature and the objects around us, and, based on our examination of the cooperation of nature, we should, perhaps. We should cooperate with nature, both the living and the non-living. But since there are no rights involved here, cooperativeness in this case means that we should *respect* its reality as we direct it toward *our* goals, not that we should defer to it as if it were another person with a mind of its own.

Thus, for instance, it was perfectly consistent with me and my dog when I trained her to bark at strangers and to eat at a certain time every day, not to snap a bone out of my hand when I gave it to her, not to beg when we were out on the patio eating, to sit when I wanted her to, to heel when we were out walking, and all the rest of it. In return, I gave her food and water and warmth in winter, and pattings and affection, which she returned a hundredfold. She was my slave, and was perfectly content with being my slave.

It would be immoral to use a human being this way, even a

human being who was willing; because a human being is supposed to direct his *own* life towards his *own* goals as defined by *him*, not to be under orders as if his will and everything about him were outside him in the master who “knows what’s good for him.” *No* one except the person himself can know “what’s good for” a human being, because the human being *creates* it for himself by using his own mind. When you own a human being, you degrade him to the status of an animal who has nothing but instinct.

(I should point out that some human beings—the insane and severely retarded, as well as children—are permanently or temporarily handicapped, and can’t use their ability to choose without harming themselves, because they don’t see that their actions have consequences other than the ones they would like to see happen. In that case, one can legitimately take over control; but this is analogous to putting a prosthesis on a crippled person. It is not that these people are animals; it’s that their defects make them unable to use their intellects.)

The point is that if we’re going to cooperate with the non-human environment, we have to cooperate with it as it in fact *is*, not make it into a kind of lesser version of humanity—still less into a god who is giving us orders, as some of the New Age people would have it, when they claim (as they did in fact) that earthquakes are the earth’s response to the Republican attempts to impeach Bill Clinton and the “partisan bickering” they decry.

It is *not* a question of right and wrong, when we are dealing with the environment; it is a question of good and bad. We have to ask ourselves, “What will be *all* of the effects of these actions of mine, not just the one I would like to happen? On balance, does it seem better for me to do these actions with all of these effects, or to do something else, which will have different effects?” *You* and *your goals* are the arbiters of where the world is headed under your direction; you need not follow “evolution,” as if it were some divine plan; humans are the *rulers* of evolution from now on. That’s a fact, and

if there *is* a divine plan, then that's what the divine plan seems to be, both from reasoning about it based on evolution up to now, and from reading about it in the Bible.

Let me illustrate by a couple of examples. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the "greenhouse gases" emitted by our machinery are causing global warming (though I have very, very serious misgivings, as I said, about the "science" that seems to indicate this). Then, before we panic, let's consider what it implies. Basically, it implies that everyone in the Northern Hemisphere has moved a hundred miles or so south. What's so traumatic about that? It means that more of Canada will be habitable, that those parts of the tropics not cooled by ocean breezes (after all, we're talking an average of a degree or two) will be less congenial to life without air conditioning. Insofar as the icecaps melt a bit, then the oceans will rise, pushing the beachfront property back; but the increase in the size of the oceans will increase the cooling aspect of the oceans and also the flora which is by far the greatest absorber of carbon dioxide—and the likelihood is that there will be a stabilization that's not traumatic or catastrophic. Further, any change is going to be very slow; and as the change occurs, the probability is that we will gradually adapt.

For instance, it's obvious that some day we're going to run out of fossil fuel. But instead of panicking and calling for the forcible introduction of electric cars (which, after all, use energy that is largely produced by burning coal, the worst of the fossil fuels environmentally—because the environmentalist wackos won't allow it to be produced by nuclear power, just because of the *name* "nuclear"), when petroleum begins to get scarce, the energy companies will be looking around for a cost-effective alternative, and we'll move, perhaps, to hydrogen-cell cars. The point is that there's no hurry; and the very last thing we should be doing is jacking up the price by legislative fiat, as if there were a shortage that everybody knows doesn't really exist.

Let me give another example: old-growth forests. Now in the course of evolution, it is an exceedingly unlikely eventuality that there would ever *be* old-growth forests, because there's such a thing as lightning and drought, and forests, as anyone in California can tell you, tend to turn into tinder-boxes which burn down to ashes at the least provocation, setting whole states on fire. And that this is in accordance with evolutionary nature is clear from the fact that some seeds of trees will not germinate except under intense heat, such as from a forest fire.

So trees burn down, and with them all the species that lived under them; and the whole thing starts all over, and the ecology is transformed.

What this means is that old-growth forests are museums of trees. They *aren't* "leaving nature alone"; they're the result of *human intervention* preventing the natural destruction of these magnificent behemoths of the plant world. And to the extent that we prevent their burning, we allow them to grow and deepen the shade under them, killing off the species that used to thrive in the light that's no longer there.

Well, what's wrong with that? Nothing at all. The question is whether we want museums of trees (I would think we would want *some*, to remind us of what trees can do if they're preserved from their enemies), but how many and how extensive is up to us. But let's not pretend that we're "following what nature wants" when we do this. Let's not be like that biologist who wants the park across the street from my house to be "natural," when it *can't* be natural, given the situation it's in. A place that has weeds growing unchecked (which is what he means by natural) has a certain kind of beauty; but it is *not* in itself "objectively better" than the carefully manicured gardens around Versailles. It depends on what *we* want; there is no meaning to "what Nature wants."

And as the burning down of millions of acres in the West during the summer of 2000 shows, there are side-effects to short-sighted

“conservation” which can be positively catastrophic. Not allowing loggers to thin out the forests and not allowing clearing of underbrush turned those millions of acres into firebombs waiting to explode once we got a prolonged drought. Those who followed the “moral imperative” to “protect the forest” are the ones responsible for burning it down.

The question is whether we treat the earth in its present state as something sacred and not to be tampered with, and therefore think of things in terms of right and wrong—leading to the junk science whose purpose is to scare people into doing the right thing—or whether we recognize it as flexible, and ask what we’re doing, what its effects are likely to be, and whether it’s worth it to stop doing it, to change what we’re doing, or to go on as we are. It’s only with the latter—the stewardship—mentality that we can sit back and study what *all* the short-term and long-term effects will be not only on the environment but upon ourselves and our goals, and thus use our *reason* and not our feelings and accomplish something positive.

In places like Los Angeles and San Francisco, there’s a lot to be said for reducing emissions from automobiles and factories, because of the peculiar nature of the air patterns there. But globally? Those oceans are awfully big.

And if we *do* look at things calmly, instead of as the New Moralists would have it, with panic at a crisis unless we *do* something, then perhaps we can do what makes sense, instead of the stupid things we’re doing in the name of the environment, which, as I said, make us feel good because we’re “addressing the problem,” in spite of the fact that the letter gets returned to us for insufficient postage.

But in the last analysis, to the traditionalist who is willing to accept that there is a God, and who entertains the possibility that the Bible actually is the voice of that God speaking to us in ways he couldn’t speak simply through the Book of Nature, the issue is more serious, though still not a matter of morals, or right and wrong.

There are hints in both evolution and the Bible, if you try to put

both together, that at the end of history—of evolution—things aren't just going to vanish, with us existing as just pure minds, but that an equilibrium will be imposed on everything; and we, with our unchangeable bodies, will live on a new, stable earth, forever.

If this is what is facing us after that cataclysmic last day, then I suspect that the world we will live in forever (the one imaginatively depicted by John in *Revelation* as the city of twelve, the New Jerusalem), will be the world *as we have made it to be*. Just as we ourselves will be forever what we have, in our ambition, made of ourselves; so our world, our environment, will be no more and no less than what we have built it into, because the world *has* no built-in goal. Just as we set goals for ourselves, we are the part of the world that sets *its* goal for it—we are its mind and will, if you want—and so it will be what we have chosen it to be.

This puts upon us an awesome responsibility. The world that God remakes when he says, “Now I am making everything new,” will not be the world we would *like* to have, but the world we have *chosen* to have. Having created us as creators, not only of ourselves, but creators—in the sense of transformers—of our environment, God has no “stake,” so to speak, in what this world will be, any more than he has a stake in what we make of our individual selves; in both cases, the result (with his help) will be just what we want it to be, no more and no less.

Which means that it's up to us. Do we want a world that looks like the South Bronx, or one that looks like Manhattan? One that looks like Yosemite and Yellowstone, or one that looks like the stripped hills of Pennsylvania? I would like to see a world with cities, for all their asphalt and concrete, and farms, and parks, and I would like to see vast wilderness too; I would like to see a world without slums, without the sorry squalor accompanying the breathtaking vistas of the Yucatan. But that's my ambition. What *our* ambition is remains to be seen.

It's all up to us. Even the New Moralists realize it's all up to us.

My problem with them is that they look on it in moral terms, and want us to avoid doing evil to the Planet, and therefore impose all kinds of self-defeating Draconian solutions on the evil they see happening, laying guilt-trips on us because we're doing what *they* don't like.

But if we change our attitude and become factualists, we can see the world as it is, and see what directions we can lead it in, and take realistic steps to get there, and if we don't get there all at once, there's nothing to worry about, because we're not righting a wrong, we're leading the world into a place we'd like to live in. If it takes a thousand years to get there, so be it. If all we take right now is one small step, it's a step in the right direction.

The Seventh New Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Discriminate

This particular New Commandment, not to discriminate, might sound like a restatement of the Third, not to be intolerant; but actually, it's quite distinct. The idea here is that *individual* differences must be suppressed, especially differences (on the high end) of intelligence, on the grounds that “all men are created equal”—or rather, excuse me, “all persons are constituted equal.”

Let me say at the outset that this is exactly the opposite of what Jefferson was driving at in this clause of the Declaration of Independence. He was denying the English notion that some people were born “nobles” and others “commoners,” that there were natural, genetic *classes* of human beings, who were intrinsically different from one another; and if you were born into one class, there was nothing you could do about it, and you had to “accept your lot in life.” Jefferson took it as given that human beings are *not* genetically separable into different groups, and *individual* differences must be

allowed to come to the fore, so that a person born of poor and ignorant parents could rise to the highest levels in our new society based on his talent alone, not on his “blood.”

What we have done, in true First New Commandment fashion, is turn this idea on its head. Since reason is only the servant of instinct, and feelings are the real truth of anything, and our *feelings* are all the same (or at least, we feel they are; how could we know?), then we’re really all the same; and so if anyone is smarter than another, he makes the other *feel* bad and inferior, and this must not be allowed. At the same time, following the Third New Commandment, we classify ourselves into racial, sexual, and ethnic groups, and assert that all *these* are equal, but they are intrinsically different from and irreducible to one another (presumably, on the basis for this New Commandment, because black feelings are different from white ones or Asian ones). Therefore, a member of one group, just by “blood,” cannot possibly hope to understand a member of another group. (By the way, underneath the “diversity” shibboleth that the mere presence of people with different skin color and so on is a bonus in a classroom has to be the hidden idea that these races *feel* distinctively about things—because as far as *thinking* is concerned, you either understand the facts or you don’t.)

Anyhow, what was thought to be a self-evident truth about human individuality, based on reason as our highest and controlling faculty, has been perverted into an excuse for collectivism, in which individual excellence based on intellect is looked on as deadly sin, and one which must be stamped out.

That this is a New Commandment and a *moral* imperative is clear from the fact that it’s simply taken for granted that you *can’t* discriminate. Have you ever heard anybody say, “Well, why not? What’s so bad about discriminating?” What’s so bad? It’s obvious! Why that’s—that’s—*discrimination*, for heaven’s sake!

Behind this, of course, is that it’s the essence of inhumanity to discriminate, because we all know that all men are created *equal*.

Don't you believe in human *rights*?

Equality and rights.

There are several things going on here, the first of which is the notion that we have rights *because* we're equal—something which seems to follow, but doesn't, from Jefferson's claim of equality. Notice that he didn't actually *say* that; the fact that men were endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights was *another* of the self-evident truths on which the secession from England was based, not necessarily the *conclusion* from the truth that we're all equal.

So let's get something straight here. **Rights are *not* based on equality; they're based on personhood: the fact that persons can direct their lives by their choices.** As long as someone can set goals for himself and direct his actions toward fulfilling these goals, he's a person, whether he's equal to others in his ability or not. And the reason persons have rights is, as I said, that it's inconsistent with me as a self-determining individual to use my self-determination to prevent you from determining yourself. This has nothing to do with whether we're equal or not.

And so a child, who is *not* the equal of an adult, is nonetheless a person, and therefore has rights. Granted, insofar as he doesn't yet understand that his actions have *all* their consequences and not just the ones he'd like them to have, he has to be prevented from determining himself (or he'd inadvertently do harm to himself); but this inferiority doesn't mean that he doesn't have human rights—because he *is* human, even though not *as* human as he's going to be.

But it's incredible how violently this manifest truth about the inequality in our humanity is fought in our culture—precisely because of this notion that if we're not equal, then we lose our rights.

No doubt I've shocked even you. But think a minute. What does it mean to be a human being? That your body is organized with the

human form of unifying energy (human corpses aren't human beings). And what does *that* mean? It means, fundamentally, that your body is capable of doing human actions. But the human genetic structure not only determines us *qualitatively*, so that we're different from lions and giraffes, it determines for each of us a *limitation* on the human activities we can perform; so some people, like Michael Jordan, can do things with a basketball that I couldn't in my wildest dreams aspire to; and I can do things, I'm willing to bet, (say, with my mind) that Michael Jordan can't do. So what?

So it means that my humanity, *as* humanity, is different from Michael Jordan's. I'm inferior to him in some ways, and superior to him in others. Or maybe not. Maybe he's smarter than I am, too. He's certainly handsomer. Be clear on this. Humanity, when looked at in terms of its relation to activity (which is what human *nature* means), means the ability to perform human acts. It follows that a human being who can perform fewer human acts than another is *less human* than another. We recognize this in the case of the "human vegetable," the person in a "persistent vegetative state" who can't do anything but breathe and metabolize food artificially supplied. There are those who would say that such a person isn't even human any more—and, following the notion that rights come from equality, would deny him the right to life. We'll have to address this later.

But if Michael Jordan is *more* human than I am, does that give him *rights* that I don't have? No, because we have rights because we're *persons*, and we have *human* rights because we're *qualitatively* the same, not because of the *degree* of humanity we have. Just as we have civil rights because we're all the same as citizens, though some persons have greater ability to act as citizens than others. For instance, the Senators who tried the President have civil powers that I don't have.

And in fact, the whole trial of the President turned on this. The Clinton defenders essentially said that we should let him alone because he's so important to the country and he was freely elected

and all the rest. That is, he's more of a citizen than we are, so he shouldn't be subject to the same petty things that would get the president of a corporation or the general of the army fired, and would land him in prison to boot. The Republican House managers, on the other hand, argued that we're *all the same* as citizens, whether we're *equal* as citizens or not; and the laws apply to citizens because of the *fact that* they're citizens (i.e. qualitatively), not based on their degree of citizenship.

In other words, the Democrats discriminated in Mr. Clinton's favor, and it's the Republicans in this case who didn't.

But since rights are based on sameness rather than equality, why should I be so anxious as to whether I'm Michael Jordan's *equal* or not? What difference does it make? How does it harm my ability to live up to my full potential if Michael Jordan, in living up to *his* full potential, can do a greater number of human acts than I can do?

Remember, a right is violated when *actual damage is done* to the *present* state of a person by the actions of some other person. Let us suppose that Michael Jordan doesn't exist, and I develop my talents to the extent to which I want them developed. Fine. Now, bring him, with his talents as developed as he has them, into existence. How has the fact that he is what he is and does what he does diminished what *I* am or what I have done? It hasn't affected it at all; I'm still exactly what I was on the assumption he didn't exist. So his greater talent, riches, and so on, have *in fact* no deleterious effect on me; they neither diminish what I now am, nor diminish my ability to do what I can do, in making myself greater in the future. So his inequality to me doesn't violate any right I have.

—Unless, of course, you assume that rights are based on equality. Then, the mere fact of his being unequal harms me. But anyone who claims a right has to be able to show some *factual evidence* that he is being damaged (actually less than what he otherwise would be) by what someone else is doing, and the “title” (the aspect, remember, that's damaged) to this “right” of equality can't be shown in

anything that I am, because in point of fact, I *don't* have the same innate talent he has, and no lessening of my reality occurs because of his greater ability.

In other words, **all men are created unequal**. *That* is the truth. No two human beings have the same talents, the same genetically given level of human existence. Live with it. That's the way things are.

And this silliness in saying that "all men are equal" in that quantitative sense (instead of "all men are *the same*" qualitatively) leads us into *forcing* everybody to be equal; the outstanding must not be allowed to develop to their full potential, or this will make them unequal to those poor ordinary slobs who just can't compete.

This is what this "equality of outcome" nonsense is all about. We have to make sure that nobody gets ahead of anyone else, because that means that the people who are behind are somehow not really persons, and this violates their "rights" as equal to everyone else.

I have to enter a disclaimer here, however, to make it really consistent with the New Morality. When it's a question of physical (athletic) ability, most New Moralists have no problem with recognizing excellence—though there are some educators who are uncomfortable even with this, as witness the (I think it is) high school soccer league somewhere in New England (where else?) that won't keep score in its tournament so that no one will feel bad at losing. But this is an aberration—in many senses of the term.

The reason for this exclusion of athletic ability from the attempt to force the excellent not to be excellent is obvious once you think about it. According to evolution, it's the *body* that evolves; and the human body is still evolving. From this it follows that some advanced bodies (those headed toward the next stage) will be better adapted (read: more talented) than others. They are to be celebrated, not put down.

But the mind is a different story. The mind is the "spirit," and is that evil thing called "reason" and "logic," which is cold and

calculating and inhuman, and has nothing to do with feelings, which are our true reality. Hence, excellence in the mind is a perversion, and must be suppressed.

Now no New Moralist is going to be this crude (or this logical), because New Moralists don't work this way. They just have a "gut feeling" (of course) that there's something wrong with geeks who can do math and have no trouble with computers and cell phones and can even program VCRs. You certainly don't want your children to turn out like one of them—and a lot of them even become *conservative* when they grow up!—and would you have your daughter marry one?

So we've got to strive for *intellectual* equality, because that's our true reality. But of course you can push the really stupid as hard as you want and they'll never be able to measure up even to the average person; and so the only way to remedy this "evil" is to dumb down what you're teaching so that nobody will progress farther than the dumbest; otherwise, the dumbest aren't equal.

Now I stress that no educator would ever actually *say* that this is what he's doing (because you "have to challenge every student," and "every student is an individual, and learns at his—sorry, 'their'—own pace and in 'their' own way"), because no educator wants to make it obvious that he's so blind to reality that he doesn't recognize that some kids are bright and others are dumb. But he'll add this little sophistry to what he claims: "But all kids are equally *capable* of learning, if you just find out how to reach them." And that, of course, is nonsense. Let me repeat that. It's nonsense. It's as much nonsense as that lots of practice will make anyone, me included, into another Michael Jordan. Trust me, I've been an educator for thirty-five years; it's nonsense. The trouble is that lots of educators actually believe it.

I remember a few years ago when KERA, the Kentucky Educational Reform Act, had just been passed, an official from the State (my college is in Kentucky) came to tell us about it—from my point

of view, to warn us of what we were to expect in just a few years. The idea was that it was “outcome-based education,” in which the kids produced portfolios of the work they did, rather than pass tests to find out how much they knew. And they’d work on the portfolio until they got the material right, no matter how long it took them, and no matter how they did it; and then they’d move along to the next grade. “And that way, no one fails,” the learned educator beamed.

I piped up, “Then if no one can fail, no one can succeed.” He, of course, was clueless as to what I was driving at, which was this: if they’ll pass no matter what they do, guess what they’ll do? The minimum. Why should they do any more? Why should they push themselves to the limits of their ability, if it doesn’t make any difference?

As it happens, several years before this, I had stumbled into making an experiment in “outcome-based education” before the term ever existed—and so I know that it doesn’t work, and I know why it doesn’t work. I had for a long time been annoyed at the fact that, though I handed back very carefully corrected tests during the semester, the students tended to miss on the final exam the same questions they had missed in the earlier tests. They obviously hadn’t restudied after the test to learn the material, since they’d already got the grade on that part of the course.

So this particular semester, I said, “Nobody is allowed to get less than a C in this course. If you get a D or an F, you have to retake a test on the same material until you get at least a C. The original grade will then be erased, since what I’m interested in is that you know the material, not in how long it took you to get it.” See how kind and compassionate I was!

Well, I was stunned. First of all, the students who *got* Cs resented the fact that those who had received Ds and Fs wound up with Bs and As after the retakes, while they were stuck with their Cs. So I had to allow *them* to retake the tests too. I had tests and retests coming

out the wazoo! (I loathe correcting tests.) Then I found out that on the second and third tests, I had an absolutely humongous number of people who failed the first time around. Why? Because if you didn't study before the test and you failed it, you found out what kinds of questions I was going to ask, and then you'd only have to study that part of the material for the retake.

But the kicker was that on the final, the students *still* missed the questions they had missed on the earlier tests, in spite of the retakes (some three and four times). I thought about it, and it wasn't long before the answer dawned on me: They didn't restudy to *learn* the material; they restudied to retake the test, and as soon as the retake was over successfully, they promptly forgot everything.

So these lovely portfolios the KERA kids are producing don't mean they actually *know* anything a year—five minutes!—later; it just means that they managed to jump through the hoop once. Hell, I hit a 200-yard drive once straight down the fairway; but that doesn't mean I can play golf.

And the kids entering college from now on will be these KERA kids. Woe to you, college professors who have any intellectual standards! All the kids coming out of high school will come out equal, because they've all just had to prove they did something once. Even the bright ones will have only done it enough to make the portfolio. It won't have stuck. But the great thing is that no one will have failed, so no one will feel bad about himself, and no one will feel inferior to anyone else.

I'm going to make an important qualification in a second, but let me state here the general principle that **no individual—as an individual—has a right not to be discriminated against**, unless the discrimination does some *other* harm to him than that others are given advantages that he doesn't have. That's what I was getting at earlier.

What I'm saying is that we're *not* equal, and so to treat us as if we were equal is to falsify our reality. But to treat us as different, some

more talented and others less so, is by definition to discriminate. So, since in fact some people are superior to others, then the inferior ones have no right not to be discriminated against—in the sense in which all that’s being done is that they’re recognized as not being as talented as the others.

When you start depriving them of opportunities that they (in their less talented condition) can in fact take advantage of, then that’s the “other” harm I was speaking of. But, for instance, to give Johnny, who has a gift for languages, classes in Spanish, French, Greek, and Latin, that Freddy, who can’t do anything with languages and who asks to take them, is refused, there’s discrimination but no harm.

So you can see that it also follows that **no individual has a right to equality of opportunity with other individuals**. The reason should be clear from the example I just gave. In fact we’re not all equal; and if you give everyone the same opportunity, then the untalented will be incapable of taking advantage of it (and might be harmed by being forced to), and the very talented will be deprived of the opportunity to develop themselves to their full potential. Giving everyone the same educational opportunity is what has resulted in the dumbing down of everyone, which is a tragedy for the bright kids, and not great for the dumb ones or even the ones in between, who think they’ve accomplished something when they haven’t. Evidence: American kids come out on top above almost all other kids in how well they *think* they can do math; they score near the bottom on how well they can *do* math.

Which would you rather have? A nation of kids who can do math, but don’t think they’re very good at it, or a nation of kids who think they’re whizzes and can’t do squat? —Maybe I shouldn’t ask that question; I’m afraid of what the answer might be.

Now obviously, *each person should be given the opportunity to develop as far as he is capable of developing*—which is what the people of common sense mean when they talk about “equality of opportu-

nity.” But words have meanings. The opportunities in this case will precisely *not* be equal; more opportunity will be given to those who can receive more, and less to those who can’t. Everyone should be challenged; but to challenge the untalented in the way in which the talented are challenged would be to invite them to despair, while to challenge the talented only at the level at which the untalented are pushed to the limit of their ability is to do them a disservice.

This means, however, in practice that some people will soar far about other people, and it will be obvious that they aren’t equal and aren’t treated equally. But in fact that’s the way things are; the talented will rise above others anyway, even in spite of being put down—and you aren’t doing kids a favor when you pretend that things are different. Kids know that they’re not equals; the untalented know they’re not as good as the talented ones. It follows from this that they know you’re lying to them when you pretend that they’re just as good at the task as the talented kids. So what if they feel bad? Their feelings reflect the reality of the situation.

Notice how shocked you are when I say that? It just goes to show how you’ve been trained to regard negative *feelings* as the real evil. I’ll expand on this in the interlude that follows.

Racial discrimination

But let me now make the important qualification I mentioned a while ago—and it’ll take some thinking to follow me on this one, so be ready. The prejudice against discrimination started off on the right foot. It was part of the Civil Rights movement. What it was reacting against was the assumption, based on a person’s skin color, that he couldn’t have the ability to be a doctor or professor or engineer or anything demanding intelligence, and therefore, “for his own good” he would be excluded from pursuing these studies.

In other words, black people supposedly lacked abilities just because they were black—abilities which had nothing to do with the color of their skin. Now *this* is contrary to fact. Granted, as I

mentioned earlier, black people had, during slavery and beyond, *acted* stupid (and trained their children to act stupid) because that way (in slavery) they could avoid work, and (after slavery) they could make whites feel guilty. But the fact is that the genes that determine skin color do *not* prevent a person from being bright enough to be a doctor or a lawyer or whatever. We see that, now that blacks have been given the opportunity, they do very well in these professions, thank you.

It was precisely this kind of thing—this categorization of people based on “birth”—that was what “all men are created equal” repudiated. Thus, the kind of discrimination that puts people into “ability” or “opportunity” groups *because of a characteristic that has nothing to do with ability* is morally wrong, and violates the rights of the members of the group, because it acts as if these people are not what they are.

And my conservative friends should take note that the people’s instincts in the Civil Rights movement were originally on the right track, when at the beginning, they engaged in affirmative action—which involves a kind of reverse discrimination upon *individual* members of the majority. This is moral because no *individual*, as I said, has a right as an individual not to be discriminated against, and so preferential treatment of blacks, say, which prevented some white individual from an opportunity he otherwise would have had to enter medical school, say, did *not* harm that individual—because the white individual had no right as an individual to *become* a doctor.

Be clear on this: to become a doctor is what a person *wants in the future*; it is not some damage done to his *present* reality. Thus, depriving him of it is not a violation of a right.

The point here is that, insofar as the while people were, wittingly or unwittingly, engaged in a conspiracy to keep *all* black people (just because they were black) out of medical schools, then this conspiracy, as immoral, had to be broken up. The most practical way to do this

is to give blacks preferential treatment (getting less qualified blacks into places taken by more qualified whites), until the time when blacks and whites can both get into medical school based on talent and preparation, not the color of their skin. The reverse discrimination does not discriminate against whites as such, but only against individual whites, who happen to be marginally more talented than the blacks who are preferred in order to break up the conspiracy. So a certain amount of reverse discrimination *in these circumstances* is legitimate—*until* there is no longer a policy of excluding the minority group because of that irrelevant characteristic.

(I'm not saying, by the way, that this preferential treatment was necessarily the *best* way to correct the wrong of invidious discrimination. I suspect a better way might have been figured out; but it would have taken longer. All I'm saying is that you can make out a case that this temporary preferential treatment was *not* immoral and not a violation of the rights of the individual majority members who were affected by it.)

Blacks will say that the time to stop preferential treatment has not yet arrived, because there's still a conspiracy to keep opportunity away from blacks just because of their skin color. But I think they're being unrealistic. Granted, many blacks are "educated" in the worst of our public schools—which means that they've had appalling treatment—and so are unprepared for college and medical school. But this isn't because they're *black*, except for those New Moralists blacks who subscribe to Third Commandment paranoia. No one, in fact—I suppose I should qualify that, and say that no one except for some fringe kooks—is trying today to keep blacks away from medical schools because they're black; the opposite is the case almost universally.

And so at the *present* time, the cry against preferential treatment is justified. Now that the conspiracy has been broken up, *it is no longer moral to give members of the minority group preferential treatment*, because it does just what the preferential treatment was

supposed to correct: it categorizes people into unreal “ability” groups based on a characteristic that is irrelevant to the ability.

And, as has been documented, this only exacerbates the racism that it was trying to correct, for the simple reason that the differences in real ability *do* show up afterwards, and the blacks who are (because of affirmative action) just as *qualified* as the whites are apt to show themselves as less *competent*, which reinforces the stereotype that *no* blacks could make it on their own, and they’re all only where they are because of preferential treatment. This, for instance, is what they (both blacks and whites) said of Clarence Thomas, in spite of the fact that he got through college and law school before the days of affirmative action, when all the cards were stacked against him, and in spite of the fact that his decisions are very well-reasoned and cogent. And the tragedy is that, instead of being a model for blacks at what they can aspire to by hard work and dedication, he is despised by them as an Uncle Tom, because he has the intelligence to agree with the position I am stating here.

Now none of this is to say that there’s anything wrong with “affirmative action” in the sense of giving extra help to a talented individual who has had bad breaks in the past. (Justice Thomas also happens to agree with this, and puts it into practice in a quiet way too.) Here, you’re giving the person an opportunity that is commensurate with his individual ability; and this is consistent with the reality of the situation. If he happens to be black, and you happen to like black people and wish them well, there’s nothing wrong with this either, provided you wouldn’t *deny* help to a disadvantaged white person just because he’s white. It’s the groupification of the individual that’s the problem.

And this groupification makes the whites feel good about themselves, because they’re *trying* to make up for the past; they *care*, and that shows how *good* they are. The fact that it produces the exact opposite effect from what they’re trying to do is irrelevant; because they *feel* that they’re doing the right thing. So here we are again;

feelings are all, and feeling that you *care* is paramount; it doesn't matter what damage you *do*, provided you do it *caringly*.

This leads us to “self-esteem,” which I'll defer to the interlude.

The connection with firearms.

But there are a couple of spinoffs from this attitude that we're all equal, stemming from the idea that rights are based on equality, one of which is very serious. But let's take the less serious one first.

There's a corollary of this New Commandment that's almost a Commandment in its own right: *Thou shalt not use or own firearms*. You know how really bent out of shape New Moralists get about “violence” (ignoring the violence of protests that advance the New Moralist agenda, of course), and how this translates itself into an attempt to rewrite the Second Amendment of the Constitution, and claim that it means that *militia* (the national guard) can have weapons, but not individuals.

I'm not going to argue the meaning of the Amendment; I just want to point out the basis of this anti-gun-ownership sentiment, and link it to this New Commandment not to discriminate.

A firearm makes an *individual* powerful; so powerful, in fact, that he can defy even the officers of the government. Furthermore, in having a firearm, a human being far outmatches poor little Bambi, who doesn't have a chance against him. And so, he threatens the ecology with his hunting, and terrorizes the rest of us.

Now there's no question that firearms in the hands of the lawless are a terrible thing, and therefore, crimes involving firearms should have punishments that create strong disincentives against using them against other citizens—and those laws must be strictly and swiftly enforced.

But this won't assuage the New Moralists. They can still be used for hunting, which makes us unequal to the animals, and they still *can* be used to thwart the Government—which is precisely why the amendment to the Constitution was put there—when the Govern-

ment becomes tyrannical. The individual, or small groups of like-minded individuals, can stand up against the State if they have firearms; otherwise, they're totally helpless.

Oh, come on! Tyrannical? Well, I just heard of a case where a school board almost took a nine-year-old away from her parents because they were home-schooling her and she wasn't getting enough socialization. The fact that she went to church was irrelevant; she wasn't getting *educational* socialization (read, indoctrination into the New Morality.) Fortunately, since she was in a consortium of home-schooled kids who went on field trips, the government *let* the mother keep her child.

But, you see, for the New Moralist, Government is always good, because it's in business, so to speak, to *help* people; and individuals are evil, insofar as they stand out as individuals, and insofar as they resist Government's benign attempts to force them to do what's good for them.

In the light of this, consider the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. Sure, they were religious fanatics; sure, they had stockpiled weapons. But they had stockpiled them because the Government, following the Tenth New Commandment we'll see later, was making threatening moves against the Religious Right, and they wanted to be able to defend themselves against attack. They weren't amassing them to come out of their compound and force the rest of Texas to belong to the Branch Davidians.

It was the mere *fact* that they were Religious Right fanatics and they *had* these weapons that made them a threat to society, in the New Moralists' minds, not some action they were doing. How can you trust these people? They *hate* us, and we know what *we'd* do if we hated something and we had all those firearms! So we can't let *that* happen! We've got to *attack!*

Now of course charges were trumped up (maybe they were valid, but the point is that they were an excuse) that they were molesting children—and so we did it for the *children*—of course we did. You

can sell anything to the public if you say that you're doing it for the *children*. And so we went in with tanks, for God's sake—I mean, for Reno's sake—and this led to setting fire to the compound, burning everybody down to save the *children*. And it was *their* fault, of course. It certainly wasn't Bill Clinton's. He said he didn't even know about the attack, until Janet Reno told him it happened. Of *course* he didn't. I guess it depends on what you mean by “know” and “attack” and “happened.” You'll have to ask *her*; *she's* the one who ordered it.

And like a good lackey, she “took responsibility” for it—in spite of the fact that the one responsible for something like this is, as I said, the one in control; and the one in control of things like this is the Commander in Chief, not the Attorney General.

Put it this way: (1) if Clinton didn't know what she was doing during the prolonged siege that led up to the attack, he damn well *should* have known, because *he*, in the last analysis, was in charge. So it's gross neglect of duty for him not to inform himself of what she was planning and either okay or veto it. If he didn't, then it's the same thing as if he okayed it. (2) If she didn't inform him, then why is she still Attorney General? It was serious insubordination to take over control from her boss. So the proper course of action if Clinton got surprised by her actions was to fire her on the spot—which indicates that he *did* know. (Of *course* he did! How can you believe she'd do a thing like that on her own?) And so, he is at fault for condoning such an abuse of Government power. Tanks! Think about that. Tanks!

But you see, they had *firearms*, and they were the Religious Right, and that made them *ipso facto* people who had to be either disarmed or wiped out.

Here's tolerance of different lifestyles for you.

Add to this the fact that violent crimes go *down* when citizens are allowed to own and pack firearms (sure they do; would you try to mug someone who might be packing?), and still the New Moralists,

ignoring facts as always, are pushing for gun control—alleging “evidence” that serves their agenda, and denying the existence of everything else.

What’s behind this—the *real* agenda—is that the New Morality can’t be enforced if the Old Morality bears arms; and so it mustn’t be allowed to do it—because then the individual is the one who is important, not the collectivity. Groups can have power, but not individuals.

The de-humanizing of the unequal.

Finally, there’s the most serious corollary of all. We’re reading out of humanity, as I mentioned, all those who are obviously not equal, like fetuses, defective persons, people in comas and so on. You’ll notice that these people, because of their handicap, are now called “not meaningfully human,” because if they’re human, then they’re equal—and (logic *does* have a way of intruding, doesn’t it?) therefore, if they’re not equal, they can’t be human.

We’re so scared of losing our rights, which we think we’d lose if we admitted inferiority to anyone, that we do one of two things: (1) We invent terms like “visually challenged,” to pretend that blindness isn’t really a handicap and “a blind person can do everything a sighted person can do; he’s the equal of everyone else; he just does things a different way.” (Tell that to my father.) Or (2) when this pretense can’t be sustained, we deprive defective people (whose inferiority not even we can deny) of their rights, on the stupid grounds that they’re not really people—and by so doing, we arrogate to society the right to *decide* when someone is and is not a person, which is a direct repudiation of the Declaration of Independence, the very basis on which we exist as a country. And once we do this, we’ve lost any hold we had on the rights we ourselves claim (since the idea of any right is that you *have* a right whether others “decide” you have it or not).

As I’ve said before, logic tends to work itself out in practice, even

when it's denied; because logic is the mental reflection of the way things have to work. If you want to base rights on equality, then you have rights only when you're equal. But since no two human beings have the same talents, then there's no factual basis for equality; and so what's going to happen is that the blatantly inferior will lose their rights.

Beware. Hitler is only two blocks down that road. You wait till you get to be eighty, and find that the younger generation finds your life not worth living, and your abilities impaired, and decides that you're no longer a person, and you're going to be Kevorkianized whether you like it or not.

As I was working on the first draft of this chapter some time ago now, I had just received a letter from a priest who up until about five years previously had been a brilliant, if traditional, philosopher, and who was then now in a nursing home, for reasons you'll see when I quote the letter. "Warm greetings to both of you. I hope your greeting by mail is very friendly. I do not do very much in that respect though I could do more greeting by mail or even by telephone than I have in fact done. A point of fact that can be done is to let you know that on January 25 my age will be 90 years old. This is not highly numerous because we do not have a high number of age facts among our retired old folks. God bless you and help you in acceptance of age."

Doesn't that make you want to cry? Especially if you knew him when he was teaching the distinction between substance and accident in St. Thomas Aquinas. Therefore, he should be killed? He should be hugged! Comforted! Loved! Cherished!

But he's obviously not human any more, and so let's dump him in the same trash bin as the fetuses. Actually, he died naturally and quietly since I wrote the first draft of this, thank a merciful God. He's happy now, in full possession of all his former brilliance, and possessed of enlightenment we can't even imagine. But getting rid of nuisances like him is all part of this Seventh New Commandment.

We must not discriminate—which means we must make the grossest of discriminations in order to avoid the lesser ones. Do I seem to recall a phrase about a gnat and a camel I heard somewhere? But what do you expect, when you're basing everything on feelings instead of facts?

Interlude: Human Dignity

Conservatives are probably still bemused by the fact that the New Moralists are constantly berating them for being full of hate; for instance, that they were all “out to get” Bill Clinton—usually “from the moment he took office.” The whole vendetta against him, from the New Moralist standpoint, was nothing but spiteful vindictiveness. (Of course, their “hate” is nothing to the real hate that was shown by the departing White House staff, who did neat little things like salt the computer printers with pornographic pictures, disable the “W” key so George W. Bush couldn’t be written, rip out phones, scrawl graffiti on walls, and put obscene messages in the voice mail. They doubtless thought such things were “funny.”)

But of course, there’s nothing really surprising in this. For the New Morality, feelings are everything, and, as David Hume and Sigmund Freud have supposedly proved, no one ever chooses to do anything for a *reason*. Reasons are always rationalizations, “casting

about,” in the all-too-mortal words of Edward O. Wilson, “among alternative scenarios to hit upon the ones which, in a given context, satisfy the strongest epigenetic rules.”

So the theory (the reasoning) the New Morality is based on says that what *really* motivates someone is feelings; certainly New Moralists (no hypocrites they—perish the thought!) never do anything except based on their feelings. And so if they want someone punished, it’s because they hate the person, and they assume that this is *really* true of everyone—again because the theory they have reasoned to says it has to be true of everyone. Therefore, if Ken Starr or Henry Hyde wanted President Clinton punished, then it’s because they’re sex-obsessed hypocrites filled with hatred and venom (and who therefore deserve to be hated to the utmost by all right-feeling people—which, of course, makes the trashing an act of virtue).

As I’ve been indicating here, and I’ve said so often, this view contradicts itself because in the last analysis, it’s based on reason, not feelings. And when reason concludes that reason can’t conclude to anything that’s true, then *that* line of reasoning isn’t worth a damn.

The justification of punishment.

But *can* a person want someone punished without feeling hatred for him? After all, if you want him punished, you want something done that’s going to cause him harm of some sort. And what right do we have to want that? Because he’s harmed someone? But then how is just adding to the evil supposed to correct it?

The argument here is going to be pretty subtle, so steel yourself. I’m sorry, but you can’t make sense of it without splitting some pretty fine hairs.

Plato had the idea that if you committed a crime, you needed punishment to get yourself back into the right order of things, on the grounds that if you harm me, then you have *also* harmed yourself because you’ve destroyed your proper orientation toward other humans (you’ve tried to make yourself super-human, as it were); and the

harm of the punishment supposedly restores the orientation, because now that you've been harmed also, we're back on the same footing.

But an additional dehumanization can't really humanize anyone. The perpetrator didn't *really* make himself super-human (he just pretended he was superior to the one he harmed), and so harming him makes him *less* than human, and doesn't really bring him "back where he belongs."

Now I'll grant that a criminal, who deliberately chooses an act that has a punishment attached to it, in some sense also chooses the punishment (à la Red Skelton's "mean widdle kid": "If I dood it I get a wippin'... I dood it!"—with the implication "I'm willing to take the 'wippin'"). Hence, until he does get punished, the punishment he has chosen is always hanging over his head, and the act doesn't reach what the psychologists call "closure" (i.e. it's not complete in his mind) until the punishment occurs.

This may be true, but it's irrelevant. It doesn't justify why *someone else* can choose to harm the miscreant—without simultaneously harming himself a miscreant, wanting harm to another human being.

And here's the universally applicable rule: **It is never morally legitimate to choose harm to anyone else.** This is obvious for the one who first does the harm, because he's acting as if (a) as human, he has a right not to be dehumanized, but (b) the other, who is human, doesn't have this right (which is a contradiction), or (c) the other is not really human (which is also a contradiction). But this applies to *anyone*, not just to the initial perpetrator. Since we have human rights because of *the fact that* we're human, not because we've earned them somehow, then we don't lose them by what we do; because no matter what we do, we're still *in fact* human. Let me stress this: **The perpetrator of a crime does not lose his human rights when he commits the crime, because he does not lose his humanity**, and the rights are based, not on what he does to earn them, but upon the mere fact that he is a human being. A criminal *wants* to be superhuman in that only if he is superhuman can he

consistently do what he does; but that desire does not make him either superhuman or subhuman.

Therefore, **vengeance is never legitimate for any reason.** Only God can exact vengeance, since only God is the potter, who can do what he pleases with the clay. The clay can't act like the potter.

But then how can you punish someone without choosing his harm? That's one part of the problem. The other part is that it's clear that if we *don't* punish criminals, then we might just as well have no laws at all, because no one is going to obey them. I learned this when I taught high school. I was told, "Be careful what you say when you threaten a student. If you threaten him with something, you absolutely have to carry it out, or you've lost the class from that moment on; they'll run amuck on you. If you say, 'You do that once more and I'll kill you,' you have to be ready to commit murder, or you're a goner." And it's true; I saw it happen. Not the murders, of course; but the teachers that threatened the most were the ones who had constant riots in their classes, because the kids knew they wouldn't carry out the threat. High school kids are that way.

But so are we all, to a greater or lesser extent. Think of the speeding laws. Do you *really* obey the 65-mph limit any more once you happened to have been going 70 and you saw that the radar car on the side of the road paid no attention?

So we're caught between a rock and a hard place. If we don't enforce the laws by actually punishing criminals, *that* choice is in effect a choice inviting violation of the laws, and all the resulting harm that lawlessness causes. But if we *do* punish the criminal, we're deliberately inflicting harm on him, and human beings as human have a right not to be harmed. (It does not say that only *virtuous* humans have a right not to be harmed.)

Let me give you an example of the problem. Years and years ago, the Cincinnati Bengals were a fine football team, headed (everyone supposed) for the Superbowl. One player, Ross Browner (I forget his position now, but he was a star) had been caught doing drugs, and

Paul Brown, the then owner, got up and in a news conference announced that he was fired (or suspended; I don't remember the details). A newsman said, "But if you don't keep him on the team, you're giving up your hopes for the championship, aren't you?" and Brown said, "I realize that. But if we *don't* punish him, then we're sending a message to everyone that if you're an important enough player on the team, then it's okay for you to do drugs—and we just can't have that."

The point here is that Brown realized that he was hurting *himself* and the team as much as or even more than Browner when he punished him; but he felt he had no alternative.

But this gives us a clue to the solution. Obviously, he didn't *want* to hurt himself, so there must be *some* sense in which you can choose something you know has a bad effect without choosing the bad effect itself.

The Principle of the Double Effect.

And the solution moralists have come up with in these situations is called the Principle of the Double Effect, which is a set of rules by which you can assure yourself that you can *do* something which has an evil effect and are keeping the effect (the evil itself) out of the choice as something you can't prevent.

It is, as I say, subtle, and so let me give a perhaps more obvious example to show that it is not just fancy Clintonspeak. Take the case of rape. A woman is told by the man holding a knife at her throat, "Now you just lie there quiet, baby, and I won't kill you; but if you make a move, then I'll be raping a corpse. Get it?"

Say she lies still because she doesn't want to die. Does that mean that in any sense she wants to have sexual intercourse with that man? Isn't she obviously *unwilling* to have sex with him, but unable to prevent it? To say that she could choose to struggle on the grounds that by some miracle she might get free is unrealistic—and since this outcome is practically impossible, then wouldn't she be wanting to

die if she struggled? So even though she knows that her act of lying still *will have the effect of* her sex organs uniting with the man, her will is still *against* this act, just as much as if the plane you're in loses its wings and you see that you're going to hit the ground in two minutes, this doesn't mean you're in any sense *willing* to die in the crash you foresee.

So it *is* possible—under certain circumstances—to choose an act which has bad consequences without actually choosing the consequences. There are five rules to make sure that the evil connected with the act doesn't enter into the choice: (1) The act *itself* can't be what's evil, because that's what you choose, and then you'd obviously have chosen evil. The evil has to lie in an effect of the act. (2) The act *also* has to have a good effect, which is what you choose the act for; if the act in effect were nothing but evil, then you wouldn't be able to keep the evil out of the choice. (3) The good effect (which is what you want) can't *depend* on the evil one, because if you want an end, you also want the means necessary to produce it—and so you'd again have chosen the evil. Even if both are inevitable, they have to be independent of one another. (4) You can't *want* the evil (using the situation as an excuse for doing evil), or you've chosen it. Finally (5) it's got to be *at least as bad* not to choose the act with its evil effect, or you'd rather have the evil than the alternative.

So, in the case of the rape, (1) lying still is okay in itself (if the rapist repented before his act, there'd be no problem; it's the effect of lying still that's bad). (2) There's a good effect; you don't die. (3) It isn't *by having sex* that you don't die, because if the rapist is caught or dies (or, as in *Crime and Punishment*, changes his mind) before he can carry it out, you've achieved the good effect without the evil one—so the good effect isn't dependent on it. (4) You're not using the situation as an excuse to have sex with someone not your husband (obviously, or it's not rape). And (5) dying is worse than submitting to sex with a rapist. (Note that if the woman thought that being raped was worse than death, she could morally try to struggle,

even if she died. I'll let you go through the other four rules and see that they fit this situation.)

—By the way, there are those who say that the fifth rule is the only one that matters; but they haven't thought things through. No one *ever* in practice does anything he thinks is wrong except for a good purpose that outweighs the evil. President Clinton, for instance, committed perjury and obstructed justice because in the situation the alternative was worse for him. And that makes it okay? Once you say that, then *everything* becomes all right, simply because no one ever does anything unless he thinks he'll be better off for it. So terrorism, rape, Unabomber envelopes, you name it, become morally all right. Nope; it won't wash. All five rules have to be obeyed in order for your conscience to be clear.

To come closer to the punishment theme, we can now assess the Ross Browner situation. (1) Firing Browner in itself was not bad; he had to terminate his career in football someday anyway. (2) It had a good effect: it avoided sending the message that it was okay to do drugs if you're an important player. (3) It wasn't the actual *harm done* that produced this effect, because if he weren't actually harmed by the firing, the act would still produce the desired effect that the NFL was serious about the drug issue. (4) No one wanted either his harm or the harm that would come to the Bengals. And (5), according to Paul Brown, the effect of not firing him would have been far worse.

To finally get to the point, Paul Brown didn't have to have any hatred for Ross Browner, or any desire to do him harm; he was just in a bind. If he didn't do an act which had a harmful effect, then that was worse than doing it; and so he had no choice. There was the rule that you can't do drugs or you're off the team. Once you make that rule, then you have to fire those who do drugs, or you can forget about the rule—and not having that rule would be a disaster for the teams.

The real subtlety here is that you're not exactly using the punish-

ment to send a message. That is, you're not saying, "We're going to do this to you so that people can look at you and say, 'Wow! I'd better not do *that!*'" That would be to use the harm as the precise means toward the good effect (warning others not to do drugs). No—and here's where you have to make fine distinctions—*that* message has *already* been sent by the threat implied in the rule: "Do not do drugs, or you're fired."

But the interesting thing here is that the threat implied in the command itself harms no one, since (a) no one has actually done the drugs yet, and you precisely want no one to do drugs, and (b) you realize that people can be tempted, and you want to provide a motive that will help them overcome the temptation. So you issue the threat *so that if everything works right, no one will ever incur the actual punishment*. You can issue a threat and not want it ever to be carried out. So *that* act is okay.

Furthermore, it's the people *subject to the rule* that are in control, not you; when they choose to live under the rule, then they are in effect committing themselves not to do drugs; you're just saying that you're serious about this behavior. So there's nothing wrong with passing a law that carries with it a threat of punishment, because the hope is that the threat will act as a motivator to help people over the difficult times when they might be tempted to violate the law—and so it is hoped that no one will actually ever break it.

But then when someone *does* break it, you are *now* faced with the alternative of saying, "Well, we weren't really serious about this law," or actually punishing the violator. So, as I said, the punishment doesn't send the message that there's a threat involved; that message is there all along. It's the *lack* of punishment that sends a *new* message that there's really no law here—and so you perform the act of punishment to *avoid* sending the message that from now on it's okay to disobey the law. Your will is oriented *away* from the harm consequent upon nullification of the force of the law, not *toward* the harm done to the perpetrator.

Is your mind numb enough now? Think it through; it makes sense—and, trust me, it's the *only* theory of crime and punishment that doesn't in effect make the punisher a vindictive criminal.

Now let's apply this to President Clinton and his impeachment. Essentially, the House managers of the impeachment were saying that if we don't punish the President for this act, then any popular President can get away with anything he pleases in the White House. And we can't let that happen.

But what happened was that the acquittal said, analogously to the Ross Browner episode, that if you're a popular President, no one has any recourse against you, no matter what you do to them. Didn't it? I don't see how his acquittal can avoid sending this message to all future Presidents. Apparently, the Senate decided that, in order to avoid "disrupting the will of the people," we can tolerate having in office a man who thinks he can run roughshod over the rights of private citizens just because he's the President and they're just nobodies— "trailer trash."

However you *feel* about the President, I think you can make out a very strong case that we don't want to be sending this message that the President is above the law. But by acquitting him, we've sent it. That's what crime and punishment entail. If he had to suffer because of what he regarded as not even a peccadillo (which, by the way, means "a *little* sin"), but even a virtuous act in New Moralism, then this is unfortunate. Just as Ross Browner might not have thought it was serious to do a line of dope, or he might have been victim to a momentary weakness, or whatever, the *fact* is that not punishing him sends a message to everyone that it's okay to do these things. And it's *not* okay, whatever message the Senate by implication sent.

But as I say, you didn't have to hate the President to want him removed from office, any more than I would be expressing hatred for Janet Reno (whom I pity) if I were President and she ordered the attack on Waco and I fired her (as indeed I would have).

No, ladies and gentlemen, it is perfectly possible to say that

someone should be punished and not feel any hatred whatever for him, even to feel sympathy for him and wish him well and hope that in the last analysis he makes it to heaven and is happy forever. I sometimes used to shock my students when I asked them if they'd ever prayed for Hitler and Stalin. (Have you? Why not?) I suppose they think I'm a crypto-Nazi when I say that I do (of course then I have to be a crypto-Commie too), because it might be that my prayers now are necessary in the Divine scheme of things to have given these men a chance at the last minute to say, "Lord, forgive me; I'm sorry," and to hear Him reply, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

It's in *this* context that only the sinless can cast the first stone. You can't *want* harm to the sinner, no matter what the sin. As St. Paul says in the first part of *Romans*, if you do, then you want hell for yourself—because you know damn well you deserve it (and if you don't think so, you're deluded). He who wants the sinner to rot in hell has himself committed the essence of sin: willing harm (in this case irreparable harm) to another. Therefore, he wants to see himself rotting in hell.

But this should not blind us to the fact that we *must* punish unlawful *acts*, even if this *results* (unfortunately) in harm to the perpetrator. Otherwise, we are a nation without laws. The punishment, and the carrying out of the punishment, are a *conditio sine qua non* for the reality of the laws; and without laws, all is Somalia.

So did I want to see President Clinton removed from office? I did. I emphatically did. Do I wish harm to President Clinton? I do not. Do I pray that some day we will meet in heaven? I do. (Though I can't imagine what I'll say to him. I admit I certainly *feel* plenty of resentment against what he did to the highest office in the land I love. But I'll worry about how I'll deal with him when we get there; by then, if I make it, I'll be able to handle it.)

The curse of “self-esteem.”

But you see, the New Moralist can't see this business of wanting someone punished and not hating him, because the only *real* motivator for actions is feelings, not thinking things through and doing what's logically necessary.

And this leads from this digression back to the expansion of the idea that I promised in the discussion of the Seventh New Commandment. This business of basing morality on feelings rather than reason and facts leads to all sorts of inconsistencies and hypocrisies. Whites *feel* guilty about what “we” did to blacks, and men *feel* guilty about the “oppression” they've visited on women, and so we *feel* we have to make up for it.

And this follows from the First Great Commandment, that feelings, and the agenda based on them, are the truth. And so, what is taught, in addition to “health” (read: sex) and the environment, in schools nowadays, is really “self-esteem,” rather than the actual subjects. Teachers, you see, must be “facilitators,” not teachers, because the teacher is no better than the student; he's just been around longer. But there aren't any facts, and so he doesn't have anything that the students don't have. And so, no matter what the subject, the student already has everything inside him, which simply has to be “brought out.”

Now this is no Platonic theory that we all actually know everything from our existence as pure spirits before our souls were trapped in a body that blinded them. Heavens, if you even mention “spirit” in school any more, you're called on the carpet for violation of Church and State. No, this modern view is that of the First Great Commandment, that there *are* no facts, only agendas, and only feelings count. With Plato, you didn't *teach* facts, you *reminded* people of them by asking adroit questions. With moderns, there are no facts to teach—only “facts for” the person who happens to believe them. And nobody's facts are privileged, and therefore everything is opinion—and so education boils down to sharing opinions.

But of course, some kids can see through this—or at least, see around it—and are brighter than other kids, and they actually learn something. But then they stand out. But that makes the other kids feel inferior—because they *are* inferior. So we’ve got to see to it that the self-esteem of these other kids is not destroyed, poor things, or they’ll go through life believing that there are actual *differences* between people, and they can’t do what some other people can do. And that will make them *feel* bad about themselves.

You say, “Well, gee!” But what you don’t understand is that feeling bad is the definition of harm in the New Morality. It doesn’t really matter what you *do* to a person, as long as he feels good about it—remember the “different lifestyle” depicted by Robert Mapplethorpe, where someone urinates in someone else’s mouth. But if you make the person feel bad, and especially feel bad about *himself*, then you’ve done the truly inhuman thing.

“But if he feels bad about himself, then he’ll just give up, and then he’ll act out his inferiority and never make anything of himself.” So? So you don’t *let* him give up; you *make* him keep trying to surpass the limits he thinks he has. You should have seen the looks on the faces of my college students who got Fs on their first test—as many did, because I demanded that they not simply react to what I was teaching, but learn it and be able to reproduce it in an essay of their own writing (Yes, I demanded that they “regurgitate” what I had told them.) They were shocked! *Shocked!* Several told me that they’d never gotten below a C in their lives. But you should have seen their papers; some of them couldn’t even write a sentence, let alone develop a coherent thought. So I said, “Do it over, and do it right this time. Study the material, and if you need help, I’ll help you.” And they did. Some of them—many, in fact, over the years—went from an F to an A, once they had learned some tricks on how to study to actually learn something. They did it because they had to take the course, and so they had to spend the rest of the semester and take the rest of the tests, and it was either fail all of

them, or do something about their unsatisfactory performance. Sure, I hurt their self-esteem; and sure, some of them gave up and quit the course; but lots and lots of them made something of themselves. Most will never be philosophers, but so what? They suffered no harm to the blow to their self-esteem. Self-esteem, phooey! Some of the greatest people in the world—St. Thomas Aquinas, Brahms, Michelangelo, “suffered” from what we today would call “low self-esteem.” They felt bad about themselves, so they pushed themselves and produced prodigious results.

I remember once in Florence Italy, I was going up a stairway in some museum there; and on the landing was a half-finished statue of a Pietà—Mary taking Jesus down from the cross. It wasn't like the one in the Vatican; this Jesus was a *corpse*, falling off her lap like a hunk of meat; and the look on her face was a whole encyclopedia of a mother's reaction to a murdered son. The leg of Jesus below the knee, however, wasn't attached to the body, and the faces of two of the onlookers were only roughed in; the face of Mary Magdalene was there, but oddly out of synch with the rest of the sculpture.

I asked about the statue, and it turned out that Michelangelo had got that far (except for the Magdalene's face), and was about to take his hammer and break up the statue in disgust, when an assistant cried, “No! No! Don't do that! Give it to me!” He did, and the assistant put the face on Mary Magdalene, and saw that he was ruining it, and had sense enough to leave the rest alone.

And there it is. This overwhelming thing, perhaps even greater than the Pietà everyone knows; a failure in Michelangelo's eyes. Low self-esteem. (He put his own face on the skin the guy in the Last Judgment scene is holding as he realizes to his horror that he's damned.)

But this isn't the New Morality way. Self-esteem is all. But no matter how you reinforce their self-esteem, “facilitate” them in their education, some kids still learn a lot better than other kids. So what do you do? Simple. You make the stupid kids think—pardon, *feel*

—that they’re just as good as the bright ones, because we’re all equal in our feelings, and that’s the truth of what we are. So we actually have math courses where if the kid says that two and two are five, we praise him for trying, and make him think he’s done a great thing, and we “guide” him so that eventually he hits on four as the answer—we hope, but if he doesn’t, what difference does it make anyway? Everybody uses calculators nowadays.

What this breeds is complacency and arrogance, not ambition. I used to get these kids, all of whom feel good about themselves, in my college, which is one of the private colleges that’s supposed to be selective in the people it takes in. They’d have had good grades in high school and yet couldn’t, as I said, write a sentence; but they were convinced that they were just *grrreat!* I remember one time I was trying to coach a drama student in a TV presentation I was directing, and she was saying her lines all wrong, emphasizing prepositions and conjunctions the way Americans are prone to do; and when I read the line (which I had written) correctly, she bristled and told me that I was trampling on her *art*, that *she* had to make the lines meaningful to *her*. (The fact that they wouldn’t be meaningful to anyone who heard it was irrelevant—as was the fact that if she already knew all about acting, why was she a student?)

Really, you have no idea how bad it is. I had three kids in a class in metaphysics during my last semester of teaching—nice kids, good kids, in their way, and, as philosophy majors, supposedly the *crème de la crème*. I gave them some tough stuff to read, granted, and one of them “got confused” with the argument, and just gave up, rather than buckling down and trying to understand it. *I* was the guilty one, because she couldn’t grasp what I was saying on the first reading or even the second. One of the others conceded that my conclusion (that there is a God) followed from the premises, but he was “into” Zen and so forth, and what I was doing was “too logical,” and he chose not to believe that God exists—never mind that he agreed that I’d proved it. You see, if the conclusion was true, then “what about

the third of the world that was Buddhist, who disagree with it? You're making them second-class thinkers." The evidence made no difference; I was dissing the Buddhists by giving evidence that their conclusions were false. And he liked their agenda.

Exactly.

Do you wonder that I retired?

Living in fantasyland.

But you see, if you're a New Moralist who's bought into the Darwinist view of humanity, you *have* to say that what life is all about is feeling good about yourself and feeling that it's all worth while, because *objectively* the big picture makes no sense, and in practically everyone's case, your own life turns out not to make any sense either—and is probably pretty horrible to boot.

And the reason we have such a high suicide rate, especially among the young nowadays, is that reality *will* tend to intrude itself on our consciousness in unguarded moments, and when it does, it makes us feel perfectly dreadful about ourselves and our lives; and ultimately, with this worldview, there are no rational grounds for hope. So once the irrational feeling of optimism departs, then what's the sense of going on?

But this we dread with all our hearts, and so we construct this fantasy world of feeling good about ourselves and our lives and our "relationships," (which of course aren't *relationships*, since we never really abandon ourselves to someone else—we wouldn't dare make our happiness dependent on how someone *else* feels about us), and pretend all sorts of things are true that we know deep down are lies.

In this nation of people who have not only all they need, but all they want, and in fact more than they actually want, but merely think they *could* want, we are populated with neurotics who have to pretend that it all means something when the whole basis of their lives says that it means nothing and all they have is just dust and ashes. There are more unhappy people, I would venture to say, in the

United States at the end of the Twentieth Century than there ever were in medieval Europe, even with its hundred years war and bubonic plagues. Why? Because we've got it all, and we can't help saying, "But is this all there is? But what am I? Am I worth anything?"

The "value" of life.

I hate to disillusion you, ladies and gentlemen, but the answer is No. Why? Because, as I said, a value is a means toward a freely-chosen goal; and as Immanuel Kant astutely pointed out, a human being *is* the goal, he is not a means toward someone else's goal. Thus, human life is the criterion for which all values are values; it is not itself a value. It just *is*.

Now wait a minute! Doesn't "Thou shalt not kill" say that human life is the supreme value? No. Right and wrong are not in the same category as good and bad. Right and wrong are what is consistent or inconsistent with the way you now are; good and bad (values) deal with the future self you want to become. It is *wrong* to kill a human being; but it can be *good* to do so, if the person's death lets you achieve your goals. And don't tell me this doesn't happen. Every woman who has had an abortion has used her own child's death as a means toward the goals she wants, and nothing has happened to her.

This, as I said, is the great conundrum of life, which I'm going to address in the final chapter. How can life make sense, if you are more fulfilled by doing what violates your very reality?

Of course, there *is* a sense in which a life can be said to have value; when one's life helps another achieve that other person's goals. But "life" in this sense is the *actions you perform* rather than your *reality*. In this sense, President Clinton's life (at least while he was President) was "more valuable" than an ordinary citizen's, because what President Clinton did affected more people than Joe Blow.

But the whole of the impeachment business was about whether

the “value” his life has toward making others happy then permits him to use other people as if he were the end and they were the means—as if *he* were the only touchstone by which value could be assessed, and other persons weren’t ends in themselves that had to be respected.

When you say that “life is the supreme value,” then, what you’re really saying is that human life is something that has to be *respected*, not that it’s the “most useful thing there is.” But even saying it in that sense is to bastardize the word “value,” because it’s then unclear when something is one of these values-to-be-respected and *not* a value-to-be-used. It commercializes what is absolute and can’t be compared with other things, and treats it as if it’s just very very expensive.

The meaning of life.

But then if my life has no value, what’s the point of living? My whole life is meaningless then, isn’t it?

No it’s not. Your life *is* the meaning; it doesn’t *have* one. Well, it does, actually; but it has the meaning you give it.

And this is basically what being human is. We don’t start out with a life that means something; we start out with potential. All we are as we grow up and develop our powers is ability to do things—which is another way of saying “ability to be somebody.”

And the agony of adolescence is the discovery that I *can’t* find out who I am, because all I am is potential; I *can* be this or that kind of person; but I can look and look inside me all I want, and all I find is possibility, not who I really am.

And why is that? Because of the freedom we are given. That’s precisely the point. You are given a range of possibilities, and *it’s up to you* which of these possibilities are going to be realized; you *choose* among the various potential selves you foresee in the future, and work to actually make yourself into what you have chosen.

And *that* self you choose is what gives meaning to your life,

because it is now “headed somewhere,” somewhere you have decided it shall be headed toward; and every step you take in that direction is meaningful, because the step is toward the end, the *real* reality of your life.

“Now wait a minute, wait a minute!” I hear you believers say. “What about God’s plan for you? Isn’t *that* what gives meaning to your life?” I’ll tell you a secret: God created you free, and He has no need for you whatever. His plan for you is *precisely that you determine for yourself what life you want to live, and work to carry out that plan*. That’s profound; think about it.

That is, you are so created that *you* create for yourself what makes your life meaningful, and then the achieving of *that* meaning is God’s (natural) plan for your life. (I say “natural” here because there’s an added something in the actual scheme of things—the Beatific Vision, in which we *become* God without losing our finiteness, just as Jesus is both God and a man; but that’s a gift and can’t even be conceived as a goal by any human being, because it’s beyond anything we could desire. It’s not part of the “meaning” of your life, because the meaning has to be something you can *think*.)

Another way of saying this is that you define for yourself what in the concrete your happiness is to consist in (because happiness is what you’re looking for, isn’t it?), and you work toward that, and that is what gives meaning to your life. But this means that **happiness does not consist in *feeling* good, but in *being* what you have *chosen* to be.**

Oh yes, there’s a big difference here. I’m a happy man; and I have been for most of my life; but until very recently (my retirement) I also happen to have been clinically depressed. You see, I’m the child of a blind father and an alcoholic mother, whom I saw go into the DT’s when I was—I must have been—seven, staring at the wall in the dark in the middle of the night and screaming “They’re coming through the wall! They’re coming through the wall!” Needless to say, my childhood was all screwed up; and this screwed-up childhood

had a physical effect on my brain, so that when there's any pressure on me and I'm not taking medicine, everything *feels* hopeless and horrible.

But I learned at Kang's funeral that the way you feel has nothing to do with the real situation—thank God!—and I spent forty years ignoring my feelings and basing my actions on the facts about my life in spite of them. Then I finally discovered that a little pill can make things feel neutral! That it was actually possible to wake up in the morning, and feel as if the day might be worth getting through! It was amazing. I told the coordinator of the study I was in (I was taking an experimental drug) “I'd forgotten you could feel this way! I haven't felt like this except for a few days when I was a teenager and I could finally leave my home!”

But that didn't mean that I wasn't happy, even then. I knew who I was, I knew where I was going, I knew how to get there, and I knew I was on the way. The fact that I *felt* as if it was hopeless didn't mean it was. It wasn't. It isn't now.

So here's some advice from the old philosopher: **Forget about self-esteem. Forget about what you are now, and never mind who's to blame for the state you're in. Figure out what you *want* to be and set off on that road.**

What life is all about is that *it simply doesn't matter* what you are now, or how you got to be that way: whether you're male or female, white or black or Asian, whether you had a happy childhood or a rotten one, whether you feel like shit or feel as if life is glorious. What matters, and the *only* thing that really matters, is the self you *choose* to be, and to start on the road that leads there.

The second thing to remember is this: **If you're not failing, you've set your goals pretty low. The thing is not to avoid failing, it's to fail forward.** The easiest thing in the world is to be successful. All you have to do is define your goal in life to be what you now are. Since there's no built-in goal in life, you're automatically successful.

But in that case, that's all there is. What you now are is the whole meaning of your life, because that's all the meaning you've given it—and you'll find no more meaning to your life, because you can't *find* any meaning to your life; you have to *give* it to your life.

You see what we're doing with our obsession with self-esteem? We're robbing life of the only meaning it has: the meaning we give it. We're saying that life as it is is all there is, and we're trying to make ourselves *feel* as if this is just peachy and wonderful; but it's all meaningless; it just feels good—if you don't pay attention to reality, and pretend that life is just a Barney program.

“But wait just a second now!” you say. “Suppose I set a goal for myself, something I'd really like to be, like a second Michelangelo, or another Bill Gates or something. For every Michelangelo, there are a thousand sculptors who are starving to death and never have anyone buy what they've done, and for every Bill Gates there are a million programmers who never amount to a hill of beans. Why should I try?”

Because this life isn't the only life. But that's something that belongs to the final chapter of this book. But let me tell you that even if what I say there is wrong (and it isn't, but even if it were), and you *set* that goal for yourself and get on your horse like Don Quixote, you will find that your life will be a struggle, and a harder struggle the higher the goal you set—but the struggle will be worth every minute of it. You may not have self-esteem because you're always failing on your way to your goal; but you know where you're headed, and you're on your way. You're acting the way a human being was made to act.

Self-esteem, phooey!

The Eighth New Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Be Greedy

So, if my view of life is right, then you should set high goals for yourself and work to achieve them, and that is what will make your life make sense. But the particular New Commandment we're considering now is almost the direct antithesis of this. Those who set lofty goals for themselves and actually achieve something in this world are looked on as evil.

This is not, however, just because of the Seventh New Commandment, that they've made themselves unequal to others. This particular New Commandment has to do with something connected with hard work and setting high goals: if you actually achieve (or come close to achieving) these goals, you're apt to make a lot of money. And *that's* really horrible. You've not only put yourself on a higher plane than the little guy, who as Senator Daschle (I think it was) said, "hasn't fared so well from life's lottery" (as if your hard work had nothing to do with it), you've got rich by *taking* from the little guy, and *exploiting* the people who work for you, and

all the other mantras uttered by everyone on the left ever since Marx.

Why Marx hates profit.

To see what's going on here, you have to understand something about Karl Marx's theory of economics. He took the "labor theory of value" from people like Adam Smith and David Ricardo and drew out its logical implications. You remember, I said that the value of something was the fact that it could be used as a means to achieve your freely-chosen goals. Marx admitted this, but he called this sort of thing "use-value," and said that this wasn't what *economic* value really was; the "value" that something has *in exchange* for something else in an economic transaction.

This can get quite complicated, so let me boil it down and oversimplify. Basically, what Marx said was that things in themselves didn't have any value; they *acquired* use-value insofar as they were *worked on* by somebody to get them into usable shape. But when someone works on something, he makes it different, based on what he did to it; and so some of his humanity-as-a-worker now resides in the product (which Marx called a "commodity"); that is, the page I am writing that comes out of the printer is no longer blank, but has the words I put on it; and so the page now "speaks about" me; and presumably, this makes the page more useful to you than a mere blank page (actually, a tree growing somewhere in the forest, because paper is a transformed object too). So you might want to buy it. And if lots and lots of you want to buy it, I'll be one of those rich people the New Moralists can't stand.

The point is that the exchange-value (for Marx) consists in the human labor that is put into the product; and the *price* is the money-equivalent of this exchange value. Well, it's not, actually, because I try to sell the product above its exchange value (because otherwise, I just get back what I put into the product, and then why bother?), and you, of course, try to buy it, if you can, below the exchange value, because you want to be able to use your money for all kinds

of other things. So the price is actually either above or below the exchange *value* (which is the labor-value, the only real value), depending on whether the supply is greater than the demand (in which case, I sell at a loss) or the demand is greater than the supply (in which case, you pay a premium). When I sell at a price higher than the exchange value, I make a *profit*, because I'm getting back more than I put in. So this first idea of profit means that I'm selling something to you at a price higher than its value—which, of course, is unfair to you, and if I'm the big producer, and you're just the little consumer, then guess who's the Bad Guy.

But now when you introduce competition, you find that other people start producing the same (or essentially the same) thing, and they increase the supply, which (by their attempts to undersell others so that they can sell all they make) lowers the price; and, to make a long story short, the price drops below the value, in which case suppliers go out of business, decreasing the supply, which raises the price to the profitable level again, which attracts more producers, which lowers the price—and so the price *hovers around* the exchange value, which (for Marx, remember) is the value of the human labor that went into producing the product. So in the long run, using this notion of profit, it would seem that producers sell at cost, and so don't make a profit at all. (That's why capitalism, which is based on profit, is automatically doomed, according to him.)

But there's another wrinkle in Marx's notion of profit, which makes it *really* bad. The real evil, according to Marx, comes when I hire someone to *work for* me in producing this thing I'm selling. In capitalism, he has to offer himself in the labor market, and there's competition for his services, and he's in competition with other workers. So supply and demand works just as above. But what the worker is selling is his *potential* to work, not his actual *work*, because he hasn't *done* anything before he gets hired, and he's hired on the basis of what he *will* do. So he's selling *himself*, or his "labor power," not his actual labor. I hire him for eight hours a day, and he's to

exert himself on my product for eight hours a day, putting value into the material I give him.

But the gimmick here is that *his* value as “labor power” is *not* the value of his *labor*. I hire him, as I said, before he’s done anything, as the potential to put value into things. So his value is *the labor that’s gone into producing him as a worker*. That is, his value as a “commodity” on the market is how much it costs to feed, clothe, and shelter him and keep him healthy so he’ll be able to work and put labor into my material. That’s his *value* in the market; the *price*, of course, will depend on what he can get. But the point is that *this* value (the labor it costs to keep him alive) has no relation to the value of the *actual labor* he puts into the material.

That is, say, it costs forty dollars a day to keep the worker alive and healthy and so on. That’s his exchange value as a worker; and when he’s hiring himself out to me, he’ll try to get more (because he realizes he can *do* work worth a hundred dollars a day); and if labor is in short supply, I might even pay him fifty dollars a day, or even go up as high as the hundred if things are really tight, and I need him to keep the factory going and I can’t find anyone cheaper. But if labor is plentiful (if there’s high unemployment), you can bet that there will be others who will work for less, and then I’d be a fool if I didn’t pick them. And of course, when labor is *really* abundant, there will be people who will take work just to avoid starvation—or in other words, will work for their exchange value, or even temporarily below it (they can’t do it for long, because they’ll starve). So the *price of laborers hovers around starvation, once there’s competition for labor*.

And this is built into the system, according to Marx, and the “decent” capitalist can’t do anything about it. If I have compassion for you and I pay you 50 dollars an hour, *my* competitors can get labor at 40 dollars an hour and they’ll undersell me, which means people will buy their widgets and not mine, and I’ll go out of business. So much for compassion.

The kicker here, of course, is that the value the worker *puts into*

the product is far greater than *his own* value as a worker—obviously, or I wouldn't hire him, because then where's my profit? I sell at cost. And so in the capitalist system, *profit is the difference between the value I as a capitalist get out of the worker and the money I pay the worker*. Since I'm not paying him for his actual *work*, but buying his labor *power*, which is himself, I am making money *from* his work but not paying him *for* it (I'm paying for *him*). And that's the way I make a profit.

There's a lot more to Marxism, but this is the essential evil he sees in capitalism. It is built into the nature of capitalism that the worker *can't* be paid what his work is worth, or the capitalist couldn't make a profit, in which case capitalism collapses.

But that's just because it's *capitalism*, the economic system that's driven by the profit motive. But there's no law that says you *have* to run a business for profit. Even within capitalist countries, there are non-profit organizations, like the college I taught at for thirty-four years. Everyone made a salary, but the *business as such* didn't make money out of the college. So what was the problem?

Anyway, what the New Moralists who buy into this are saying is that, since profit necessarily is nothing but paying the worker less than the value of his work, capitalism is intrinsically evil and unfair and exploitative, and even if it's more efficient than other systems, it should be abolished. Also, once the capitalist gets power and controls the supply, he exploits not only the worker but the consumer. But not to worry; Marx says that capitalism's own inherent contradictions are going to kill it; it's just that, once labor unions were formed, this slowed down the process (because workers got control over the supply and hence the price of labor). But it'll come, they say; it'll have to. It just might be a good idea by revolution to hasten the process.

What's wrong with all this?

But, though it sounds great in theory (and the New Morality is

big on what sounds great in theory, like evolution and global warming, and outcome-based education, and so on), there are *tiny* things that Marx overlooked that make it just a tad different from what he said.

Let me illustrate. Once, years ago, I had my house remodeled, and we hired a firm with Larry, his brother, and Bud, a worker they took on. They charged me at the time \$17.50 an hour labor for each of them—which was cool. But one day Bud mentioned to me that they were paying him \$10.00 an hour. I said, “Do you know that on the bill to me your labor is listed as \$17.50 an hour? That’s what I’m paying you.” He answered, “Oh, sure.”

I said, “Doesn’t that bother you?” and he answered, “Hell, no. I know if I went in business for myself, I could get \$17.50 an hour, but then I’d have the hassle of drumming up work, getting insurance, taking care of workers comp, figuring out taxes and social security, planning the jobs, and all that. It ain’t worth it. I’m happy; I just show up at work in the morning and go home and have a beer and forget about the job. They’re up half the night.”

(I might add that one thing Bud didn’t mention is that Larry and his partner were *responsible* for everything the firm did, including what Bud did. If Bud did something egregious on his own and was identifiable as the culprit, he *might* get sued; but even if he did, Larry would also. And, of course, generally Bud’s goof-ups wouldn’t be known as his, and Larry would be the one to answer for them. And believe me, people will go to great lengths to escape having to answer for what they do; so Larry was doing a *huge* favor for Bud.)

There you are. The capitalists *aren’t* just sitting on their duffs clipping coupons. They’re *providing a service* to the workers, which the workers consider valuable (Bud was in effect glad to pay them \$7.50 an hour for it—which is less than they paid *him*, by the way). Once you get beyond the notion that doing something valuable to someone has to be taking stuff and transforming it (actual physical *labor*), the whole picture changes.

What's valuable economically (from the producer's point of view) is *service*: acting for another's benefit—or using your own time, effort, and resources (which could be advancing you toward your own goals) for the sake of advancing the other person toward *his* goals (this latter is Marx's "use-value" and today's "utility"). This can take the form of transforming metal into a car, or waiting on table at a restaurant—or finding work, getting insurance, taking responsibility, and all the rest Bud was talking about.

That's one thing. Another thing, though, if you're going to understand economics, is that the service in question always has *two* values, not one. The *seller* looks at the product precisely *as* his service, and figures out "how much of himself he's put into it," in terms of what he's lost in resources and ability to pursue his goals. This is his *cost* (what economists call "opportunity cost," not just "money cost"); and it forms the minimum below which he won't sell his product or service, because then he'd be worse off for performing his service. This is the *seller-value* of the service.

On the other hand, the *buyer* doesn't care how much of the seller's time and "reality" has gone into what he's buying; he's just interested in how far it will advance him toward his goals. Remember, the goal is always some *activity* of his; the product is valuable because it enables him to *do* something with it. So just as the seller's value is in the last analysis his activity (the activity of buying the materials, making the product, and selling it), so the buyer is considering how this product or service enhances *his* activity. The buyer figures out what he's going to have to forego doing in paying for this thing (you buy a theater ticket, and it means you don't have enough for dinner out), and he picks the activity more important to him. So *he's* looking at what *he's* giving up to be able to do the act the product or service allows him to do. The upper limit of what he'll give up is the *buyer-value* of the product or service.

Marx tried to say that the buyer-value was irrelevant in practice, while contemporary capitalist economics tends to say that the buyer-

value (the utility) is the only economically relevant one. They're both wrong. The two are distinct and irreducible to each other.

Because, of course, this buyer-value is a *different* act or set of acts from that of the seller; and since values are always in terms of goals, and each has different goals, then the buyer-value and seller-value won't come out in money terms to the same figure. Generally, there's a wide gap between what the buyer will pay if you push him hard enough, and what the seller will take if he's driven to the wall.

The third thing to notice here is that the *price* is the *compromise* between the two values; **price does not reflect any value at all, still less the "real" value of the product or service.** Products and services *have* no real (in the sense of objective) value, since value is always subjective, because it's determined by the freely-set goals persons have.

That's why silly things like pet rocks can sell for \$20.00 today, and next week you can't give them away. They cost the seller practically nothing to produce, but he *did* have to do *something* to them; and the buyer thought they'd look cute on the coffee table as a conversation piece, saying that he'd actually paid for the stupid thing. But that gets old fast, and so the buyer-value vanishes, which means that the price goes down to zero. In that case, the seller's subjective value in packaging the things makes no difference, because no one wants to buy it any more. On the other side, it makes no difference what you offer Michael Jordan to play for the Bulls; he has no interest in offering his service (so the seller-value is infinite). It's just not true that every man has his price.

So you have to have both values if there's going to be a transaction. Now the "ordinary" way price is determined is by haggling. I, as buyer, express an interest in your car (as I did recently in a Ford showroom). You, as seller, tell me a price—the highest price you think I'm willing to pay. I (having checked with *Consumer Reports* what the lowest price you can sell for is) say, "No way. I've got X

dollars cash (quoting a price below your seller-value), and I'll take it off your hands for that." You come back with the fact that that's impossible, and come down a bit, and then I rejoin with a higher price than my original one. Finally, we reach a figure that I think is a good one, and you're willing to take. This is *above* your seller-value, and *below* my buyer-value. So we're both happy.

Notice, here, that both of us gained by the transaction. This is the beauty of economic activity—with a caveat no one has noticed that I'll take up in the interlude—that the transaction, if it involves values, won't occur unless *each* party gets back (according to his subjective standards) more than he gave up. And since there's no "real," objective value to anything, then this is possible.

In the actual case, once we'd reached the price, I said, "I know at this point I should walk out and come back tomorrow, and I could get you down some more. But that's okay; I'll take it." The fact that I *could* have got the car at a lower price didn't bother me, because, among other things, I didn't want to incur the *cost* of haggling any more, and it was about the price I expected to pay anyway. So I was content, even though I assume the dealer thought he taken me to some extent. Fine. Let him be happy too.

Our guide once in the Yucatán told us as much. "When you buy something in the straw market, notice that there isn't any price tag on it; so you talk to the person. Don't take what he first asks; but then don't feel bad when you've paid a price you like and later you ask someone else and they say they got the same thing ten dollars cheaper. You got it for a price that was worth it, so what's the problem?"

He understood. The thing itself doesn't have any objective value; it's what you want to give for it, and what the seller wants to take for it. If both of you are happy, what's your problem if two other people settled on a different amount? You didn't lose; you gained; you got something you figured was worth more than you gave up to get it.

The reason we think that price reflects a kind of objective value

is that when you introduce manufacturing, in which you make eighty thousand widgets a day, you have to sell all eighty thousand every day or you'll be drowning in widgets. You don't have time to haggle over each one, the way car manufacturers do (since they make relatively few of them). So you *guess* at the highest price you can ask (obviously, above your seller-value) that will enable you to sell all of them. If you've got one left over, you guessed too high, and you'd better come down tomorrow, or the leftovers will begin piling up; if you've got ten people calling, "Where can I find another Tickle me Elmo?" then you guessed too low, because you could have sold all you made at a higher price.

Notice a couple of sub-things here. First, there's no magic or "reality" to this "equilibrium" (i.e. sellout) price; it's just the price at which you sell all you make; when Beanie Babies take over the young imagination, you'll only sell all your Tickle me Elmos if you cut the price you're asking drastically. Be aware of this. **Ten tons of subjectivity do not add up to one ounce of objectivity.** The price is still just the compromise between buyer-value and seller-value; but it's on a large scale, that's all.

Secondly, contrary to what is often implied, there's no law that says you *have* to sell at the *highest* price you can and still sell out; if you want to, you could sell your widgets at half that price (always supposing this is still above the seller-value, your floor), and, if the money you make enables you to achieve the actual goals you have for your life, what's the problem?

This is very important. If you want to know what economics is all about, you have to realize that *we are not by nature infinitely greedy*. That is, values are in terms of the *goals* we set for ourselves, and these goals may be very lofty (and so require lots of money to fulfill), or they may be not so high in economic terms. I made a retreat in Gethsemani Abbey recently, the Trappist monastery, and the monks I spent a week with are happier than most people I know, and they can live for a year on what I spend in two weeks. Who needs a

mattress and a box spring? Three inches of foam rubber and a wooden shelf is plenty.

Of course, they're exceptions in one direction, and there are others who are exceptions in the other. But most of us are in the middle. We have a pretty good idea of who we are, and of how much it costs to live the lifestyle we want. What we want beyond this is security: not to have to give up our way of living. (I was delighted to find that my income from my retirement is just about the same as I was making the year before. Neat.) Sure, we'll *take* more if we win the lottery, but we don't get our undies in a bunch about it.

Economic theory, however, as usually given, simply assumes that our "needs" (our goals) are infinite, and resources are finite; and so economic activity consists in choosing which are the more important goals to be fulfilled and which we'll have to give up; but we'll never be satisfied. But that's bunk.

Economic activity consists in *transactions: Using the freely offered services of others to pursue your own goals, and compensating the server by allowing him to do the same.* That is, the money you pay me for serving you now allows me to go out and have others serve me. This is true whether I have so little money that I can't fulfill all the goals I have, or whether, like Bill Gates, I have so much I couldn't possibly spend it all on myself. On the other hand, Robinson Crusoe, alone on his island, was not engaging in *economic*, but *practical*, activity when he built his stockade and stored up his food.

And as to our "needs" being infinite, you can see this is not so in practice from advertising, which isn't just "letting people know" what's out there; it's an attempt to persuade people that *without* the widget in question, their life isn't worth living (that is, that you're *harmed* in some way if you don't have it). My wife succumbed to this recently and demanded that I buy a cell phone especially if I was going off for a week to the wilds of a monastery in the Kentucky hills. Suppose I got into an accident on the expressway and was stranded for a week without food and water. So I now have a stupid

little phone, plus monthly service fees for the privilege of being able to be pestered no matter where I am. But it's true; I *could* have called her if the car broke down. And I *did* call her when I got back into the home area (early in the morning) out of the "roaming" range, and woke her up to tell her I'd be home soon. So there.

Here's some more advice for you, then, from the old philosopher. **Figure out for yourself the kinds of activities you want to do, and how much it costs to do them. That's your standard of living. When you make enough money to do these things, you've got all you want.** In other words, don't look on having lots of money as a goal in itself; money is a pure means toward using others' services to achieve your goals. **And you're *really* lucky if you can take one of these things you want to do and figure out a way that people will want to pay you to do it.** That's what happened to me. I love to teach, and people actually hired me to do it. Why did I need to make millions at it?

The new-morality dimension.

Now as I'll show in the interlude, all is not rosy with economics, even with the corrections I just made to economic theory. But the point here is that New Moralists have bought into the basic Marxist view that capitalists make money by cheating both the consumer and their workers, and they have *power* over them, which makes them *unequal*, and this makes everyone *feel* bad, and it's just *terrible!* Let's have some *justice* and *fairness* here! They buy into Marxism because, even before Darwin, Marx had a materialist view of evolution, in which man developed reason *because* he made tools and *because* he needed to communicate to exploit others; and so Darwin's view of biological evolution up to man fit right in. Besides, Marx raged against capitalists and wanted revolutions and things, which shows that he not only had a *theory*, he had an *agenda*, and his *heart* was in the right place.

New moralists add also the fact that capitalists are in business

precisely to make money, often a lot of it, and so they're *selfish*, and that, of course, violates the Sixth New Commandment; they're not cooperating in this joint enterprise; furthermore, as we know, manufacturing just *wrecks* the planet, and *destroys* and *pollutes* and *wastes* our precious resources on *luxuries* while the Third World is *starving* because of our *exploitation* of them for our *own gain*! (I'm sorry; but when this subject comes up, you seem to need a lot of italics.) Not only that, but the capitalists are doing this by using their *brains* and *calculating profits and losses*, and not being compassionate toward the poor, still less toward snail darters and spotted owls and all our scaly and feathered companions on the earth.

So capitalists, by and large, violate the First and Greatest Commandment because they think there's such a thing as truth and that facts matter more than feelings and compassion; they violate the Fourth, (not to restrict instinctive gratification) because they postpone satisfactions and save up so they can start their businesses; they violate the Sixth, because they absolutely *ruin* the environment; they violate the Seventh, because they put themselves above everyone because of their minds. And they violate this one because they've made money by cheating and grabbing it out of the hands of the poor folk. Is it any wonder they're hated?

I think it's the selfishness that really bugs the New Moralists; there's no compassion in Big Business. When firms like Procter and Gamble give hugely to charity, then "Yeah, sure, of course! First of all, they forced the workers to contribute, and secondly, they had to do it to keep people from breaking all their windows in rage. It's all a sham. You don't think they *care* about the inner city schools and the disabled, do you? Don't be naive!"

The fact that the board of trustees and the CEOs of these firms are also human beings makes no difference; just because of "the system" they absolutely can't have any concern about workers or the public, or they'd close up shop, and become a non-profit organization. The mere fact that they make a profit *proves* how evil they are,

can't you see the nose in front of your face?

And, of course, since they're evil, then they must be suppressed, as far as possible. But the Old Morality is still pervasive enough that it's not possible simply to abolish capitalism and replace it with the just society, which is a Marxist one; unfortunately (because, of course, of the evils capitalism has wrought on the world), the Marxist societies that exist haven't done too well by their citizens—but it's not because of the *system*, it's because of the way it's been implemented!—and so “socialism” and especially Communism is a bad word, and the people rebel against it. So we have to take subtler measures—

—to impose our moral standard on the country in spite of the people's resistance. We're doing it for their *good*, of course; it's just that they're not enlightened enough to realize that yet. So we first demonize companies like Big Tobacco and Bill Gates, and show how exploitative and unfair they are. Never mind that we have to bend the truth a bit to do this, they've got the wrong agenda and we have the right one, so we're acting in accordance with the *real* truth.

But after getting the people in a frenzy against these companies, we then tax them to death—well, not to *death*, because that revenue is pretty tempting, and after all, there's the story about the golden eggs. In the case of Big Tobacco, it's irrelevant that this doesn't hurt the companies at all (since they just raise prices, and the poor addicts will simply pay the tax; and the kids will smoke all the more because of teenage rebellion), this will (a) show that we *care*, that we're *trying*, and (b) put all that extra money in the government's pocket to use to redistribute to the poor (i.e. to the ones who are paying this extra tax—of course, they only get *some* of it; we need to hire administrators to distribute it, of course, of course).

And if we can't get a tax passed through that Right-wing Bible-thumping Congress, well then we'll sue the companies, which will (a) give us even more money, (b) hurt them even more (i.e. make them raise prices to pay for the suit, which they'll then collect from the

smokers), (c) show where we stand on the matter, and (d) give the lawyers that much more money as an incentive to keep up the good work, and to vote for us next time.

It's not the money, it's the principle of the thing.

Notice that this enrichment of the lawyers is not regarded by the New Moralists as really a bad thing. There's a dirty little secret here. The New Morality is not against riches *as such*, only riches that come from *profit*. But if you're wealthy because you inherited it à la Kennedy and the majority of the liberals in Congress, or because you're a lawyer, or because you're an entertainer, in the news business, or a sports figure, then you can make millions with no problem.

Why is this? First of all, why doesn't anyone treat Michael Jordan like Bill Gates? I hinted at the answer in the discussion in the Seventh New Commandment, not to discriminate. Michael Jordan is outstanding because of his *physical* skills, which means that his body has evolved farther than that of the rest of us poor slobs who can't dribble worth a damn. This should be celebrated, not belittled. (I almost put "denigrated" down, but based on what happened to the man who used the word "niggardly" recently—he had to resign—I thought better of it.) But more than that, people liked to go to see him soaring through the air, licking the breezes as he dunked another one; it made them feel happy; and feelings are everything, aren't they? Besides, he's black, and he's made it big, which (a) puts a little fairness into life, and (b) in an area which, as good New Moralists, we know is the only one blacks can excel in on their own. He deserves every penny he can get, since whites owe it to people like him.

So that's simple. Now why can entertainers and news anchors make gazillions of dollars without any New Moralist's batting an eye? Because they're the new Apostles. Of course! The entertainers appear in dramas whose purpose is to preach these Ten New Command-

ments in season and out of season, and to ridicule, vilify, and—yes, denigrate—everything connected with the traditional view of things, like religion and capitalism. The fact that these movies, as Michael Medved has shown, are flops is irrelevant, because they know they’re fighting an uphill battle, and it’s a matter of time before everyone will see things the new way, and really *appreciate* their tremendous *courage* for portraying mothers who choose abortion as sensible and right-to-lifers as slaving fanatics, for showing that gays are just like everybody else, that Big Business only has unscrupulous cretins in the board rooms, that all priests are pedophiles (which would be *okay*, you understand, if they weren’t *priests* who preached against it), and all the rest of it.

It’s absolutely amazing how these people think of themselves as counter-cultural for bravely uttering what is politically correct and wins nothing but applause from anybody who matters.

But anyway, somebody said someplace that “the worker is worthy of his hire,” in the context, I believe, of those who go out and spread the good word; and so who would begrudge these intrepid souls their mansions in Beverly Hills? And of course, the news anchors, who take what happened during the day and spin it into the cotton candy of the New Moralists take on everything, are the *crème de la crème* of this noble effort; so why shouldn’t they be able to take their place alongside Michael Jordan, Oprah, and O.J. sailing along to the summer villa somewhere near Monaco?

But Bill Gates? Michael Milken? *Rush Limbaugh!*? Better a millstone should—sorry, I seem to have got stuck back in antiquity.

Interlude: Human Economics

There are a couple of other things, as I said, that have to be taken into account if you really want to make sense out of economics, and not just stay up there on the top floor of the ivory tower forecasting economic trends with as much accuracy as the global-warmists predict the weather. (By the way, one of the main honchos in the computer modeling of global warming has said he found out that the models have no predictive value at all. But that didn't stop President Clinton from forging ahead with the Kyoto assault on Big Business in the name of saving the planet—and you can now see why, having read the preceding chapter. Note also all the suits against the gun *manufacturers* for deaths due to guns. Boy! If *that* doesn't reinforce what I said about both the Seventh and Eighth New Commandments!)

The three functions of a firm.

You hear in economics texts that a business is in business to make a profit—which leads to some fancy footwork when it comes to accounting for non-profit organizations, not to mention businesses like Bill Buckley’s *National Review*, which hasn’t made a profit since it was founded (if my memory serves me), and still wants to keep going, judging by the appeals I get from the publishers for contributions to rescue it from its financial straits.

This is actually based on the fallacy I mentioned in the preceding chapter that people have “infinite needs” and are never satisfied; and so they’re always trying to “maximize satisfaction,” which in economic terms boils down to maximum return on investment.

Actually, the sociobiologists have latched onto this economic “truism” (which happens to be false), and are now trying to explain everything, including religion, as “maximization.” The fact that most people (in our society, certainly, but everywhere) are pretty content with comfortable mediocrity doesn’t faze them; they’re *really* infinitely greedy, because they’re “maximizing” things by giving up. When your theory can make anything into “evidence” for itself, it’s a lousy theory.

Anyhow, once you reject that assumption of “maximization,” and say that people have *finite* goals, then you can look at things more objectively. True, the firm can’t run without (a) the entrepreneur, who is responsible for what the firm does in offering its services to the public—and who offers these services to get a return at least sufficient to enable him to use others’ services to fulfill his (finite) goals, whatever they are. And, in the case of small businesses, which are, as everyone knows, by far the greatest number of businesses, the entrepreneur is very apt to be interested mainly in “making a living” doing, like Bill Buckley, something he thinks is worth while and which he loves to do; and if it makes a mint, fine, but if it doesn’t, that’s okay too.

But then there’s also (b) the consumer, who, if he doesn’t want

the product or service, will destroy the company. And after all, the entrepreneur *makes* his money *by* providing the service. And so, even if his *motivation* is to make money, *the firm's* purpose is just as much the service to the consumer as it is profit for the entrepreneur.

And also (c), unless the firm consists only of the entrepreneur, there are the employees in it, who are necessary if it's of any size, and without which it won't function; and *they* won't work for it if they don't get decent pay and decent working conditions. And so a third purpose of the firm as such is to provide a means by which those without entrepreneurial skills can nonetheless serve the public indirectly through the firm and by this can get money so that they can pursue their own goals.

So it's not true that the firm "is in business to make money." It's got all three purposes, no one of which is in itself subordinate to the others; they are three *coordinate* purposes to the firm. And so one of them might in a given case take a back seat to the others without any inconsistency at all. In fact, in the case of non-profits, if the CEO acts as a kind of entrepreneur but is actually salaried like everyone else, you can forego this first purpose altogether, just as a firm that consists of a single person can forego the third. The one you *can't* get rid of completely is the second, the service to the consumer.

Now what does this mean? Basically, it follows that **there is no economic law that says that return on investment must be maximized**. That is, it is **not** economic folly or irrational to avoid doing something which maximizes your gain and which promotes one of the other functions of the firm.

There's a law in economics called the "law of diminishing returns." The idea is this: Suppose I hire you at a hundred dollars a day, and once I put you in my factory, my output is two hundred dollars greater than before I hired you. Great. I then hire Frank in addition; he costs another hundred a day, but now my output (with both you and Frank) is two hundred and fifty dollars more than before I hired either of you, which means Frank's work has added

fifty dollars, because the two of you now talk to each other and each doesn't do as much work as if you were alone. When I now hire Henry, he begins to get in the way of the two of you, and so all I get is an extra hundred and ten dollars from hiring him. Diminishing returns. But now what happens when I hire Joe? I find it costs me an extra hundred dollars, but my returns go up only an extra seventy-five. So it's stupid to hire Joe, right?

Wrong. It's stupid *if* all I'm looking at is how much of a return I can get on my outlay. But suppose it's a time of high unemployment, and guys like Joe are out there wanting jobs. If I, as entrepreneur, am making ten thousand dollars more than the money I want in order to live my chosen lifestyle, why is making still more than that to be the prime economic consideration? The firm is *more* than fulfilling its function as far as I'm concerned, but it has these other functions too; so why don't I spend some of the firm's money giving employment to those who need it? Why am I being *economically* inconsistent if I do this? I'm not talking morals here; just the logic of the economics of the firm.

Or again, if I'm making more money than I want, why is it economic folly for me to cut prices—even if I don't have to, because I'm now selling all I produce—so that consumers can get a quality product at a lower price and have more money to spend on other things? Who's hurt by it? The firm isn't; it's doing a fine job, thank you, even though it's selling below the equilibrium price. The employees, we assume, have good working conditions and a good wage, so they're okay. So why do economists sneer at this?

Because it's stupid, it's unreal, that's not the way things work! Oh no? Then why have firms in the United States been suddenly downsizing lately? Because competition has forced them to produce better products (Oh?) at lower prices (Indeed?—sounds like a law of economics operating here, doesn't it?), and they can't do it with the personnel they've acquired over the years. But what does *that* mean? How did those redundant people get there in the first place, and

what kept them there so many years until competition reared its ugly head? They were hired *not to maximize return on investment, but because the firm was doing okay, and it seemed like a good thing at the time.*

So let's really get real here. People aren't hired in practice because the stockholders, through the CEO, are looking to squeeze the last dollar out of every move the firm makes, but because somebody says, "We've got more work than we can really deal with in this department; we really need another hand here." Does the personnel director sit down with his calculator and do a cost/benefit analysis? In the *real* world? He wants, among other things, to keep his people happy and not go through the hassle of hiring replacements if they quit in disgust. And when he decides, "Why not? Jones is probably right," what does this personnel director look for in this extra hand? Not the one who will be most efficient—not in the real world. He looks for a "team player," which is to say, the person who he thinks is going to give him and the rest of the firm the least grief. **People are motivated far more by avoiding hassles than by maximizing profit for the stockholders.**

"Well they *shouldn't* be!" you say. They shouldn't? Why not? "Because the whole purpose of the firm is to make money for—Oh." Exactly. It's only *on that assumption* (which happens to be false) that you look for the person who's going to bring you back the most bucks. If you see the firm as a team that provides a service, then it's in business to make *everyone* happy: the entrepreneur, the employees, and the consumers; and you don't necessarily make the employees happy by bringing in Mr. Buzzsaw to create as much tension as profit.

Now everybody knows that what I've been saying goes on in practice; it's just that the economists justify it in theory by saying, "Well, of course you don't hire Mr. Buzzsaw, because the tension is going to make the workers less motivated, which is in fact going to slow production, not increase it, and so there won't be the return

you were looking for.” Nice try, and in some cases it might be true. But it’s not the way firms actually work, because people actually work in firms, and people don’t want hassles. Even if the entrepreneur wanted nothing but the maximization of his profit, as soon as the firm gets to be any size and he can’t keep his eye on it, the employees are going to look to their own comfort level rather than the size of his bank account. What do they care about him? They just want a decent job that pays well.

“Well sure,” say the economists, “because they’re trying to maximize their own satisfaction too.” Maximize, phooey! They aren’t turning over rocks trying to find every little thing that’ll make their life better; a job’s a job, for heaven’s sake, and it’s not supposed to be a rose garden. They know that. No; what they really want is to *avoid* unpleasantness and stinginess on the part of the boss; but if the job is reasonably fun to do, then they don’t get all bent out of shape if it’s not perfect. It’s too much trouble to be maximizing your satisfaction all the time; you’ve got to live a little, and loosen up.

I ask you, who’s in the ivory tower, and who’s got his feet planted on good old terra firma in this?

And the point, as I said, is not that it’s possible for a firm to be *moral* if it seeks a reasonable profit for the entrepreneur *and* a quality product at a low price for the consumer *and* good working conditions and pay for the employees. It’s being consistent with the economics of what a firm is. It’s the *economists* who are being “normative” when they say that the firm is “really” trying just to maximize profits, and therefore, things that don’t aren’t economically sound.

And what this shows is that *there’s nothing in capitalism that demands greed and exploitation*; in fact, it’s inconsistent with the multiple coordinate purposes of a firm. It’s just that economic *theorists* have had the notion that self-interest is *the* motivator and therefore the purpose of the firm, and that self-interest knows no bounds. But all the time, these same people know that they do lots

of things not for the sake of using others for their own gain, but because they care about others too—and while they wouldn't want to suffer for others' benefit, they see nothing wrong with doing something that helps them along too.

Hell, you go down to the bar and you're there with a guy and his glass gets empty. So you buy him a drink. Why? So that he'll buy you two next time? No, because, like Mount Everest, he's there. What's the big mystery? (Actually, it *is* a big mystery, the mystery of love, if you analyze it deeply enough; but the point is that when you analyze it from the cost/benefit point of view, you start making up all these hidden selfish motives that just aren't there.)

And, as I say, this sort of cooperativeness goes on all the time in small firms, where the members know each other. Look at Larry and Bud, the contractors I talked about. They weren't trying to extract the last ounce of "maximization" from each other; they just had a job to do, and the three of them could do it better than just the partners; and all of them were constantly chatting and joking while they were sawing away and plastering.

The fly in the ointment.

But it all still sounds a *bit* like utopia (which, by the way, means "nowhere"), doesn't it? I said that in transactions, both parties gain, because each gives up less than he gets or there's no transaction; and firms aren't just really just looking to get the greatest possible profit at the least possible cost. Yeah, but then why isn't everybody just full of bliss?

So now I'm going to give you what I promised earlier, which is the Great Blairian Contribution to economic theory. **Values are not the same as necessities**, as I mentioned earlier, and **values do not function economically the way necessities do**. And unless the distinction between the two is taken into account (and it hasn't been in economic theory), economics can't be made to make sense when put into practice.

Here's the difference: (1) Values lead to *freely-chosen* goals, defined by the choice of the person who has them; necessities are those things without which we can't live a *minimally* human life—and a “minimally human” life doesn't depend on our choice, but on the genetic potential we have, which is something objective. Thus, if you're deprived of a value, you may be *disappointed*, but if you're deprived of a necessity, you're objectively *harmed* and dehumanized.

Put it this way: There's a zero-point in humanity (considered as the ability to perform human acts): the point at which a person can do what “practically everyone human can be expected to do.” Below this, in the area of negative humanity, so to speak—as in blindness, you're a human being, but you can't do what a human being can be expected to do just because he's human, and so there's a kind of contradiction in you—which is what we mean by “harm.” Staying out of this is the realm of necessities. Above this zero lie the different lifestyles of humanity, and among these you're free to choose depending on your interests, your whims, and your ambitions. This is the realm of values.

(2) Since the goals values lead to are free, you can give up values and their goals if you want to. But you can't choose to give up necessities without wanting to harm yourself—which is inconsistent with yourself as a human being, and is therefore immoral. It follows from this that if you have a choice between giving up a value or a necessity, you *have* to give up the value; in fact, if the necessity is an absolute necessity (such that without it you die), you would morally have to give up *all* values to get it.

That is, if you're in the desert, and you're dying of thirst, and Darth Vader has a gallon of water, which will tide you over till you get out, and he says, “I'll give you this if you give me all your money plus your house and your car,” you'll not only give it to him (because what's the money and the house and the car if you're a corpse?), but morally speaking, you *have* to give it to him, if this is

the only way you can survive, or you'll be killing yourself.

A corollary to this point is that one value is given up for another insofar as the second leads you closer to your chosen goal than the first. In other words, you give up one for the other because (by your subjective standards) you're better off with the second. But with necessities, you give one up *only* when (a) you can't have both, and (b) you're *worse off* without the one you take than the one you gave up.

That is, when you're dealing with necessities, you're using the Principle of the Double Effect, and not *choosing* the giving up, but *permitting* it because otherwise you're doing greater damage to yourself. So, for instance, you may put up with allergies here in Cincinnati rather than move to Phoenix and have to give up your job and your family ties and so on. It's isn't (in this respect) that you're better off here; it's that you'd be worse off there.

(3) It follows from this that (a) we have no right to values, and (b) we have a human right to necessities—insofar as deliberately refusing to supply them is the equivalent of actually doing harm. Take the case of Darth Vader in the desert. I'm assuming that he's got plenty of water for himself, so there's no deprivation if he just gives you the gallon of water. If you say, "I won't pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for that! It's outrageous!" and he says, "Die, then." Isn't he in effect killing you?

Conservative economists bristle at this, because it's *his* water after all, and he can do what he wants with it. But it's not that simple. Take your two-year-old kid. It's *your* food and your water and so on, and if you refuse to feed him, aren't you killing him? Sure you are. Don't get sidetracked now with "But he's your responsibility!" The point I'm making is the general one that harming someone need not necessarily consist in *doing* something that damages him. It can also be that *refusing necessities to someone who is harmed without them is in effect the same as being willing to harm the person.*

The only way you can get around this is by using the Principle of

the Double effect and not *choosing* the harm that comes by the refusal. If you and Darth Vader are both in the desert, and all he has is a canteen that will enable one of you to survive, and you ask for a drink and he refuses, *that* can be moral, even if you die by it. Think it through: (1) The act of refusing is okay, since if you had or found water, there'd be no problem. (2) Darth lives on, which is good. (3) It isn't your death that keeps him alive (because if you *do* find water an hour after the refusal, the good effect occurs without the evil one). (4) He doesn't want you dead; he just wants to live himself; and (5) it's a life for a life; he chooses his life, not your death. Notice that in the situation as I outlined it, if he shares the canteen with you, *both* will die; so he can either give the whole thing to you, choosing your life, or keep it, choosing his; but morally, he can't do "the compassionate thing" and share it.

On the other hand, if you see a blind man walking down the street, and he's about to fall into a construction pit he can't see and kill or hurt himself, and all you have to do is shout to warn him, and you just sit there and watch him go over the edge, then you're *willing* to have the harm come to him, and this is the moral equivalent of pushing him over. It doesn't matter that you have no connection with him; he's a fellow human being, and has a right not to be harmed—and you've deprived him of this right.

I rest my case on this point.

(4) But the implications of this lead to the fourth difference: **Values are incommensurate with necessities.** They're not on the same scale, because one is increase of benefit, and the other is avoidance of damage. *Here* is the thing that's overlooked by economists, because they assume that they are somehow on a continuum. For Marxists, values are just not-very-necessary necessities, and for capitalist economists, necessities are just very valuable values. But that's a distortion of the way things really are.

Since necessities are what can be *expected* just because we're human beings, and therefore what we have a right to (they're the

means toward doing the minimum our humanity gives us reason for expecting to be able to do), then when we have them, we rightly take them for granted, and don't want them at all. You don't set as a goal for yourself breathing or being hydrated. Humans breathe and drink water; and so when there's air around and water in the well, you consider—correctly—that this is something you've got a right to just because you're human; because to deprive you of it is to do harm to you.

So necessities are *beneath* any value, when we have the necessities. They're presupposed, not something that we set as a goal for ourselves. But when you *don't* have a necessity, as I said, it's greater than *any and even all* values; you *have* to have it; you don't *want* it, and you have to give up all values required to get it.

So necessities have zero value if you have them and infinite value if you don't. Which is another way of saying that they're not in the same category as values; they only look as if they were. You can compare two values with each other and figure out what you want to give up to get the other one. You *can't* morally compare values with necessities, because you can't do harm to yourself for the sake of a benefit.

Notice this: **the foregoing of a benefit is not a harm, and the lessening of a harm is not a benefit.** That's the fallacy. You are not *badly* off if you sent in your envelope to Publishers' Clearing House (You may already be a winner!) and they didn't reply. You're not ten million dollars poorer; you're just not ten million dollars richer; but you're still what you were before you sent in the money. (Okay, so you're thirty-four cents poorer, because of the stamp on the envelope, which is why I can't be bothered with these things. But what's thirty-four cents in your life?)

Similarly, if I cut your arm off and then give you a hundred thousand dollars "in compensation," have I restored your ability to pick up things? No. I've given you *benefits*, but they don't really undo the harm I've done. Nothing can ever give you back that

arm—well, short of some miracle of surgery. But even then, I can't give you back what you could have done with it before the surgeon sewed it back on.

Have I made my point? Values are not necessities, and they don't function economically in the same way. When you're faced with the "loss" of a value, you're just not going to be as far ahead as you want to be; but if you're faced with the loss of a necessity, you're under a real threat.

What this amounts to is that **someone who is supplying a necessity to another person has him under a threat of harm (objectively speaking), while someone supplying a value is doing no harm in withholding it.**

So, if you're a doctor and a patient comes to you and you find that he's got a brain tumor, and you tell him, "That will have to be operated on, and soon, or you'll die," you have informed him that he's under the threat of death. True, *you* aren't saying you'll kill him, you're just informing him of what the facts are; but from *his* point of view, he's under a threat of death.

Now if he asks you, "Well, what does that mean? What's it going to cost?" he's asking you how to get out from under that threat; he's not asking what *benefit* is going to come to him from your service. He's asking how much he has to give up to get back to zero in his humanity—so he can weigh the two damages using the Double Effect, and choose the lesser of the two evils.

You tell him, "Operations like this run about thirty thousand dollars," and he says, "(Gulp!) Okay. It'll take half of what I have in the bank, but what can I do? Go ahead, and the sooner the better." And when the operation is over, he thanks you profusely as he hands over the check, because you've saved his life. And you have. And he may even say, "It was worth it."

But here's the secret. It wasn't. He *had* to have the operation; it wasn't *worth* anything. He's no better off with it than he had a *right to expect as human*. All you did was get him back to zero, you didn't

give him a *value* at all, since values deal with *the kind of life you choose* to lead, not with life as such as opposed to death.

Before you scream at this, think of it carefully from his point of view. His situation is really no different from that of a person who gets mugged, with the robber holding a gun to his head and saying, “Give me your wallet, or you’re dead.” You hand it over, and the robber has done you a favor? Well, you’re not dead.

“Yes, but,” you say, “The robber was going to *do* him harm; the surgeon did something that *removed* the harm he had nothing to do with putting there!” True. And that’s why I said, “from his (the patient’s) point of view.” From *his* point of view, it doesn’t matter how the harm got there; he’s under a threat of death, and the threat is removed. So he’s back where he was before he found out about the tumor (or before he got it, really). So neither the robber nor the surgeon did an actual favor to him (benefitted him) in letting him live. Think about it. Think, don’t just react, because I’m just about to take care of your difficulty.

Transactions involving necessities.

The difficulty is that the surgeon had to *use up his own activity to remove this threat from the patient*. That is, the surgeon was performing a service—which happened to be a necessity, but it was a service nonetheless—and so he deserves compensation for his service, or he’s nothing but a slave, and that’s dehumanizing. In other words, if he serves the patient for free, then he’s lessening himself (doing a kind of damage to himself) for the patient’s sake.

Now he *can* do this, using the Double Effect, since it isn’t the *lessening* of the surgeon’s ability to pursue his goals while he’s at the operating table that saves the patient; it’s the activity he performs. And let’s face it, the “damage” here to the doctor is so insignificant that it really has to be put in quotes. But if he does so, choosing the patient’s life and ignoring his own inconvenience, this is an act of *love*. But the surgeon has a *right* to be compensated for his service to

others.

So there are *two* rights involved here: the right of the patient not to be killed by the tumor (because as human, he has a right to life), and the right of the surgeon to compensation.

The problem is that if the surgeon *refuses* to operate, just on the grounds that it's inconvenient, then he can't really justify this on the Principle of the Double Effect (supposing him now to be the only surgeon available). (1) The act of refusing in itself is okay; (2) it has a good effect; the surgeon is not inconvenienced; (3) it isn't the patient's death that prevents the surgeon from being inconvenienced, since if the surgeon doesn't operate and the patient spontaneously recovers, the good effect could occur without the bad one; (4) the surgeon doesn't really want the patient dead; but (5) that's a bit of a sophism, because you can't compare the inconvenience of three hours' work at your profession with the death of another person.

Of course, if there are plenty of other surgeons, then the refusal is not the equivalent of killing the patient. Also, if the surgeon is dead tired from all the work of operating on other people (as during a plague or in the army or something), and he'd be seriously harming his health and his ability to operate on others, *then* there would be justification for refusing this patient using the Double Effect.

But the point really is that *the surgeon has deliberately gotten himself into the business of supplying this necessary service to others; so he has more of an obligation to help such people than just the ordinary Joe does*. What did you study to become a surgeon for, if you can't be bothered operating on people who might die if you refuse?

But this doesn't alter the fact that the surgeon's service has a *value*. There *is* a transaction going on here. The surgeon's service has a seller-value; it's just that in this case, there's no buyer-*value* for the service, because it's a necessity, not a value, and so the "value" is infinite. And you can see this. It doesn't matter what the surgeon charges; the patient will accept it. He has to. Even if he has to go hopelessly into debt for the rest of his life, he'll agree, because what's

the point of hanging onto your money if you're dead?

Transactions involving necessities on one side and values on the other are one-value transactions, and so they don't function economically the way two-value transactions do, where haggling can arrive at a compromise. In the case we're considering, where the value is the seller-value and the necessity is on the buyer's side, economists say that "the demand is inelastic": that is, the service will be taken no matter what the price asked. That's usually *why* there is such a thing as "inelastic demand," in fact; because the people on the demand side *have* to have the object in question, and the price isn't a consideration for them.

It follows from this that, if the transaction is treated like a two-value transaction, then the value-side has *power over* the necessity side, and can quote a price wildly at variance with the (only) value (his), and will get it, because there is *no* value on the other side, but the threat of harm instead. The necessity is *not* a very valuable value; it is something that can't be compared with a value. And therefore, it's taking advantage of the person who needs the necessity to act as if he's in a position to haggle, and when he agrees on the price, it's "worth it" to him, and he's "freely" agreed to it. He hasn't *freely* agreed to it any more than the victim freely agrees to hand over his wallet to the mugger.

But still, the surgeon deserves compensation for his service. Precisely. There *is* a value here, and it's the *only* value. But this means that *the surgeon must be honest in assessing what he's giving up in performing this operation, and ask for no more compensation than this.*

That is, if economics is going to be consistent with the reality of the situation, then surgeons can't justify their fees by "what the market will bear," because in this case, it will bear an infinite amount, and they are taking advantage of the threat the patient is under. And suppose the patient is under the knife for three hours. The surgeon then has to ask himself, "Is my service worth ten thousand dollars an hour?" Not to the patient, because to the patient it's worth infinity.

What this has to mean is, “Am I giving up something that would cost me ten thousand dollars during this hour I’m wasting rooting around in his brain? Would I be doing something that cost ten thousand dollars if I weren’t doing this?”

I submit that to ask the question in this form is to answer it. But in this case, that’s the only value involved, and so the surgeon is taking advantage of the patient if he charges the ten thousand dollars an hour.

So in this case, what the surgeon (or anyone supplying a necessity, like producers of heating oil, electricity, telephone, lawyers, and on and on) has to do is this: He has to figure out, as I said earlier, “What is the yearly income I need to be able to live (in my spare time) the kind of life I want to live?” and divide up that income by the number of patients he expects to see (plus their ability to pay), and charge *no more* to the patients than that amount. Then he’s charging the *value* of his service, which is the only value involved, and isn’t just taking whatever he can extort from the patient just because the patient is under a threat.

There’s an added caveat here, however. Since the surgeon or anyone like him is supplying a *necessity*, which in the abstract the patient or client has a right to have for nothing (since without it he’s harmed), *then the supplier has an obligation not to set his goals so high that he’s in effect economically super-human*. That is, if the surgeon “just can’t consider life” without a second Ferrari in the garage and the summer villa on a hundred acres in Mar del Plata, then he’s saying that his idea of life is greater than 99.9999% of the human race can actually live at; and that’s unrealistic. The fact that he *can* live that way because he can *force* his patients to support this lifestyle means that he’s no better than a Mafia boss who lives the same way by running a “protection” ring.

A surgeon or a supplier of a necessity in general has a right to a *decent* living from his service, but not to an *extravagant* one, precisely because his services are not really *worth* anything to the

recipients. So he *can't* look at how “valuable” his services are to the recipient; because that term is economically meaningless. The fact that he's studied long and hard is also irrelevant in determining the value of his service; the value of his service is the lifestyle he is giving up in performing it.

Now it *is* true that the surgeon is an educated person, and so presumably has learned that life does not consist in Big Macs, chips, and beer while watching wrestling on the Tube. He's found out that symphonic music is actually more significant music than what Snoop Doggy Dogg produces; and the things to eat, see, hear, and so on that aren't positively bad turn out to be expensive. Furthermore, a surgeon's job is messy and dangerous; and so he's not only giving up listening to Beethoven, but he's giving up not having to muck about in bloody and stinking brains for hours at a time, where the least slip means that the patient dies. So the surgeon's activity *does* have more value than, say, your average garbage man's—though his service is a necessity too, from the homeowner's point of view.

I would think a surgeon would have no moral problem whatever in saying that he has a right to live on the equivalent of an eighty-thousand-dollar a year salary, or even perhaps a hundred thousand a year (in, say, 2000 dollars). The reason I say “equivalent” is that if he's in an office, he has to actually *get* more, because he's got to pay the staff and so on. But once he gets above the equivalent of a couple hundred thousand, I think he should begin having moral qualms, and if he makes a million a year, he definitely has a moral problem.

Notice that Michael Jordan could make forty million a year without any moral difficulty, since no one had to go watch him dunk basketballs. If people want to pay the price of the tickets, then that's because they think that what they're getting for the price is *greater* than what they're giving up; and so if Michael Jordan can make himself fabulously wealthy by supplying this value, more power to him.

But the surgeon's not in the same situation. True, what Michael

Jordan does for people can't be compared with what the surgeon does; but that's the whole point. It doesn't mean that the surgeon's service is *more valuable*. It isn't valuable at all; it's *necessary*. No one goes to him to be *better off*; they go to him to get out of trouble. Of course, if he's a plastic surgeon who does cosmetic surgery, then he's supplying a value, not a necessity, and *then* if he wants his villa in Corfu, there's no moral difficulty.

Now I personally think that until suppliers of necessities become convinced of what I've been saying, there's no solution to the problems we have, whether the economic system is capitalism or Communism, or whatever. And the reason is simply that since the suppliers are providing necessities, then they can get together and simply refuse to perform their services unless they get paid exorbitant sums for it—and whether the one who pays is the patient (or client) or the government, it will get paid, because the consumer *has to have* the service, whatever the cost. They have people by the throat, and can extort whatever they want.

So socializing medicine is not the answer; until doctors get back to the notion that their *main* purpose in life is helping people, and that all this gives them is the right to a *decent* living, not an extravagant one, we're lost. And don't say it can't happen. Teachers, for instance, are also supplying necessities, and there are still plenty of teachers, even though the pay is not all that humongous.

Now I've given the impression that the necessity is always on the consumer side. But this isn't the case. I mentioned that not everyone has the skills to make it as an entrepreneur; and so some people—by far the majority—can't make it unless they work for someone else. But that means that if they *don't* work, they starve. Necessity.

And what *that* means is that employers *can* offer pay just this side of starvation, and working conditions just this side of horrible, and people will take it—not because they're willing, but, by using the Double Effect, because they *have* to or die.

And, thank God, because of unions and people like Charles

Dickens (and even Marx) who “raised consciousness” on this issue, in the “developed” nations we’ve pretty much solved this problem. We’ve got laws that prevent blatant exploitation of workers, and have come to realize that it really doesn’t make economic as well as moral sense to exploit them.

All I’m saying here is that it’s the same situation. When the supplier has to supply the service or be harmed, then the value is all on the employer’s side; and so the employer *must not* offer simply “what the market will bear,” but must take into account the humanity of the employee, and not simply exploit him because he can get away with it. In the last analysis, the firm needs employees; and they are human beings, not “commodities”; and it is inconsistent with the *economics* of the firm and of transactions to dehumanize people in hiring them just because they’d be *more* dehumanized if they couldn’t find any work.

Why capitalism works, and socialism doesn’t.

To go into more detail would be to write a book on just this subject, and so I’ll have to refer you to my textbook *The Moral Dimension of Human Economic Life* or Chapter 2 of Part Five of *Modes of the Finite*.

But, at the risk of making this chapter overlong, there are a couple of remarks that I think need to be made about capitalism as opposed to socialism. Capitalism (i.e. a free-market system) basically brings prosperity—though it needs to be fixed up by taking account of necessities—and socialism brings misery. Why is that?

Because, first of all, there are two motivators for doing things: fear and ambition. When fear of punishment is the motivator, you will do the minimum you can get away with and avoid punishment. When ambition is the motivator, you will do more the more you are rewarded for what you do.

Now in socialism, the government runs things. But the government runs things by passing laws—and therefore, in the last analysis,

by threatening punishment if you don't obey them. Therefore, people will do as little as they can get away with, and the result is economic stagnation and regression. You can "motivate" them with propaganda about how you're all sacrificing together for the glorious future, but people aren't fools. They say, "Why should I suffer for generations yet unborn? Let them see to their own problems."

On the other hand, if you say, "If you do this, I'll pay you; and if you do twice as much, I'll pay you twice as much," you're very apt to find twice as much done. And, of course, that's the basis of capitalism. When I perform a service, the recipient pays me according to how valuable it is to him, and I get paid more the more value he sees in it. So what's this going to do? Give me a *reason* for (a) figuring out what he considers valuable, and (b) doing more and more of it. And who gains? He does, and so do I. We both move ahead, faster and faster.

But you see, the New Morality hates Big Business (actually *any* business) because of this selfish motive, and it loves government because government is there precisely to *help* people. But New Moralists ignore what I just said, which works out to be the exact opposite of what you'd expect in the abstract.

The "selfish" businessman is always looking to what the consumer wants, because the happier he can make the consumer, the more the consumer is going to pay him. And so, in spite of the fact that he may be *motivated* by selfishness (though even in capitalism, as I said, he doesn't have to be), it's going to work out that the *consumer* is even more of a beneficiary than he is.

On the other hand, people who want to help other people don't want to *suffer* in doing it. So government bureaucrats are going to see to it that their lifestyles are not curtailed by what they do for the public. And since the money that pays them is from taxes, which the people *have* to pay, they've got an unlimited supply of it, which they think they're dispersing to help the people they've just extorted the taxes from. So what this boils down to is that a great part of any

governmental program consists in welfare for the bureaucrats: insurance that they never lose their jobs, that the “problems” they are “solving” never go away, but only get worse (making their helping activities more needed than ever), and that they can go home to their Select Comfort mattresses and HDTV sets in the bedroom after a hard day of doing the People’s Work.

So it’s the selfish-in-theory who turn out to be the altruists-in-practice, and the altruists-in-theory, in good Clinton First New Commandment fashion, who turn out to be the selfish-in-practice.

But you see, the New Moralists *care*, they’re *trying*. And they can *show* how wonderful and good and kind they are by *taxing* the evil businessmen and *redistributing* it to those who *deserve* it—first and foremost, of course, to the redistributors. If only a pittance gets to the people that are supposed to be the recipients, well, that’s a detail we can safely ignore, because we know we *care*.

(What is it? We spent something like five trillion dollars on the War on Poverty over the years—enough to have given every single one of the poor when it started a million dollars apiece—and all we’ve got to show for this governmental effort at compassion is five times as many poor, and a lot of well-off bureaucrats. There’s the beauty of socialism for you.)

Let me just mention, however, that, since government *is* the society in which people cooperate to see that no one’s rights are violated, then government *does* have the right to tax the well-to-do to supply necessities to those who can’t get them by their own efforts. But it has the obligation to do the *minimum* of this, or it’s demanding more than is necessary from the affluent (making necessary—because of the demand—more than what is necessary—which is a contradiction, in case you hadn’t noticed), and creating an incentive for the people who *can* make it on their own but can’t be bothered to get off their tails, to sit and let government take care of them. And that’s dehumanizing even to the poor.

So there are wheels within wheels here, not surprisingly. If it were

all perfectly simple, we'd have solved all our economic problems ages ago. All I'm trying to say in this chapter is that the *foundations* of capitalist economics are solid—though the theory needs tinkering—and that this country, as founded, *was* on the right track. It is indeed the greatest country in the world, for all its flaws; don't let the New Moralists bamboozle you into thinking it isn't.

The Ninth New Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Do What is Unhealthy

Well, having solved the world's economic problems, let's forge ahead. A little thought will reveal the basis for this New Commandment, not to do what is unhealthy: We are, of course, nothing but complicated animals, which are complicated machines, and this "spirit" and "immortal soul" stuff is a lot of hocus-pocus; so health is where it's at. You're healthy when you can do what you're *genetically* (there's the operative word) capable of doing, and you're sick when you can't; and, of course, when you're sick there's something wrong with you. Biology trumps everything in the New Morality.

But the interesting twist here is that, like all moral stances, the New Morality, which doesn't even recognize itself as a morality, can't avoid thinking that what is "the right thing to do" is what is consistent with yourself as human, and "the wrong thing" is what is inconsistent. So if health means that you can do whatever you're genetically capable of doing, then evolutionarily speaking, health is virtue—and conversely, sickness is vice.

But there are two ways of considering each branch of this

dichotomy: (1) (a) What is healthy is moral, and (b) what is moral is healthy; and (2) (a) what is unhealthy is evil, and (b) what is evil is unhealthy. And what is the *sign* of health or unhealth? Why, you *feel* good or bad, of course! “Oho!” you say. “*That’s* why feelings are so important.” You’re catching on.

If it’s healthy, it’s moral.

Obviously, then, when you do what is healthy, you’re doing what is good for you—which is, at least for the New Morality, synonymous with doing what is Good with a capital G. And when you do what *feels* good, then this must be what is healthy, because your body is telling you, “Great! That’s it! More! More!” And you know that you have to come to grips with your feelings, and not repress them (which, we all know, is unhealthy), and so the world is just a lovely place. Instead of those crazy monks in their hairshirts beating themselves with their little whips—the perverts!—we’ve discovered that The Right Thing is actually to do what you felt like doing anyway! No wonder the New Morality took over so fast.

Which, of course, means that President Clinton did what is *virtuous* when he and Monica—why should I say it? Just think for a minute of what they *did*. I mean, so she was less than half his age, so he was her boss, so she was an intern, so he was married, so it was in the office of the Chief of Chiefs of Police, what was unhealthy about it? I feel good, you feel good, neither of us gets sick, so that’s the only thing that matters. And I can go about my business of running the country *much* better now that I’ve had this relief—which proves that it was the right thing to do. Thanks, kid. But don’t let people know; the Religious Right just doesn’t understand, and they’ve still got votes.

(Insiders, by the way, say that President Clinton in private is not repentant. He regrets the trouble he has made for his family and entourage, but still claims he did not commit perjury or obstruction of justice. Remember, *he* wanted the Republicans to apologize to *him*

for impeaching him. What I'm saying here is that this makes sense, according to the New Morality. He can't *say* that what he did was the right thing, because there are too many traditionalist voters out there, but apparently he honestly believes that he didn't do anything wrong. Now you can understand why. In the eyes of the New Morality, he didn't.)

Anyway, it's not just jogging and working out in Moore's Fitness that's moral in the New Morality. That may be The New Sanctity, because (they say) you feel lots better afterwards, even though it's not all that great going through it; but *anything* that doesn't make you sick and feels good—especially what feels great—is morally okay, and it's better the better you feel.

This is why health clinics in schools are sex seminaries, because sex is a healthy thing, if you do it right. That is, all forms of sex are healthy in themselves; diseases come from something other than the act. In fact, no less than the former Surgeon General (Joycelyn Elders) advocated that masturbation be taught in school, from kindergarten. And you'll find that if you want to claim that there's something wrong with masturbation, New Moralists look at you and say, "You mean that business that if you keep doing it you'll go blind? Don't make me laugh." If it's not unhealthy, what's wrong with it? And if it *does* promote physical well-being, the case is closed.

You also hear a lot about how beneficial it is to get rid of pent-up emotions, and to "let it all hang out." It doesn't matter that what you feel about someone or some situation might actually be inconsistent with the actual persons or situation (as was my feeling about Kang at his death); expressing that feeling is "honest" because it's healthy, and "bottling it up" causes you all kinds of emotional and physical problems. So it's *good* to let the other person know how you feel about him—except that what you're supposed to say is, "What I feel now is..." rather than "You're such a...", because the latter (a) supposes that you know something about the other person, and that's *thinking*, which is unhealthy, and anyway, (b) we're

focusing on *you*, not the other person.

He, of course, is supposed to be healthy and play the game and not take your expression of your feeling as if it had anything to do with *him*. If he's a New Moralist, he "feels good about himself," and nothing you can say should put a dent in it. The fact that things don't work out that way, and I might be devastated when I learn that you find me disgusting and repugnant, is just a detail—and *I'm* the one who's being unhealthy; so it's *my* problem if it bothers me when you tell me to my face you can't stand being within ten feet of me.

It's a bit hard in the present age to make out a case against adultery, or breaking any promise for that matter, when it turns out that it's healthier to take the other route. If your wife can't or won't satisfy your sexual needs, then you have to take some way out, right? Because it's unhealthy not to satisfy them; and so it's her fault if you look for an outlet. That's not infidelity, just common sense. You still love her; this is just physical. It has nothing to do with your marriage vow; the fact that the vow *says* that she'll be the only one can't *mean* that, because that's not healthy. Even "reverend" people like Jesse Jackson apparently subscribe to this.

If it's moral, it's healthy.

And conversely, we find that New Moralists tend to downplay the health risks of what makes you feel good, and especially what makes you feel great; on the grounds that if it feels good, it's moral, and if it's moral, it's healthy. When was the last time you heard about medical side-effects of that powerful hormone that's called The Pill? Even when you hear about them, they're always accompanied by a disclaimer that says, "Of course, if you use it *right*, there's no problem at all; and anyway, the benefits *far* outweigh the risks."

Think for just a second. The benefits? What benefits? The *only* benefit (for a healthy woman) is not getting pregnant. Which implies, of course, that pregnancy is a disease. Well, *unwanted* pregnancy is. And it's fascinating to see the medical profession, of all things,

touting how great pregnancy is if you want it (and telling you all about the progress of “your baby” as you watch the ultrasound), and the next minute sympathizing with the woman behind you about the health problem she has because she’s got the same “condition” you have.

A propos of this, in the sex part of an ethics course I was teaching, I mentioned to the class why masturbation was wrong; and a young black girl was talking with me as we left class. “You can’t believe this,” she said. “Everybody masturbates. Look at the priests; they masturbate all the time.” “They don’t masturbate!” I said, and she answered, “Of course they do! They’d go crazy if they didn’t.” So instead of the Old Morality’s “If you masturbate, you’ll go blind,” the New Morality has come up with, “If you don’t, you’ll go crazy.”

Even RU-486, that wonderful pill—actually, combination of pills—that kills your kid before he’s had a chance to mess up your life, has perfectly enormous dangers to the woman that you’d never know about to hear the New Moralists in the medical community talk. And have you heard of Post Abortion Syndrome? Bet you haven’t. But there is such a thing, and lots of people have it. But abortions are *good*, and therefore, they’re *healthy*, and don’t let the Religious Right fool you.

And have you ever wondered why we’re losing the War on Drugs and doing so wonderfully in the War on Smoking? The secret is right here. Drugs make you feel good; they make you feel terrific, while smoking doesn’t (it just peeps you up a bit). And drugs were discovered in the Sixties at the same time sex was—you’d think for the first time in history. You *can’t* believe that there’s anything wrong with this stuff. Why I know three people who have tried practically everything, and *they* turned out just fine! (Not noticed here are all the other people you know who tried it and are now living on top of subway gratings.)

We’re not going to win the drug war, because we surrendered years ago. There isn’t any real war at all, just the sham of a war to

appease the dinosaurs of the Religious Right. And you can see this, because when the New Moralists start a *war*, as on smoking, it gets *fought*. But New Moralists believe in their heart of hearts that marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, and acid are *good* for you, because they make you feel so wonderful. True, they don't *think* this, because no one in his right mind would try to make out a rational case for it; but they *feel* it, and so they look on all of the reports of the harmfulness of drugs the way they look at the old movie *Reefer Madness*, as just propaganda that their own experience tells them is a lot of bunk.

I have had kids tell me seriously that there are no health risks connected with marijuana, and cocaine doesn't do you any harm. When I point out that both of them get you into an unreal world where you seem to be in perfect control and everything feels just peachy, and therefore make it that much harder to deal with the real world where you've got to struggle, that makes no difference, because the stuff doesn't make you *sick*—except when you try to quit, of course, but why try to quit?

But this is all perfectly consistent. New Moralists live in a dream world, pretending that reality is what they want it to be, in spite of the fact that it's just the opposite.

If it's unhealthy, it's immoral.

On the other side of the coin, we have the War Against Smoking, which makes Carrie Nation look like Kate at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

No one denies that smoking is unhealthy; no one ever has, in my memory. When we were kids, cigarettes were called "coffin nails." Then why the crusade now? Because now the New Morality is in control, and it's now a *moral* issue. Smoking is not only bad, it's *evil*, and therefore it must be stopped. It's not *called* a moral issue, of course, because then, by the Second New Commandment, you could smoke if you felt like it, just as it's okay to have some pot if you feel like it. No, it's a *health* issue, ostensibly—which doesn't explain the

fervor against it at all.

And there's all the junk science that's trumped up to say that passive smoking is a danger greater than nuclear fallout. Now granted, if you're cooped up all day long in a place that's full of smoke, this can be bad for you—possibly, in the extreme, even seriously bad; but let's face it, before this jihad, there were generations who were born and grew up around smokers, and, while the *smokers* got sick, the other people did fairly well. I'm not saying it's *good* for you, or not annoying, to smell another's smoke; just that it's not significantly dangerous, generally speaking.

But, you see, there are actually *two* commandments that are violated here; this one and the eighth, because tobacco is *promoted* by Big Business, to further the greed of these corporate giants, who are *destroying* the population for their own selfish gain. (Note, by the way, that nobody applies this sort of thing to Larry Flint, because *he's* getting rich promoting what's healthy in his porno shops.)

Tobacco is the prime villain at the moment, but there have been others and there will be more. The Alar scare about the additive that apple-growers used caused enormous damage to the growers (Hurray!) for no reason at all. Saccharine causes cancer in mice if you give them doses equivalent to stuffing yourself with pounds of it for years on end. Fatty foods and movie popcorn must be banned; we're killing ourselves, and rather than just informing us, we've got to be saved from our own folly. In other words, we must be made to conform to the standards of the New Morality, whether we want to or not—because no one in his right mind would harm his health, which is all we've got, after all.

Actually, since smoking *is* bad for you, the campaign against it made a good deal of headway at first, particularly among the young, because it told you what common sense told you. But now that it's clearly the New Morality zealots who have taken over, kids are seeing through this the way their parents saw through the hysteria about pot. They don't see smokers withering before their eyes, and they

know people who have been smoking for decades on end. So, like kids everywhere, they are putting their own experience ahead of what they're being told and showing the finger of rebellion to the New Fanaticism. This is not necessarily grounds for hope, however, because all they're doing is subscribing to the First and Second New Commandments: *their* truth is the truth for them, and no one should try to force a moral code down their throats; it's just that they instinctively recognize that the war against smoking *is* an attempt to force a moral code down everyone's throat.

And by the same New Commandment, there's a law that says we not only have to have seat belts in our cars, we can't buy cars that don't have air bags. Why? Because people might not put on the seat belts, and then they'll hurt themselves in a crash. Never mind that the cars with air bags also have to have a warning that you'd better use your seat belt too—and, of course, it's just a minor point that the air bags now make it impossible for little kids to sit in the front seat, and that even adults can get killed with these devices that are supposed to be their salvation.

(And just wait a few years, when the original cars with air bags get to be fifteen or twenty years old, and connections between the sensors and the bags begin to corrode and fray. We'll have reports—quickly suppressed—of air bags deploying for no reason on the expressway and in other convenient places.)

But the legislators *care*; they're *trying*; they've *done something*. They've got the right agenda, promoting the public health; and that's what matters. The fact that the last state is worse than the first is irrelevant.

If it's immoral, it's unhealthy.

And finally, if something goes against the New Morality, it's automatically unhealthy. People who claim that there's such a thing as absolute truth are dangerous mental cases, almost as bad as those who claim that there's such a thing as a moral code that applies to

everyone. The intolerant, like the Branch Davidians, are basically crazy; it isn't that they have a theory that they're following; their emotions are screwed up, as are people like Kenneth Starr, who's obviously sex-obsessed because he thinks that President Clinton did something wrong with Monica. Former Cardinal O'Connor of New York, who preached that homosexual sex is sin, is another sex-crazed fanatic. They're all sick. *Sick!* Of course, contraception and "family planning" is a *health* issue, isn't it? A world health issue, in fact; and in the name of health, we have to force Catholic and Muslim cultures to give up their unhealthy ways. And how many times have you heard environmental issues promoted in the name of health? We have to clean up the air and water; because you're *killing* people (Al Gore actually said this) if you don't pass the New Morality environmental legislation.

A propos of this, I mentioned that how "wetland" has a nice ring to it, and "swamp" used to be paired with the adjective "pestilential." The reason, of course, is that swamps are breeding grounds for all kinds of wildlife—like mosquitoes that bring us diseases. One of Julius Caesar's great accomplishments for the health of Rome was the draining of the Pontine Marshes. But now that these same places are wetlands, you can't touch them, and suddenly all those health risks have vanished.

Similarly, in my childhood, where my father would even strop his Gillette razors to make them last, and would scrutinize the water and light bills to see if this month was a penny more than the previous one, we had toilets that flushed eight gallons of water. Why? Because the people who made them knew that with less, you couldn't guarantee that the bowl would flush clean. But now water conservation is part of the New Moral Code, and so it's now illegal to buy a toilet that will flush more than two gallons of water. I recently stayed in a hotel equipped with these lovely devices, and I had to flush three times to make it even *look* clean. So we now have a nation full of toilets with only part of the waste flushed out of them. We don't

need Saddam Hussein bringing biological weapons over in suitcases; every new house is already a bacteria factory.

Of course, it's Big Business that's the real culprit in ruining public health, because Big Business doesn't *care* and will produce anything that sells, irrespective of its health risks. So Big Government must step in and save us from this menace—producing effects like the ones I just mentioned. But the difference, of course, is that the agenda of Big Business is profit, and the agenda of Big Government is—to make the bureaucrats feel good because they're *trying*, they *care*, they're *doing something*.

Being healthy and feeling good.

But in all of this, the New Morality is schizophrenic, because it equates being healthy with feeling good, while in fact there are all kinds of things that feel just fine and do enormous damage to a person; and the New Morality doesn't really know how to deal with this. I mean, it stands to reason that if something feels good, your instinct is telling you that this is something you ought to have; and since reason is just searching around for strategies that “satisfy the strongest epigenetic rules,” then reason's job is to come up with sophisms that promote it. But reason persists in saying that there's something wrong here. And so the New Morality is caught on the horns of a dilemma.

So, for instance, it's obvious that suicide is a bad thing (and therefore unhealthy. What could be unhealthier?). Well no, it isn't, not always, because if you feel really rotten, what's the problem with killing yourself? It's obvious that murder is a bad thing. Well, no, not in all cases, because sometimes the person wants to die and you're just helping him; and sometimes you're faced with tough choices, like killing an old man who's life is just a misery for himself and everyone around him—even if, in his insane perversity, he wants to live—or, of course, that “healthy” act of dismembering the kid inside you. Killing is a *health* issue nowadays; it's healthy to kill yourself or

someone else to make people feel good instead of feeling awful.

Now the interesting thing here is that *in fact*, pain and emotions in general *report* the relationship between the body and the environment, according to the program that was genetically laid down when we were living in caves. But the emotions are automatic responses to the environment and the state of the body, and don't know that changing conditions call for different responses from the ones that were initially beneficial. Further, *human* emotions tend to be concerned with the benefit of only one *part* of the organism, not necessarily the organism as a whole—at least as they now express themselves; and so if we listen to them blindly, we'll harm and even kill ourselves. Follow the hunger drive wherever it leads, and you'll become obese and die; follow the sex drive at every prompting, and it will become more insistent, and you'll ruin your life; follow fear, and you won't be able to do anything at all; follow self-confidence and you'll get yourself into idiotic risks. And so on. We all know this, even in spite of the propaganda against it. So we know we have to use reason to assess what the emotions are telling us, and base our lives on the reality of the situation as known, not the way we feel.

We *know* this. We can't escape knowing it. But the evolutionary basis of the New Morality says that it has to be false; reason must *follow* instinct, not direct it. And so the New Morality prescribes all kinds of things that are bound to be disasters, and pretends that it isn't the prescriptions but extrinsic circumstances that cause the disasters. And in the last analysis—

A little pill shall heal them.

The New Morality, with its reliance on instinct and emotions, still has a pathetic trust in science and technology, even while it rails against it. Somewhere there is a cure for AIDS which will make it possible for us not to change our behavior. Somewhere there is a cure for depression, even when we are doing things that would depress Pangloss.

So if things don't go right; if you're unhealthy (or if you feel bad,

which is the same thing), then you're a victim of something greater than yourself. You may be an "addict" (like a drug addict or a sex addict or a computer addict—addictions are legion), which means that *you* aren't to blame; it's up to science to find a cure, and Government to provide the funds. It's not that you're *immoral*, you're *unhealthy*, and so you have to be cured.

No, in the New Morality, it's *institutions* that are immoral; people are just victims of one institution or another, from smokers (Big Tobacco), serial killers (Big Business in general), drug addicts (discrimination and bad parents), and so on. It's basically the Religious Right, however, which is the real villain here; because it (and especially the Catholic Church) is the institution which is impeding the progress toward a really healthy society, in which everyone can do everything that he feels like doing, and all the side-effects will be technologically taken care of, and every tear will be wiped away. *There's* the healthy society, and if we can just get rid of the Religious Right, we have a chance to achieve it.

Which leads us to the final New Commandment.

Interlude: The New Prophets

But before we discuss this last New Commandment, let me say something briefly about the New Preaching. It's called "reporting the news," or "entertainment," but it's really evangelization. (Incidentally, "evangelization" is from a Greek word meaning "reporting the good news," which is what the early Christians believed they were doing.)

But the news reporters don't realize they're preaching, of course. *They* don't think they have any bias; far from it; they're the ones who see things objectively, without all the prejudice that comes from believing in souls and resurrections and gods and things. In fact, it's amazing to listen to these round-tables they constantly have on the subject of bias: they "investigate" and come to the sober conclusion that No, there's really no *bias* there, when it stares everyone in flyover country in the face. But everybody *they* talk to considers what they're doing objective—because they never talk to anybody but New Moralists. Why should they? They have scientific *fact* behind them: evolution and global warming and passive-smoking data. It's the other kooks who trump up phony evidence to bolster positions that no normal sane person would even consider.

And the result is that certain events just plain don't get reported, and others get blown way out of proportion. For instance, you might see a shot on January 22 of a bunch of people in the streets

protesting on the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, but what's covered is the NOW counter-protest—and the camera never pans back to show the mall in Washington just packed with hundreds of thousands.

You hear a tremendous amount about bombing of abortion clinics and the resultant threat to the citizenry, but you don't hear about killing of pro-lifers. (Yes, there have been a few. Are you surprised? You shouldn't be; people, in case you don't know, feel passionately on both sides of this issue, and there are always kooks.) Police brutality against the civil rights protesters or environmentalists is very carefully documented and bruited abroad; police brutality against Operation Rescue is met with total silence. Crimes of whites against blacks merit headlines for weeks; crimes by blacks against whites are buried on page 20. Crimes against gays get front-page play for weeks; crimes by gays against straights get two inches.

And in politics, the speeches of Republicans refuting the blatant contradictions of the Democrats can be found only if you tune to C-Span; the networks can't be bothered. Or rather, they can be, when the speech can be edited to show how trogloditic and mean-spirited the speaker is. Notice how the Secretary of State of Florida was always the "Republican" Secretary of State, a party hack, while the canvassing boards counting dimples and pregnant chads were never called Democrats, though that's what they were; the Florida Supreme Court was an august body, worthy of the deepest respect, while the "divided" U. S. Supreme Court was railroaded by the Conservative majority.

(While I'm on this topic, a word I've never heard anyone else say: We now know (those of use who have access to news other than the networks) that there were all kinds of illegal voters in Florida, people who voted more than once, and so on. There were all kinds of reports of fraud in the recounting of Broward County—and in general, chicanery was rampant. And the Florida Supreme Court did everything in its power—in fact, a good deal *more* than was in its power—to ensure that the chicanery went on long enough for a Gore

victory to be pulled from the jaws of defeat.

As I see it, the problem the U. S. Supreme Court had was how not to allow the Democrats to steal the election without getting into criminal charges of fraud and so on, which could take years and would split the country apart—especially given the News Media’s preaching—I mean reporting—that of course Gore had *really* won, even though *legally* you couldn’t prove it. For them, following Jesse Jackson, it was the *Republicans* who were stealing the election, intimidating black voters (in black counties run by Democrats where Gore won by landslides, strangely enough) and “stopping the count” and all the rest.

What was the Court to do? The evidence of fraud was there for everyone to see. But *something* had to be done, and so the majority found a way to invalidate the—clearly unconstitutional, and recognized as such by its own Chief Justice—move by the Florida Supreme Court before the phony “recount” had occurred, which would have enabled the Gore people to claim that the people had spoken in his favor—and they would have; a way would have been found if they’d had the time.

So, sure it was irregular. Sure what should have been done is gather evidence of the fraud—it was in fact being gathered—and bring it to court. But practically speaking, this was impossible. Frankly, I think it was, in the situation, a stroke of genius, because it caused a fuss for a week and then it was all over, and justice was in fact served. I am in admiration at Justices Scalia and Thomas, who obviously were behind this.

To connect this up, you may hear speculation about voter intimidation, but you’ll never hear on ABC anything like what I was just saying. Because I’m biased, and objective reporting just can’t be bothered with it.

Again, how many of you heard the objective fact that Newt Gingrich was *exonerated* of the ethics charges against him? True, he was driven out of office as an evil hypocrite, but now that he’s gone,

how is it news that he was right all along? What “the people” are concerned about is the fact that Bill Clinton was railroaded, and we just barely managed to stop the train.

Have you noticed, too, that the news media conduct polls and then tell us what the American People think? Not what the polls say, but what the American People think. And they beat this over the head—when the American People think along the same lines as the news anchors. Do the reporters who spend so much time on these polls even realize that it’s a neat way of influencing the waverers, by showing what “everyone” thinks? Everyone wants to be in tune with everyone. Perhaps they’re not so Machiavellian; they just do the poll, find the results and say, “Wow! I knew it! That’s *news!*”

But of course, when John Zogby, for instance, comes up with something that contradicts the comfortable conclusions, you either don’t hear about it, or the results are pooh-poohed (never mind that Zogby predicted the last three elections much better than ABC or NBC or Gallup). It does make one ponder, doesn’t it?

I told the *New York Times* recently that I’d decided to drop my subscription, after suffering through reading the Sunday *Times* for more than thirty years. I discovered that lately all I’d been able to stand was the crossword puzzle. The nice lady I was talking to asked me why I was dropping it, and I said, “Well, either I’ve grown or you have; but the paper seems more and more to be, instead of ‘all the news that’s fit to print,’ ‘all the news that’s printed to fit.’” I thought that was clever; but all she did was make polite noises of regret, no doubt because it was a shame I had got mired in my right-wing bias.

However, let me stress: I am not accusing these people of a conspiracy to manage the news; it’s just that they are overwhelmingly New Moralists, even by their own admission. So the news manages to get managed by osmosis, so to speak. Many of them honestly don’t know that they only hear and repeat what they want to hear; they are so spun themselves that to them spin is a straight line.

And why is this? Because, in the Sixties, they perceived the news

to be managed, and so large numbers of them got into journalism “to make a difference” (i.e. to get it right, and get out the truth), encouraged by their professors. They still do. And don’t forget that one of the main tactics of Communism was to infiltrate the universities and the news and entertainment media, on the understandable grounds that if you can control these, you can eventually turn the thinking of the whole people around. Which is not to say that the reporters and so on I’ve been talking about are Communists, but (a) Communists are precursors to and have the same base in a pseudo-science that New Moralists have, and (b) the causes Communists stand for and the causes New Moralists stand for are very similar. Furthermore, everybody, from Communists to existentialists to philosophy professors, to linguists, had bought into the gobbledygook that truth has nothing to do with what is “out there.”

So when the kids in journalism school heard their left-wing teachers reinforce their core beliefs, they naturally went along and thought that any educated person not blinded by dogmas held them; and then when they got out into the field, they gradually supplanted the reporters who made it their business to dig up all the news and just lay it out for people to see. *That* didn’t make a difference; it didn’t shape the mind of the readers and viewers. I mean, *facts!* What’s a fact? What is truth?

Truth is the agenda, remember? So we had a network blow up a truck on television to prove the truth that the gas tank was unsafe—because they couldn’t get the tank to blow up by itself. But since they *knew* it *was* unsafe, then they were showing the *truth* when they helped it explode. Or when the film crew infiltrated the supermarket chain they had targeted and then filmed themselves engaged in unsanitary practices, this was *truth*, because they couldn’t get it on tape any other way—but they *knew* that things like this were going on, didn’t they? So what’s wrong with showing it? Or the “reporter” who wrote up stories of the indignities the blacks in the school were going through, as if she was telling what she’d actually

heard, rather than the kind of thing she *knew* was happening. She was getting out the *truth* about the situation; and if the actual events never happened, so what?

And, of course, in the Clinton matter, the *truth* is that it was just about sex and this is a private matter, and the *truth* is that the House Managers, and especially Henry Hyde, were simply full of hatred and out to destroy the President, and the *truth* is that the President is not self-serving and slimy, but the shining knight of the *real* truth, which is the New Morality—and it's no wonder that the Bible-thumpers can't stand him and are trying to destroy him. So that's what we heard, day after day, week after week, for a year. Of course we did; because that was the truth. Linda Tripp was the slimeball, because she betrayed Monica. (Linda, by the way, said that she did it to save Monica, who was about to be destroyed. Oh, sure! —But without the stain on the dress, which Linda urged Monica to keep, what would you give for Monica's reputation?)

It makes sense. If your notion of truth is the agenda, then your notion of reporting is what anyone else would call propaganda.

And it *is* making a difference—a big one, and they know it. I don't see how the news media can be unaware that they got President Clinton elected in the first place. During the original primary campaign, he was the subject of close scrutiny by the press, particularly concerning Gennifer Flowers and the draft, with their adroit questions keeping the issues alive; but as soon as it became clear that he had the nomination locked up, all that stopped, and suddenly we were in the worst economy in fifty years, with no one questioning this (though it was patently false); President Bush's tax increase was an unmitigated disaster, and a middle-class tax cut was absolutely essential, and the figures "establishing" this were never examined. But then when Clinton got elected, surprise, surprise! The economy had got much worse, and try as he might, he couldn't come up with the tax cut, and had to raise taxes yet again; and still nobody pointed out that the figures he was now giving about the

state of the economy were *above* the ones he had used in the campaign. And, to everyone's amazement, the economy had now become the best in generations; and it's continued that way throughout his Presidency, in spite of the slowdown at the very end because Bush stole the election—of course, of course.

And in the 2000 election, "reporting" did little things like give special play to that ad that connected Bush to the dragging death of the black man, project a Gore win in Florida before the polls had closed in the Republican part of the state, and so on. Gore was a disaster as a candidate, but he was all they had, and they did their best, and they almost succeeded. How they must have raged!

If you're conservative, you know the story; if you're not, of course, then what I just said is conservative spin. Unfortunately, the conservative spin comes from places like the Congressional Budget Office and other official Government sources. But that's just a detail; all the papers and television report just the opposite, so who are we going to believe?

So I don't think there's any question that the New Moralistic reporters are making a difference; though people seem to be becoming more and more suspicious of them. Viewers are watching less and less of CNN and NBC and ABC and CBS; and these networks wonder why. For the same reason that people in Russia didn't really read *Pravda*. True, there's no government control of the press in the United States; it's just that during the Clinton years, the government *in* control was controlled by the same attitude that's controlling the media—and the people began to catch.

Even the business of presenting "both sides" of an issue gets spun in the present state of the press. It depends on what issue you're talking about how the other side gets presented. In cases where the main event is favorable to the New Morality, the people on the other side are presented in such a way as to look either ridiculous or fanatical.

Even in the *News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, which, I think, is the

program that tries hardest really to give both sides of the issues, the “other side” tends to be represented either by considerably less articulate spokesmen, or by wishy-washy ones who make so many qualifications that they can’t be distinguished from “our side.” (It *does* seem as if Paul Gigot is coming into his own, though.) The trouble here is the ones on the New Moralists side don’t even realize that they’re on any side at all; it’s only the viewers on the other side who realize it, and that the other side is the outside—and pretty far outside at that.

But in fact, there are some issues in which there *aren’t* two sides. And if you bristle at this, why are you taking umbrage at my suggesting that there might be two sides to the question “There are always two sides to every issue”?

For instance, in reporting on the O.J. trial, to take the evidence against Simpson and equate it with Mark Furman’s use of “nigger” as “the other side” is gross distortion of the situation. To equate what President Clinton did with Henry Hyde’s long-ago affair, as if you’re giving “both sides” of the issue, is to manufacture the illusion that “it was all about sex and nothing else,” which totally ignores the use of the machinery of government to fix a court trial. When one side has the facts and the other side only lies and distortions, giving both sides is anything but fairness.

“But who are we to decide? We just report.” Oh, right. Aren’t reporters supposed to dig behind stories to see what basis they have in fact, not just accept everything at face value? When “Catholics for Free Choice” makes a pronouncement about abortion, aren’t you supposed to discover that this is an “organization” in name only, and not call it a “Catholic” one? It has no members, and in fact has no connection with either the Catholic Church or with any real segment of Catholicism; so it’s about as much “the other side” in the “Catholic debate” about abortion as a statement by Protestants and Other Americans United.

But, of course, when the shoe is on the other foot, and the news

is being made in the direction of a refutation of some New Moralism tenet, digging goes as deep as China. Let some scientist dare to claim that global warming isn't happening, and his whole life comes up for scrutiny. Every detail of Linda Tripp's follies was known, once it was found that she was behind the bimbo eruption that turned out to be Monica Lewinsky.

Thank God for the Internet and talk radio!—which, of course, the Government is trying to regulate. Rush Limbaugh gets calls every now and then complaining that he doesn't give equal time on his show to views differing from his, and a while back, there was an attempt to pass legislation to the effect that talk radio had to do this. It died, thank goodness. Rush's answer to this has always been, "I *am* equal time."

As far as the Internet goes, what you hear from the mainstream press is, "How can you pay attention to *that*? It can't be trusted." That's true, of course. Anybody can put anything he wants on the Internet, including bald-faced lies, and statements with no factual backing at all. So what else is new? But this is *different* from what we now have from the mainstream press?

At least in these sources, you know where they stand; you don't get bias presented as if it were objectivity. And with talk radio and the Internet, we now know that there's another view out there; and we *do* learn things that somehow never get reported in the mainstream until the story becomes so widespread that they have to report it. Look at the President and Monica, which was sat on until Matt Drudge got hold of it. (Incidentally, the *Drudge Report* has links to all kinds of news sources, both left and right. No attempt to suppress "the other side" here.)

Entertainment as propaganda.

But who watches the news nowadays? A recent survey (there we go with polls again) revealed that forty per cent of the people *during* the Lewinsky mess didn't know who Monica Lewinsky was. Forty per

cent! Now granted, that doesn't mean that those forty per cent didn't know that President Clinton had got himself sexually involved with someone and was in trouble for it; it might just mean that the name itself didn't register. Let's hope so.

But still, what it says is that people as a whole aren't really paying much attention to the news. Why should they? It's boring, and if there's one thing people of the present age shun, it's boredom. "In depth" coverage of anything can't take more than three minutes or the remote comes into play.

But not to worry; there *are* things that people pay attention to, and they can be reached through them: TV sitcoms and dramas, movies, and especially music.

I don't think I have to say much of anything about the state of television, with all the sex and violence we have on it. The sex is understandable, because this, of course, is the essence of the New Morality. And don't let them kid you by saying that it's what the people want. Not when the Ellen DeGenerate show preaching lesbianism went on and on in spite of the ratings, and when *Nothing Sacred*, that show about the "progressive" priest, bombed and was kept on the air for almost a year anyway. (It got rave reviews, of course—which shows something about the reviewers.)

But the main source of evangelization of the New Morality is music. In the *Republic*, Plato twenty-five hundred years ago proposed strict censorship of literature and music for his ideal society, even going into questions about what rhythms and tunes were acceptable and what were degrading.

When we look at our culture in the past forty or so years, he may well have a point. There's no question that the New Morality came in at the same time rock music did; and that it really took off with Elvis and the Beatles. Elvis shocked people of my generation with his pelvic gyrations and his obvious sexually-aroused tremolo—though what he sang sounds pretty tame today. Which should give us pause. Elvis legitimized the sexual revolution. And, of course, the clean-cut

Beatles (who *were* neatly dressed, in spite of the furor their hair caused) did the same for the drug culture with their cutsey references to “Mother Mary comes to me,” and “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” and “Norwegian Wood,” and all the rest of the allusions that we older fogies didn’t get, but those in the know did.

The thing about music is that it acts directly on the emotions, and you don’t have to think to get it. I remember one day some years ago I was driving my two (by that time grown-up) kids somewhere, and they had on a popular music station. “Turn that thing off!” I said, and my daughter said, “Why?” “That song is filthy!” “But you used to like it when you drove me to high school and it was on.” “I never listened to a song that said, [I don’t remember the words I repeated, but it was as explicit as you can get about sexual intercourse and still be on the radio].” There was a pause. Then she said, “You’re right; it does say that. I never paid attention to the words before.”

But does that mean they didn’t get through? You hear it often enough, and it sinks in without your realizing it. But it’s not just the words. Plato was right; the rhythm and the melody and the harmony “say” something to the emotions. Try putting rock lyrics to Gregorian chant, and see if there isn’t a clash; or try singing the *Te Deum* to the tune of *Light my Fire*, and you’ll see the incongruity on the other side—in fact, you’ve probably heard something like it, if you’ve been in certain Catholic churches lately. The obtuseness of the “with-it” clergy knows no bounds.

Elvis’s music perfectly fit Elvis’s lyrics and their overtones, which perfectly fit his intonations and gestures; it’s a celebration of promiscuous sex, and letting go of all restraint upon emotions—the Fourth New Commandment.

And then, of course, there was the pseudo-folk music which was New Morality social commentary: *Blowin’ in the Wind*, *If I Had a Hammer*, and so on. That graduated into the unintelligible sort of lyrics that grace the more sophisticated rock music of the present.

“Significant” words appear at intervals, giving the listener the impression that he’s listening to something that means something; but they are interspersed among random words chosen for the sound—and for the purpose, it seems, of destroying meaningfulness, clarity, and logic. Now maybe this is just me, and there’s something underneath these things that makes sense if you’re real smart.

My problem, of course, if this is the case, is that I can’t escape the notion that I’m reasonably intelligent, and tolerably well-informed and educated; so that I’ve got to the stage where if I can’t make head or tail of something, I have a strong suspicion that there’s no head or tail there. I’m “into” classical music, mainly; but I’ve had the same problem with contemporary stuff in that genre. I have made sincere efforts over the years, and I recognize that there are composers like Stravinsky and Penderecki who have something valid to say and say it well. But there are others, I am more and more convinced, who are doing the esthetic equivalent of the First New Commandment and shouting at the top of their voices the “truth” that there is no truth.

Which is not to say that there isn’t some significant modern music, or rock music for that matter; a real artist can do things with almost any medium. What I’m arguing here, however, is not that; I’m saying that most popular music is what it’s always been: propaganda; it’s just that now it’s propaganda for the New Morality, both in the lyrics and in the rest of the music. Listen to a rock station, and then turn to one of those “retro” stations that plays the music of the Fifties, and you can see the difference in what the songs are promoting. This is not to say that the music of the Fifties is better *music*; most of it, too, is esthetic trivia if not garbage—as popular stuff always is. But what it’s *about* is a world the present age laughs at as stupid; and so the triviality of the music then is seized upon as proving how idiotic was the goal it advocated—without realizing that the music of the present is just as trivial, but isn’t recognized as such, because the listeners buy into the goals it promotes. That’s *real*,

man!

Let me digress a moment about the implications of gangsta rap and that sort of thing. Talk about racial profiling! (I know I know, Eminem is white; but he's doing black music, let's face it.) If this deserves hearing because it's part of "the black experience," then this means that what it talks about—rape, cop killing, slaughter—is universal throughout the black community. Black people are saying, "That's how we are, and you'd better get used to it." Then is it surprising to find that people—including black people—regard young black men as a menace? Until some black leader comes along and repudiates all this and can convince kids, and black kids especially, to stop listening to it, on the grounds that it's no more "the black experience" than Charles Manson is a representative of "the white experience" because he's white. It's the thug experience, something that no decent person should have anything to do with, whatever his color.

The point I want to make here is that music is perhaps more insidious and much more difficult to deal with than the more obvious forms of entertainment or news management, precisely because it doesn't seem as if anything of significance is being conveyed, at least if the lyrics seem innocuous. I mentioned a while back that Sinatra song, *Love and Marriage*, which people I talk to think is wholesome, not realizing that it's ridiculing the connection between love and marriage. That message gets through without your realizing it because of the tune and the emotional overtones of the poetry; and insofar as you find yourself humming it, you're reinforcing the attitude it has toward love and marriage.

It's precisely because people don't realize that actual information gets conveyed by means of emotionally-based relationships, which is the basis of art and esthetics in general, that when I point this out, I get looked at as if my head were a Picasso sculpture. Hell, music is just a bunch of sounds, for God's sake!

My contention is that you can't "dig" the kinds of sounds that

come out of heavy metal and gangsta rap, and enjoy them and want to hear more of them, and simultaneously be comfortable with the idea that virginity is precious and that the relation between the sexes is something that is spiritual first and carnal second and as a consequence of two people's spiritual and personal union—not without a compartmentalization worthy of Bill Clinton at his finest. And the reason is that the emotional attitude of the one, whatever the lyrics might superficially say (and they generally make no secret of their attitude), is the direct antithesis of the emotional attitude of the other. You might just as well play *The Stars and Stripes Forever* as a dirge at a funeral as say that this kind of music is compatible with anything but sexual trivialization and license.

To be perfectly frank, I don't a really good way to fight this. When kids are young, parents can, of course, censor what they watch on television and listen to in music. But when they grow into their teens—certainly, their late teens—I don't see how you can stop them from hearing the music their peers are listening to.

I suppose the only thing that can realistically be done is to teach them that music *does* mean something; that it instills and reinforces an attitude toward life, and that some attitudes toward life are true and worth cultivating, and others are pernicious and to be avoided. And, when they're ten and eleven, getting to the stage where they'll still listen to you but want to think for themselves and follow their peers, you have to point out that it's both yucky and unhealthy to play with feces; and it's yucky and unhealthy to do the same thing with your mind. And certain types of music and TV and movies are the mental equivalent of playing with feces. Even if everyone around you is doing it, it's not something to copy if you want to keep your mind healthy and smelling decent.

But they'll get the opposite from the most unlikely places, like in church, if the clergy are trying to be "relevant." Which brings us once again to the Tenth New Commandment and then the epilogue to the whole book.

**The Tenth New Commandment:
Thou Shalt Not Worship
(at least as the Religious Right does)**

Listen to this: “A cultist is one who has a strong belief in the Bible and the second coming of Christ; who frequently attends bible studies; who has a high level of financial giving to a Christian cause; who home schools their children; who has accumulated survival foods and has a strong belief in the Second Amendment; and who distrusts big government. Any of these may qualify a person as a cultist, but *certainly more than one of these would cause us to look at this person as a threat, and his family as being in a risk situation that qualified for government interference.*” [Italics mine.] —Janet Reno in an interview on *60 Minutes*, June 26, 1994.

So if you frequently attend Bible studies and you distrust big government, you were looked at by Janet Reno, the United States Attorney General, as a *threat*, which qualifies for government interference. Or if you have a strong belief in the Bible and you home school your children, “certainly” you are a threat qualifying for government interference. Remember this was the person who torched

the Branch Davidians at Waco—and who, remained the head of the law enforcement of our nation during practically his whole term. Do you wonder why I said at the beginning that Clinton was a good example of a New Moralist? (That same Bill Clinton, by the way, proposed in his last State of the Union Giveaway—excuse me, message—that the army be unleashed as an “anti-terrorism” measure to engage in civilian law enforcement. But is *this* part of what it means by “terrorism”? Before you laugh, think carefully about that Waco business, and call to mind the picture of little Elian looking down the barrel of a rifle. Cubans in this country, by and large, are Catholics.)

The New Morality, you see, is extremely serious about this last New Commandment, don't kid yourself. There is a genuine fear that the Religious Right is going to try to grab power and start imposing Fundamentalist Christian Morals on everybody—and undo all the “progress” the Irreligious Left has made in imposing the New Morality on all and sundry. What do you think the inquisition of John Ashcroft was all about? It's one thing to give up a New Moralist Attorney General, but it's quite another to have her replaced by a fervent Christian.

I mentioned that one of the main motives for the fanatical defense of Bill Clinton (who, one would think, alienated at one time or another his whole constituency, except perhaps for the pro-abortionists) was to prevent the Religious Right from scoring a victory by his removal from office. There were a lot of people who found him a disgrace, but if the alternative was that the Religious Right would win something, there was no contest.

It's this fear of Christians imposing Christian morality on the country is why you hear everywhere the canard that the wars and persecutions in the world all have a religious, and especially a Fundamentalist base; that it's *religious* fanatics who make all the trouble and who are the real threat to peace and tranquillity, just as they have been throughout history. And the Christians are the worst.

—Excuse me? I didn't know that it was the Christians who threw the Romans to the lions. And look at when this is being said: at the end of the Twentieth Century, without question the bloodiest in history. And the source of the blood? Hitler, an atheist; Stalin, another atheist; Mao, Pol Pot, Ho Chi Minh, and our friend Zhang Zemin, good atheists all. There has been more blood shed in the precise name of godlessness than in the name of God—and the reason is that people kill people because they hate them, and hate (as we can see from the reaction of the Clintonistas to pussycats like Henry Hyde and Kenneth Starr—I hear a New Moralists scream of rage at the epithet) is by no means monopolized by those who follow the Jesus who preached love.

In fact, many of the “religious” wars and persecutions adduced as evidence of how noxious religion is to peace are as much political as religious. It's more of an accident than anything else that Catholics are fighting Protestants in Northern Ireland; it just happens that the nationalist loyalists are Catholic, and those in favor of union with England are Protestants. Anyone with a grain of sense knows this. The same is true of the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in what used to be Yugoslavia; it's as much ethnicity as it is religion.

There's also the minor point that Christianity as such is irenic, not bellicose; Jesus is the “prince of peace,” after all, and he was the one who gave the command to turn the other cheek when you were slapped. So if there are wars “in the name of” Christianity—and there have been, I'm not trying to say there haven't—these wars are inconsistent with the principles the fighting is supposed to uphold.

Still, plenty of the New Moralists take the slander as obviously true, and never bother to look it in the eye. Why should they? The New Prophets trumpet it from the rooftops in season and out of season.

Permissible religion.

Now wait a minute! Bill Clinton is shown on TV coming out of

church with a Bible in his hand. So New Moralists aren't anti-Christian. That's very true; they're not. They're anti-*fanatical, right-wing, fundamentalist, self-righteous, impose-your-lifestyle-on-everyone-else, intolerant, bigoted, sexist, racist, homophobic* Christians. Christians as such are okay; it's the Old Moralist Christians who are a menace. But Christianity is just fine; Jesus stood for love and tolerance and forgiveness and acceptance and environmentalism and the Right to Choose and freedom from oppression and all those nice things (though you have to do a little searching to find "environmentalism" and abortion among the parables—possibly the lost sheep or the lilies of the field or letting the tares grow along with the wheat—and maybe "if your eye is a stumbling block, pluck it out" for abortion). And, according to Luke, he really socked it to the rich and greedy. Jesus was the first New Moralist; the fundamentalists have got him all wrong.

And this, of course, is what is insidious about the New Morality; it's superficially in many ways so very like Christianity. With just a little adjusting, you can fit Christianity into it rather comfortably. And after all, the sexual stuff was beaten over the head by Paul, not Jesus—and we know that Paul was a sex-crazed fanatic, probably worse than Ken Starr. But Jesus himself had very little to say about it. (There *is* that uncomfortable passage about divorce; but then again, everybody knows the eye-plucking business wasn't meant to be taken literally, so we can safely ignore this—especially since Matthew provides a loophole, and so the original Jesus could have made all sorts of other qualifications. And probably did, if we know Jesus—and we do, the real Jesus, the guru, not this God-man nonsense.)

And have you noticed how many Christian churches have swallowed the sexual aspect of the New Morality hook, line, and sinker? "Sexism" is a far greater sin than sodomy in most mainline Christian denominations nowadays; they're much more interested in not using masculine pronouns referring to God (they get nervous using them,

for some reason, even referring to Jesus) than they are in little details like homosexual intercourse, divorce, and adultery—at least if the spouse is kept up to speed on it—and if you bother to mention contraception, you’re laughed to scorn right in the pew; and as for abortion, you’re in danger of being thrown out bodily. These are the “mainline” Christian churches, the ones who regard themselves as where Christianity really is at.

In these churches, you will find that what they believe in is what Jesus “stood for,” rather than those inconvenient legends about resurrection, heaven and especially hell (You know, “God loves people too much to send anyone to hell forever.”), walking on water, raising the dead, and so on. Those, of course, are meaningful if properly understood, as metaphors, but you can’t take them *literally*, for heaven’s sake. All religions have things like this, and Christianity is no different; you have to see *behind* the imagery to what is being *expressed* by the hyperbolic language.

So there’s no problem with Christianity; Jesus stood for the right things; and so, if you want to go to church and feel good about yourself—pardon, your “soul”—go ahead; we don’t care if you do that, or whether you consult your horoscope (as long as you don’t use it like Nancy Reagan to suggest policy to the President) or even if you talk to Eleanor Roosevelt. What the hell; some sports figures don’t change their socks when they won the game in them either. All that’s harmless; it’s the *values* that count.

Once you say that, of course, then Christianity becomes anything you want it to be. Who nowadays holds (for that matter, who *ever* held) that if you looked at someone and the look tempted you to lust, then you actually *should* pluck out your eye and throw it away? Who today holds that once you get married, the only thing that ends it is death? (Even Matthew, who has the loophole “except in the case of whorishness,” has Jesus say that anyone who marries a divorced woman is committing adultery—which leads Peter to remark, “Then it doesn’t make sense to get married.” They saw the implications

even then.) Who will actually give his shirt to someone who takes his coat, or let a person slap him twice?

So Christianity becomes “social justice,” never mind that the term that’s translated “justice” really means “virtue”; the ancients had no notion of rights as we do. Consequently, sexism and racism are sins, even though Jesus himself said to the Syro-Phoenician woman, “It isn’t right to take the children’s food and throw it to dogs” (meaning, “I shouldn’t be curing your kid, you goy”). That remark would have cost him his pulpit if he’d been a present-day mainstream Christian.

And the purpose of Christianity as transformed by the New Morality? Why, feeling good about yourself, of course. Christianity proves that God loves you, which means you’re *worth* something. (The fact, of course, that there really isn’t a God is a detail; the point is the *values*, remember, not the legendary stuff. And here, what matters is that *you* matter.) And your sins are forgiven—which means, when all is said and done, that they weren’t sins in the first place. *You* didn’t sin; as Paul says, it was the sin inside you that did it; you couldn’t help it, so why should you suffer for it? (The fact that Paul stresses the fact that you *will* suffer for it if you don’t reform is, of course, conveniently overlooked.)

The idea is that once you’ve got into the *essence* of Christianity, you’re forgiven because you didn’t really mean it: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Bill didn’t really *mean* to do any harm to Monica—in fact, he didn’t *do* any—or to Hillary, or to Chelsea, or anyone else; so why should he be persecuted? He couldn’t help it; it was just one of those things.

And, insofar as you’re into the essence of Christianity, you’re tolerant. How many times have we heard during the past year, “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone,” and “Judge not lest ye be judged”? And how the people who quote these lines judge the judgers! How quick they are to cast stones at the casters! But isn’t this intolerance? Not at all. Intolerant people are *evil* and *should* be

hated.—Oops! We’ve slipped on this slope all the way from pseudo-Christianity to the New Morality, haven’t we?

But see, New Morality-type tolerance (with its consequent intolerance of the intolerant—that is, of the Old Morality) is *Christian* in this version of Christianity, because if you really get the values of Christianity, you *realize* that you can’t condemn anyone else for sinning without having to look into yourself and maybe admit that *you* might have sinned too—but then, where’s your “forgiveness” in the New Morality sense? You’re “forgiven” in this version of Christianity only if there wasn’t any sin in the first place. You can’t *undo* the past, not really; and so if you really *had* sinned, if you really meant it, and it wasn’t just “The devil made me do it,” then you *deserve* to feel bad about yourself—and that’s out of the question. Christianity is about *love* and *tolerance* and *forgiveness*, and that means first and foremost *forgiving yourself*.

How often have we heard *that*? Somebody has an abortion and then begins to think, “Gee, maybe I shouldn’t have done that,” and is told, “The Christian thing is to deal with it; grieve over your loss [note carefully the “your” loss], and learn to forgive yourself; you’re a good person, and if you made a mistake, put it behind you and move on.” Like Lyle Menendez; you’re an orphan now that you shot Mommy and Daddy full of holes. Grieve over your loss, and learn to forgive yourself. You’re a good kid; move forward and bring out the goodness, and put the past behind you. New Moralist Christians are quite adept at this; it only took a weekend for Jesse Jackson to put his adultery behind him.

And why do we hear “Put it behind you” ad nauseam. Because it’s the New Morality way of dealing with personal sin. Put it behind you. Explain it away; excuse it; and then forget it; it wasn’t the real you. Remember, according to Freud, guilt *is* feeling guilty; so if you don’t feel guilty, you aren’t. The fact that you ruined someone’s life isn’t important; if you don’t feel guilty about it, you’re home free. You’re redeemed. Forgiven. Jesse Jackson’s kid will get along; after

all, look at all the other kids nowadays that don't have a Mommy and Daddy there all the time.

Isn't that *wonderful*? Doesn't it make life *meaningful*? I mean, we've *all* done things that we don't want to think about, and so forgiveness means let's *nobody* think about them—if *I* don't think about them, why should *you*?—and let's concentrate on the *positive*, and move *forward* and bring about the just society, where we put flowers in the rifles and copulate on the meadows, just like Woodstock. We're *good*, not evil; it's the Religious Right that persists in thinking that evil exists; it's the *idea* that people do evil that's evil.

I mean, the essence of Christianity is, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," isn't it? (Actually, it isn't. That's Leviticus. The Christian new commandment is "Love each other as I have loved you," which turns out to be very, very different; are you willing to be crucified for someone when you get nothing whatever out of it?) But if we're supposed to love our neighbors as ourselves, then isn't the first task to love ourselves? And how can we do this if we think of ourselves as evil? You see? Christianity is incompatible with sin. And anyway, Paul says that Christians aren't subject to the Law; so we can forget about the Ten Commandments (especially the one Ted Turner wants to abolish, against adultery)—and replace them, naturally, with the Ten New Commandments.

I hear some people saying, "Oh, come off it! As if what you're describing isn't Christianity!" Ah, but it's been transmogrified into the New Morality. Since there isn't any truth, the New Morality can define anything to be whatever it says it is. It all depends on what "is" is, remember.

Of course, this notion that Christianity's "redemption from sin" means that there wasn't a sin there in the first place doesn't mean that *institutions* can't sin, particularly Big Business, and any institution, really, that promotes values antithetical to this feel-good wishy-washy pap that you find preached so often in these mainline Christian churches.

But you get the picture. The values of Jesus are (or turn out to be, once they're updated to the circumstances of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries) the values of the New Morality. And so it's perfectly all right to keep the trappings of Christianity—especially in this transition period, when the unwashed still don't get it—as long as we see into its true essence, which is the New Morality. Later, when everybody wakes up, we can do away with the stained glass and the altars and the funny collars and all those other vestiges of the barbaric age Jesus so presciently foresaw the end of.

The uniqueness of Christianity.

Here's my answer to the cries of outrage against what I just said. I don't care how many people who call themselves Christians nowadays hold something like what I've been outlining. The problem with all of it is that in Christianity it's precisely that the values *aren't* what's primary. And that's what makes Christianity unique among religions—and it's one of the reasons why the reality of Christianity is hated by the New Moralists.

In all other religions except Christianity—at least except the Christianity that existed up to the recent past—what is important and what is believed in is the values the religious leader taught (what he “stood for”), not the facts about his life. Confucians, for instance, believe in tradition and respect for others; Hindus and Buddhists believe in getting free of the cares of the world (I know, I know, I'm oversimplifying)—and it doesn't matter whether you believe that in fact there's some kind of God or not—Muslims believe in worshiping Allah and following his moral code. But the details of the life of Confucius himself, or the life of the Buddha, or even of Muhammad, may be interesting, but are only peripherally relevant, insofar as these people were exemplars of the lifestyle the religion seeks to inculcate. (For instance, there's the slight difficulty that Muhammad had more than four wives, though the Kuran says four is the limit; but no Muslim has any real problem with this. Who Muhammad was and

what he did are not of the essence of the religion, really, at all. He was a prophet *of* the religion, not what the religion is *about*.)

But if you look at the Apostle's Creed, which is a statement of the basics of what Christians believe in (or did before it became the New Morality with a pulpit, as I said), what you find is this: *That* there is one God, who created everything visible and invisible, and is somehow Father, Son, and Spirit, *that* the Son actually became a human being, *that* he was born of a virgin, *that* he was crucified at the order of Pontius Pilate for our sins, *that* he died, was buried, and on the third day rose again from the dead and is now in heaven, and *that* he will come again to judge the living and the dead, and *that* his kingdom will never end, *that* our sins are forgiven, *that* our bodies will come back to life on the last day, and *that* they will live forever.

Where is "turn the other cheek" in all of this, or "love your neighbor as yourself," or "judge not lest you be judged," or any of the other values of Christianity? The values are not what Christians believe in; what they believe in are the *facts*, and that they *are* facts; the values *follow* from the facts, but it's the facts that are the actual object of the belief.

As St. Paul said to Corinthian sophisticates who were doing just what the New Moralists Christians of our time are doing, and claiming that the resurrection business is *meaningful* but you can't take it *literally*, "If Christ did not come back to life, your faith is meaningless; you still have your sins, and we turn out to be perjurers before God, because we gave sworn testimony that Jesus came back to life—which he didn't do if corpses don't get up and walk around." He said this around the year 57, right at the beginning of the whole Christian movement, to nip precisely the "meaningful legend" interpretation in the bud. He said, "We *saw* him after he'd died; there are still a lot of us still alive who saw him, and you can ask them if you don't believe me."

On *this* view of Christianity, the New Morality is right in that you can't undo what you've done. But what the religion is really all about

is that, instead of saying that therefore, you have to redefine what you did into something acceptable so that you can live with yourself, Christianity says that, though *you* can't unness the mess you've made of your life, *God* will do it for you because of the willing sacrifice Jesus made for us by allowing himself to be crucified. That act, somehow or other, will, when applied to us, remove the sinfulness from the sins we have committed (though it doesn't reverse the actual *act* as such), and so we won't have to suffer eternally for it. Consequences of the act in this life will follow the laws of nature; the consequences of the choice in the life after death are what is erased.

But in order to believe this, you have to believe that it's a fact that your life will go on after death, and because of the mess you've made of it, that afterlife is going to be unendingly miserable, and there's nothing you can do about it. So you also have to believe that there's a God, and a God who is willing to undo the mess, at least as far as the afterlife is concerned, and that the evidence of this is connected somehow with the miraculous return to life of Jesus after he had been crucified. If, as Paul says, he didn't come back to life, then the whole thing is a waste of time, because "redemption from sin" just means the New Morality sophistry of explaining the sin away as if it's really not so bad after all. Redemption in Christianity is not therapy; it's a miracle.

Christianity has its appeal because there are too many people who can't adopt the First New Commandment, who think there *are* such things as facts, and who know that *in fact* they've done things that are reprehensible, damaging, and, irreparable by any human agency. Evil is *not* confined to institutions; people commit evil; and anyone who has an ounce of objectivity knows that *he's* done evil, evil that he can't undo.

But the New Morality is seductive, of course, because, like the serpent, it claims that if you buy into it, you are like gods, knowing what good and evil *really* are (or rather, being able to decree what's good and what's evil—what else does "autonomy" mean?); and it

sounds so much like what Christianity preaches that if you leave out all the stuff about God and his miraculously erasing the sinfulness of sin because of a crucified man who stood up and started walking around scaring people by showing them holes in his hands and side, then you can have it all and not be bothered by sin.

Which leaves only the insignificant problem that the sin's really still there, and didn't go away.

That is, Bill Clinton might have been able to bamboozle the lawyers and the Senators with his definitions of "alone" and "is," but can he really believe that what he did was okay, and all the damage was because of the System? Maybe he can, at that. It's amazing how much guilt the System can absorb; the Jewish scapegoat is nothing in comparison. He *did* want the Republicans to apologize, after all.

But this is why, of course, you can't be a New Moralist and live in the real world. Remember how I talked about a nation in denial. New Moralists *say* that they're the ones who live in the real world, but they can't look realistically at their lives and still feel good about themselves—and you have to deal with your feelings, after all, or what's the point of living?

Exactly. What's the point? When you analyze evolution and its moral code, the New Morality, there *is* no point (it's all chance, remember)—and therefore feeling good is all these people have. Which is why, for the New Moralist mentality, meaninglessness is the meaning.

Why Catholicism is especially hated.

Which brings us to the real enemy of the New Morality: Catholicism. Other versions of Christianity aren't anywhere near the problem Catholicism is. They may talk about the truth, but when all is said and done, they're not as committed to a determined set of *facts* as Catholicism is. What was behind the Protestant reformation was that Scripture alone would lead you to heaven, and it was *your own* interpretation of Scripture that was guided by the Holy Spirit to get

you there. You didn't need some priest or Pope to tell you what Scripture said; the Holy Spirit spoke through the Word of God directly to your heart.

Now granted, there are plenty of Protestants who hold to the death the factuality of what they believe; but still, in the basis of *sola fides, sola scriptura* (faith alone, Scripture alone), there's the implication of personal interpretation as the guide to heaven. After all, if Scripture is the only thing outside ourselves that we've got to go on, and there's no institution telling us what the words of that book are supposed to mean (which is what removing oneself from the control of the organized church implies), and Jesus in his Holy Spirit is supposed to be with us "all days until the end of the world," then each of us has a hot line to the Spirit himself (faith).

So if two Christians contradict each other about whether the Communion bread is really the Body of Christ ("Do *this* to remind yourselves of me," "Don't you realize that if you eat this bread without recognizing that it is the body you are eating your doom?" etc.), or is a symbolic *reminder* of the sacrifice of Jesus, who is to decide between them? Evidently, the Spirit is guiding one through one interpretation, and another through another.

—Which means, as I said, that objective truth doesn't really matter; it's whether you're saved or not that matters. And it's all too easy to make this mean that you're saved if you *feel* saved.

Put these two together, and you get a bias against accepting an objective truth that's true for everybody, plus feelings as the guide to finding out whether *your* truth is really the truth for you. This, in fact, with its consequent tolerance of other sects as "just as good," is a remote source of the New Morality—and since in America, various denominations had to live together, this kind of accommodation, all too easy on Protestant principles, is fertile ground for the New Morality to sprout in. You go from one church to another, depending on what you "feel comfortable with," what you "get the most out of," and so on. What the church *teaches* doesn't matter half

so much as how you feel about God and yourself and your salvation. So there's no real problem for the New Morality here. *You* decide whether what this or that church teaches is true; and so you're not *learning*, you're sitting in judgment on the facts, and it's *you* who make them the facts, in the last analysis. They're "facts for you," and we're right smack in the middle of the First New Commandment.

But when Catholics go to Mass, they believe that they're participating in the crucifixion: making it present, as it were, to our age, so that it can apply to those here and now. It's not a question of "what I get out of it," but "what I have to put into it." And Catholics have from the beginning held that the religion consists of a known body of facts, and that these facts can't change, because they're what happened, what *is*, and that the church Jesus founded was founded with the precise purpose of seeing to it that the facts, while maybe better *understood* over time, never got distorted or contradicted by human interpretations and investigations of them.

I'm afraid I have to qualify this, because even Catholics, as opposed to the Catholic Church, have been heavily affected by the New Morality. There are plenty of Catholics who are for practical purposes Protestants and who still show up for Mass when they feel like it (and who think that that Commandment that you go to hell if you don't come every Sunday is something that can be safely ignored. God loves us too much to send us to hell for sleeping late). There are plenty of Catholics who directly repudiate what the Catholic Church teaches, because they "feel comfortable with" the ritual and so on. But these aren't *Catholics*, because Catholicism is a "community of believers," and the believers are believers, as I said, in a set of facts, not a set of values, except as following from these facts.

Catholics—that is, those who *do* submit to the teaching of the Church—also hold that what is true is in fact true, and true for everyone, Catholic and non-Catholic alike; and if someone doesn't believe something that is in fact true, he is mistaken—often sincerely

mistaken, but objectively mistaken. People might be *saved* in spite of sincere adherence to a mistake, but that doesn't make it not a mistake; it's just that God takes into account our human fallibility.

But what they have *never* held is that, in spite of this, the truth (in the sense of what the fact actually *is*) doesn't really matter, or that something can be true for one person or system and false for another person or in another system. This was really a large part of the Galileo controversy. The Church was investigating, among other things, whether Galileo held that it was "theologically" true that the sun went around the earth, and simultaneously "scientifically" true that the earth went around the sun. The Church put its foot down. One or the other of these is false; they can't both be true.

That is, the Catholic Church holds that what is known as true by faith is always somehow compatible with what is known by any other method of investigation; and so the Church has never shied away from scientific investigation, and has a whole body of rational thought and empirical study that, while not "canonized," so to speak, by the Church, has met with the Church's approval, and which has been used by Catholic theologians to show how Catholicism and science are not incompatible and in fact mutually reinforce each other.

Sure, the science the Church adopted has been mistaken over the years, and sure, the wedding of theological interpretation to what seemed to be scientifically established fact has led occasionally to pig-headedness (and yes, even persecution); but the point is that the Church holds that what the Church holds by faith as true is compatible with what science knows from investigation is true. If there seems to be a conflict, then it's only apparent, and deeper study of both the science and the religion will reveal that there isn't any real contradiction.

To a non-Catholic, all this is idiocy. The Pope sits up there on his throne decreeing X, Y, and Z to be the *truth*, as if the truth could be established by decree; and based on this, he decrees that certain

things are moral and others are immoral—and that everyone, Catholic or not, should agree with him because he’s got this divine insight into the real reality of things, and is right because he’s infallible, not because the facts say he’s right. For instance, Pope John Paul II says that women can’t be priests (not that they *may* not, but that they *can* not; that is, that it is a physical impossibility for them to be), and declares that he can’t change this edict, because it’s out of his hands; it’s part of the “deposit of faith,” and there’s nothing he can do about it. If he were to attempt to “ordain” a woman, he wouldn’t be able to carry it out.

This drives New Moralists so far up the wall they crash into the ceiling. Who the hell is *he* to say that women aren’t worthy to be priests, and to declare, “I have spoken, the case is closed forever”? His answer is, “Who am I? Nobody. Who am I to say that the earth is not flat? Nobody. But in fact the earth *is not* flat, and I can’t say it is and make sense. It’s out of my hands. Who am I to say that women can’t be priests? Nobody. If you don’t believe that this is something analogous to the earth’s being round, I’m sorry; but that’s the way it is. I simply can’t declare the opposite. I mean, if you want to be a priest and you’re a woman, then don’t be a Catholic. You can be saved in spite of your mistake; I’m not sending you to hell. But facts are facts, whether you like them or not, and I simply can’t change the facts to suit your preference or even your sincerely mistaken belief.”

It’s because of this attitude that Catholicism is The Enemy. It claims to have a grasp on some facts that no one will ever be able to prove aren’t facts—and that goes directly counter to the First New Commandment. You *can’t* be sure of *anything*; *anything* is subject to refutation. (Even “You can’t be sure of anything”? Even “Anything is subject to refutation”? If it is, it isn’t.) And to say that *moral absolutes* follow from these “facts,” means that moral absolutes apply to everybody, even the “sincerely mistaken,” whether they realize it or not—which implies that the “sincerely mistaken” should be

educated out of their ignorance into—Catholicism! God save us!—I mean, Evolution save us!

(I might remark that as a philosopher, I have spent a good deal of my life trying to show that one or another tenet of the Catholic Church is a contradiction and therefore impossible; and I haven't been able to do it. I certainly *can* show that you can't prove by observable evidence that many of them are *true*. But by the same token, I haven't been able to prove that any of them *can't* be true. And some things, like that there is a God, can in fact be proved from observable evidence.

I also did a study to try to establish if the Biblical stories about Jesus could be explained as legendary accretions to the life of a remarkable man. The problem with this hypothesis is that it predicts that the earliest view of Jesus would be the guru who taught wise things, and only after several generations would people begin to believe the fantastic tales of multiplying bread, walking on water, getting up from the grave, and so on. But when you look at the documents, the earliest ones—the letters of Paul—are all about the “Christ of faith,” with almost nothing about the enigmatic statements like “turn the other cheek,” and these documents are known to be written in the Fifties, far too soon for legends to be believed as facts. And Paul is adamant that they *are* facts, and that he has eye-witnesses to prove it.)

But, of course, New Moralists have lots of company in their reaction to the arrogance of Catholicism. Protestants absolutely bristle at the notion Catholics have that they're “sincerely mistaken” (though not *as* mistaken as, say, Buddhists or even atheists). The hubris! *Ecrasez l'infame!* Besides, the Catholic position is stupid. I mean, to say that Jesus has got a gag that he's going to shove into some Pope's mouth as soon as that Pope tries to say something contrary to what Jesus holds is true—I mean, what *is* Jesus, some kind of God or something?—Oh.

And look at them, walking around in skirts that aren't even plaid,

and wearing their collars backward, and having those funny hats and then on Sunday getting all dressed up like Superman in silken capes and things and doing hocus-pocus and claiming that they made a piece of bread into a living human being (though it still looks and feels exactly like bread, surprise!), and hearing people tell them all their sins and claiming they can forgive them, and all the rest of it. I mean, how could anybody *believe* this?

Exactly.

But there's still that inconvenient little fact that if Christianity isn't true—and, certain Evangelicals notwithstanding, Catholicism *is* a form of Christianity, even more “fundamental” in many ways than the Fundamentalist version—you still have your sins, and so you should either kill yourself or mentally do the same thing and redefine yourself and your world into the New Morality feel-good dream world.

Put it this way: Catholicism is what you would logically expect if Christianity is objectively true, and isn't just a “way of life.” And it is this that makes Catholicism the Great Satan for the New Morality; it must be ridiculed out of existence; and if it can't be destroyed by ridicule, then in the last analysis, we'll just have to get rid of it any way we can.

Notice how New Moralists turn the other way at reports of religious persecution, especially Catholic persecution, throughout the world. It's like the loyalist Argentines during the period of the “dirty war,” when people just disappeared. It's unfortunate, but it has to be done somehow. So Catholics are getting killed and enslaved in Africa and China, it's not really happening, and if it is, it's not so bad as people make it out to be, and anyway even if it is that bad, it's only self-defense against what would be far worse if these people ever got into power (as you can see from the atrocities inside Vatican City, for example?). A world in denial.

Notice one little thing before I leave this. Isn't it interesting that the Catholic Church is practically the only institution that hasn't

budged an inch in its official position on sexuality? In fact, Pope Paul VI predicted in that encyclical *Humanae Vitae* that dealt with contraception that if contraception caught on, the ills that are so manifest nowadays would inevitably ensue.

Of course, since sex is the very essence of the evolutionizing organism, then that's the main reason why Catholicism has to be destroyed. But it *does* make you sit back and think, doesn't it, if you happen to hold that all sex all the time in as many forms as possible might have something *in fact* wrong with it, that this institution, which claims to have a lock on what the actual facts are, is about the only one which hasn't leaped onto the New Morality bandwagon to a greater or lesser degree.

To sum up.

But before we get into the epilogue, and talk about the real issue that emerges from all of this, let's take stock of where we are.

If you're going to accept that human beings evolved just by chance because the organisms best adapted to their environment were able to reproduce more, then logically speaking you have to be a New Moralist. You have to believe that reason isn't something special that's oriented toward the way the world actually is (the facts, or truth), but is merely the device which makes us reproductively efficient.

Hence, you hold the First New Commandment, that there's no truth anyhow, and so no one (least of all Catholics) should lay claim to it. You also necessarily hold the Second New Commandment that no one should force his morals on anyone else—and you have to ignore the fact that this very Commandment violates itself when you try to force others *not* to force their morals on anyone else when they believe they have an obligation to do so. And from this follows the Third New Commandment, that we must be tolerant of all lifestyles—except that of fundamentalists and Catholics in particular, or of anyone, like Bill Gates, who violates some other one of the

New Commandments.

And, of course, since the driving force of evolution is sex, then sexual activity must not be restricted in any way, and we have the Fourth New Commandment; and the Fifth immediately follows, that the only thing that is to be curtailed in sex is the inconvenient consequence that it tends to result in that great polluter, a child, if you don't do something about it. And, of course, this implies the Sixth New Commandment, that the environment is bigger than we are, and we must, like good organisms, cooperate in advancing the environment first and ourselves as members of it.

And since we are really nothing special, we must not extol reason as if it made us distinctive and "superior" to everything else, because that would be discriminatory, and thus the Seventh New Commandment follows. And making a profit is one of the most discriminatory things that can be done, and so we have the Eighth New Commandment, not to be greedy. And the cord that ties all this together is the Ninth New Commandment, not to do what is unhealthy, because what are we but living organisms just like every other one? And so violation of any one of these New Commandments is merely to do what is unhealthy in one way or another.

Finally, there is the temporary New Commandment, to avoid worshiping in a Christian, and especially Catholic, way, because that supposes an absolute truth, spirit, reason as supreme, and all the other evils that go directly against the *real* truth that there is no truth and no spirit. This is, however, only a temporary commandment, because, once the real truth is understood, then Christianity will be revealed as the laughing-stock it really is. (I might remark that Auguste Comte held this same view some hundred and fifty years ago; it seems that those traditionalists die hard.)

If, on the other hand, you hold that there *is* such a thing as truth that can be known by reason, then—however reason appeared on the scene—it *is* superior to unreasoning instinct, and we *are* something special; and with a little further investigating, you're on the way to

accepting that there *is* such a thing as spirit, and that conscious life may not in fact end with death. Whether that leads you to Christianity or not, it definitely leads you away from the New Morality, because it means that we have to be consistent with a self that is governed by reason and the facts, not feelings, and that we are not subordinate to the environment we find ourselves in, even though we are part of it.

—But in all of this, and no matter what view of humanity you take, it's still the case that you can often fulfill more of your reality if you violate some aspect of it that doesn't matter to you. And since it's human to look to your own advantage, that means that it's often human to do what is inhuman. But that doesn't make sense.

And that's what the next chapter is about.

Epilogue: What's the point?

Let me set this up by telling you a pretty long story. Years ago, I was teaching a course in critical thinking, and the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings were on the tube. I told my students, “This will be a good exercise. One of these people is telling the truth, and one is lying. Either, based on what we now know, could be telling the truth. But what a person says has implications. You listen to the testimony and answer these questions: If he is telling the truth, what else has to be true? Are these things true? If she’s telling the truth, what else has to be true? Are these true? Based on the answers, you might be able to find out who’s lying.”

I, of course, myself did what I asked the students to do, and from the testimony, I concluded that if Thomas was telling the truth, Anita Hill had to be lying. If she was telling the truth, then he and seven—I think it was—other people who had no particular connection with him (people like the head of the University of Oklahoma) were lying or mistaken. Not to mention that if she was telling the truth, it somehow in all those years never occurred to a woman

lawyer dealing with sexual harassment (the EEOC, after all) that all she had to do to get him dead to rights was conceal a tape recorder (à la Linda Tripp) on her person and record his incriminating remarks, especially since she'd testified that he actually told her that if she could prove what was going on, he'd be ruined. It was no contest.

The next year, 1991-92, I taught the course again, this time using a new textbook I hadn't looked at too carefully beforehand, and which, I found, had all kinds of political examples, as usual slanted heavily to the left. No problem, it was a logic course. But I happened to have a student who was far to the right of Rush Limbaugh *and* a young girl Democrat from Arkansas in the class—this was the Clinton election year, remember. Well, as you can imagine, discussions frequently got off the topic of logic, and some weren't exactly quiet; there was one time when I actually had to leave my position behind my desk, because the conservative was about to get up from his chair, and it looked like something physical might happen. An exciting course. (It *was* fun to teach.)

But since we were then at the point in the course of dealing with the fallacy of using emotions instead of reason to draw conclusions, I thought I'd introduce it with an illustration. The next class, I came in, and in a subdued air told the kids that the dean had heard the uproar in the class, and—with a catch in my voice—I said that he had called me into his office and told me that this wasn't the first time I'd used classes for political propaganda (at which I got indignant and told the class, "I don't know who reported this, but you know as well as I do that I've always been neutral!"), and then described my discussion with him, and—with tears in my eyes now—I said that nothing I could say made any difference, and (sob) the upshot was that this was the last class I'd be teaching. I didn't know who'd take over, but I wanted the class to know that I didn't mean to do anything but teach them how to think, and...*And there's not a word of truth in anything I've been saying.*

My little speech lasted a good ten minutes, and I could hear during it that electric silence where no one is breathing or moving, and I could see the shocked looks and the tears in the eyes of several of the students. Of course, they got mad at me when the last line sank in, and I said, “You see? You believed me, didn’t you? I was ‘credible.’ It’s the easiest thing in the world to be credible in that sense if you happen to have had some acting lessons. And the point is, all I did was play on your emotions; since I *looked* sincere, you believed I *was* sincere, and it never occurred to you to think that since I have tenure and there’s such a thing as academic freedom, if Thomas More fired me for something like this, I could sue them for millions. They wouldn’t dare.”

That’s not the end of the story. As it happened, I was surfing the TV one night the next year and I happened to catch Clarence Thomas’s speech to that eighth-grade graduating class, where he had been invited by the teacher and then disinvited by the (black) Principal, and there was such a stink that he was invited again—and the speech was a masterpiece of humble nobility and encouragement to the kids to try their hardest and not let adversity or what people thought stand in their way; what was great about this country was that they could still make it. I had also read several of his decisions, and they struck me as very intelligent and cogently reasoned.

Still not the end of the story. Since he is still the object of a smear campaign, I decided one day to write him and tell him about all this, to let him know that there are people who know what the real situation is, and who are behind him and admire him. I kind of hoped for a note thanking me, but nothing happened. What the hell, who am I, and he’s a Justice of the Supreme Court. That’s the way things are.

Months later, my wife called me at school and said out of the blue, “Clarence Thomas called and wants to talk to you. Yes, it’s *the* Clarence Thomas; I recognized his voice. Call this number.” Thinking it was a trick, I called the number, and got, “United States Supreme Court, Justice Thomas’s Chambers.” Wow! Well, I said I

was returning the call, and a short time later he called back, saying he'd been meaning to call me for some time—and we talked for almost two hours, one guy to another, with him encouraging me to keep up the good work of getting people to think instead of feel, and on and on, trading anecdotes and views. I was overwhelmed.

This is one side. This man, a brilliant person and a paragon of noblesse, humility, decency, and—yes, charity—is regularly scorned and vilified by the people who should be looking up to him as a model of what black people have a right to aspire to in our society. And all because he didn't take the easy course and capitulate to the New Morality and ignore the truth; all because he was black and dared to perpetrate independent thought. And he will doubtless go to his grave with a reputation of being scum—because people choose to believe the New Moralist who was “credible.”

And on the other side we have Bill Clinton, who everyone knows had sordid sex in the oval office of the White House and lied about it and suborned perjury and obstructed justice—and was acquitted by a pusillanimous Senate, and finally not prosecuted at all by the Independent Counsel. Nothing happened to him, in other words. And we learned also that a woman says he actually raped her, and everybody yawns, even though the White House itself doesn't deny that there was something going on, but says it was “consensual.” Consensual rape, that's rich! Tell that to Mike Tyson. Yeah, but see, in his mind, if she actually was in the same room with him, she “really wanted it, deep down.”

(It was interesting to see people like Richard Cohen, the liberal columnist, eventually getting a *bit* disturbed by the sleaze. On March 3, 1999, he wrote that he thought he knew Bill Clinton, and now he's wondering. “Who is this guy?” he asked. I'll tell him who he is. He's a liar.)

But there are still plenty of people who admire the man, and will till the day he dies. (There are people who admire Stalin, for that matter, and some that still admire Hitler.) The point is that Bill

Clinton is not going to suffer for what he did. Other people get life for rape, but he won't. And as to the future, he's home free. No one can bring up the charges again, or it's double jeopardy, and no one will dare touch him for anything he does from now on, no matter what it is—and so why shouldn't he keep doing what he damn well pleases?

Not even Monica suffered—though you can bet she *would* have if it hadn't been for that stained dress. It looks as if she's not only going to be rich, but will be the latest Victim the media put in the Church of the New Sanctity. So *she's* learned her lesson, hasn't she? If you want to really get ahead, sometimes you have to give one. And why not? What has she lost, really? Sure, the Ken Starrs of this world think she's a slut; but look at what all decent-minded people think of Ken Starr. Apparently Mommy and Daddy knew this; they seem to have been proud she was of service to the President, even if they didn't foresee what the service was.

There it is, ladies and gentlemen. There's the real issue in all of this. Why be decent, if what happened to Clarence Thomas is what you get? Why not do what you know is wrong, if it doesn't make any difference and is fun? If you're actually a *lot* better off for it?

And, in the last analysis, who cares even if other people suffer, as long as you come out ahead? Why *should* you put yourself out for other people? *You're* the one that matters to you. How does it do you any good if you suffer so other people will be happy? And don't give me that crap about how good you feel when you suffer to make other people happy. You know, "Give to the United Appeal and have that warm glow for the rest of the year." Better I should keep the money and buy a space heater.

Let's be realistic here. None of you like to be lied to, so you know that lying is wrong. Now, how many of you have lied? Oh? And how many of you lied and got away with it? Really! And I'll bet you feel *really bad* about yourself for that; you can't live with yourself, right?. I mean, everybody lies. So it's a "sin," I suppose, but

everybody does it, and if you're clever at it, nobody's the wiser and nobody's harmed, so what's really wrong with it?

—You know what's wrong with it, as I said, because you don't like to be lied to, even if you aren't harmed by it. If someone says he's telling you the facts, you want what he thinks the facts are, not some fantasy that serves his purpose.

Well sure, but what difference does it make?

Precisely.

To do what is wrong is for you to act as if you weren't what you are: to pretend that you're something that you know you aren't. We're not talking about mistakes here; we're talking about those times when you *know* that what you're doing is inconsistent with what you are (however you define it), and you knowingly and deliberately choose to do it—because if you don't, you stand to lose a lot more than you gain. You're a fool if you don't act immorally, because you're a fool if you deliberately bring harm on yourself.

And let's face it, if you *don't* do what's immoral, you can bring tremendous harm on yourself. If Bill Clinton hadn't lied and obstructed Ken Starr's investigation in such a clever way, he'd be, not the first elected President to be impeached, but the first President to be impeached and thrown out of office—with no legacy except that. As it is, he had two more years as President, and the American people, as usual, had an attention span of two weeks. (And *think* of all the people who are just aglow with admiration at how clever he was!)

One time when I was discussing this sort of thing in class, a woman came to my office after the session and told me, "I actually am an inmate at a minimum-security prison around here; they let me out to attend class. The reason I'm in prison is that I came home one night to find my husband lying on the floor in a pool of blood, and a gun beside him. I fainted, and woke up with a policeman looking down at me. They arrested me, and I was told by the public defender (I'm a poor woman) that if I pled guilty to a lesser charge, I'd get a

ten-year sentence, and with good behavior, I'd be out in two years; if I pled not guilty, it'd be murder, and he'd defend me, but he could guarantee I'd be found guilty, which is twenty-five years minimum, and it would be ten years before I could get out. What could I do? I have two kids. This is my second year." She knew that it was wrong to lie, and very wrong to lie in court (otherwise why would she be telling me?); but she believed she *had* to lie under oath, not only for her sake, but for the sake of the kids. And of course we now know that *everyone* lies under oath. Perjury is only perjury if you get found out—and not always even then, is it? The President had to admit to the Special Prosecutor that he deliberately made false statements under oath, after which his lawyer went before the microphones and said, "But that doesn't mean he *lied!* He *never* admitted that he *lied!*" Sure. It all depends on what "is" is.

Now you have a choice. You can say either that human beings should act as though they're human, or that human beings should do what is to their advantage. Because very often it's not possible to do both. Values (what lead you to the goals you want), as I said in the interlude after the Second New Commandment, are not the same as morals. Then why should we pay attention to morals?

But still, since the essence of humanity is to set goals for yourself and work to achieve them, then the *human* thing to do is to pursue your goals. What I'm saying here, however, is that the way (and sometimes the *only* way) to achieve these goals is to do the inhuman thing. But then that means that it's often human to do what is inhuman. That doesn't make sense.

Once again, don't give me the pablum that in the long run, the decent person will win out over the crook; open your eyes; it doesn't happen. Why are there so many crooks? Precisely *because* it so patently doesn't happen. Who would do what is inhuman if he knew that in addition to its being inhuman, he'd be worse off for doing it? You know darn well that if you got into an embarrassing situation, you'd probably lie your way out of it if you could. Why shouldn't

you? And you know darn well that nothing beyond a momentary twinge is going to happen to you.

Or how many women are there who know that their fetuses are human beings, and that when they have an abortion, they're actually tearing their own child apart limb from limb? And how many women, knowing this, put it out of their minds and have the abortion anyway? And what happens to them? Sure, there's remorse, but they can finish their college career and become the doctor they always dreamed of being, and can help thousands—can save hundreds of lives—and the pro-choicers they meet will applaud their courage, and even the pro-lifers will sympathize. And they justify themselves by the fact that it was such an “agonizing decision.” See, in the New Morality, the more you emote about it, the more noble and righteous your heinous act becomes.

But suppose they don't make the agonizing decision, and they don't have the abortion. Do you think that there's no remorse at the life they had to give up? Do you think there'd be no agony *here*? Why do you think they made the decision the way they did in the first place? And the point is, why shouldn't they have? What have they got to lose?

“Integrity,” you say. Integrity! Big deal! Integrity doesn't put food on the table, and who's *got* integrity anyway? We've all lied, haven't we? We've all pretended that things aren't the way they really are, and we get along just fine, don't we? Why shouldn't we go on doing it?

Because it's not *right*, damn it! True, but who cares? If it gets you what you want, and if you do the right thing and are miserable for the rest of your life, then what's the percentage? And it's *so* simple to be like Billy the Clint and Jesse Jackson and just to “put all this behind us” and get on with our life as if it never happened. And it never *did* happen if we don't think about it. Remember the First Great New Commandment.

So it's human to do what's inhuman. But that doesn't make

sense.

But is this life all there is?

You remember way back in the interlude after the First New Commandment, I talked about the basis of science, that it wasn't actually measurement, but confronting some apparently contradictory set of facts, the assumption being that reality can't really contradict itself. Well, what I've been trying to say here is that human life is so constructed that it almost inevitably runs into a contradiction. It's almost impossible to set goals for yourself and pursue them without somewhere along the line—often, in fact—facing a situation where you have to either give up the goal or violate your present reality; where you have to contradict that “true reality” of yours that is the goal, or the actual reality which is your present self. And either of these is contrary to what it is to be human.

Human life would make sense if the only way we could frustrate ourselves (that is, pursue a goal we couldn't reach) would be to do what is inconsistent with what we now are. That is, if lying inevitably kept you from what it was you wanted to achieve by the lie, no one would lie; if murder automatically made you worse off for killing the other person, no one would be murdered. That way, the human thing to do would also be the advantageous thing to do, and what is disadvantageous would automatically be inhuman.

But that's not the way things are; and so life as we observe it doesn't make sense. At least, if this life is all there is.

And there are other ways in which life as we observe it doesn't make sense. There's a long story here which I'm just going to sketch in an extremely superficial way; if you want a longer discussion of it, see my *Living Bodies* or *Modes of the Finite*.

(1) I mentioned that consciousness, in which the conscious act reacts to itself reacting as well as to what it is reacting to, implies that consciousness can't have a degree (or it would be twice as great as it is, which is absurd), and therefore is spiritual and not a form of

energy. But if it *is* spiritual, then by definition, it can't "run down," which would be to lose *some* of itself—which that would imply that it *had* a degree, which can be lessened. So consciousness ought not to be able to go out of existence. Now when we sleep, there's a sense in which our consciousness "goes out of existence"; but since it wakes up again, it was only dormant. But when we die, it seems there's no consciousness any more. That doesn't make sense; it doesn't need energy to act, and so why should it stop acting when we die?

(2) The thrust of life, as is obvious, is self-preservation. Every living thing, as living, tries to continue living as long as possible, fighting at every moment the tendency it has as a body to run down and decay. This reinforces the notion I was mentioning about consciousness, which is a form of life, after all. Life is *greater* than the energy of the body; it controls the energy of the body, and lifts it beyond its capabilities as energy; and *as* life, it tends to keep going as long as it can.

But if consciousness could survive death because it is spiritual, and consciousness is a form of life, and life tends to go on as long as it is capable of going on, then it doesn't make sense for conscious life to stop at death. That is, its essence as life would say that *if* it could survive death, it would; and its essence as spiritual says that it *can*. Therefore, the conclusion is that it does.

(3) The essence of the human being as free, as I have repeatedly said, is, within the limits given by his genes, to set his own goal for himself and to work to achieve it: to define himself and then work to achieve that definition. Now a being in process is in a self-contradictory situation; its *true* reality is the goal at the end of the process (because it can't exist as it now exists, and that's what moves it toward the goal, where it can exist); so as it now exists it both is and is not itself. It is unstable, in other words, because it can't exist as it is, and must act to achieve the final equilibrium—just as a rock, when released, can't stay up in the air, but must fall down to the lowest

place available to it.

Thus, once you have set the goal for yourself, and said, “I *will* be X,” and started working toward it, your reality is in a self-contradictory condition that can only be resolved by being at the goal; you aren’t really yourself—you’re only incompletely yourself, as Aristotle would say—until you’ve achieved your goal.

But suppose you die before you’ve attained your goal. Then your whole life has been a contradiction, because (as I was just saying) it takes its only real meaning from the goal you gave it, and that meaning is never achieved. Well then, suppose you *do* attain your goal. You will find that you immediately have at least one other goal: that of not losing what you’ve attained. “To be thus is nothing,” said Macbeth on being made King, “but to be *safely* thus.”

In a way, having to give up a goal you’ve attained is even worse than dying in the pursuit of it, because when you’ve attained your goal, you know who you are, and that you’re what you want to be. You are completely yourself. So if you give it up, you have to give up yourself, and what could be more self-contradictory than that? “Smart lad,” A. E. Housman says to the athlete dying young, “to slip betimes away/from fields where glory does not stay.” Which is worse, to be an athlete who dies just before the pinnacle of his powers, or someone like Hank Aaron, who has to go on living without doing the one thing that made life really worth it?

The point, of course, is that neither of these really makes sense. And the more ambitious you are, the worse it gets. If you try the really human, lofty, heroic things, you can almost guarantee a life of frustration; if you set your goals low, then you may be able to fulfill them at least for a while. So the thing to do, as Epicurus said, is to live your life just on this side of boredom; that way, when you come to die, it won’t be any great loss, and you can claim that it was, on the whole, happier than it was unhappy.

If life ends with death, *this* is the meaning of life; don’t be ambitious; don’t try to do great things, because you’ll only make

yourself miserable, and for what? You'll never get what you want anyway—or if you get it, you'll have to give it up, which is worse. Actually, it isn't just Epicurus who holds this. Buddhism and Hindu philosophy in general teach that involvement in this world is the way to unhappiness. That is, *don't* set goals for yourself, and you'll be happy; set the goal of goallessness if you want to make sense out of life.

But this means that, *since* humans are goal-setters, and yet die, then it doesn't make sense to set goals, least of all, lofty human goals. What it means to be human is directly contradicted when you spell it out in practice, if life ends with death. And yet, it's not really humanly possible to avoid setting goals, as Jean-Paul Sartre points out; every time you choose, you inevitably set a goal for yourself. And you can't avoid choosing when confronted with alternatives, because to choose not to choose (to let circumstances determine the outcome) is to choose. So we can't help setting goals, and we can't achieve the goals we set. It doesn't make sense. Do you wonder why people like Sartre concluded that life is absurd?

(4) Now if we add to this what I was saying in the previous section—that the goals we *do* set can be best achieved, at least temporarily, if we violate the reality of ourselves who pursue these goals—we have another way in which the essence of human life contradicts itself. All these four things mean that life is a contradiction *unless* there is a life after death, such that the goals you set for yourself will be achieved, provided only that they are not themselves self-contradictory and impossible—in which case, there's no way they can be achieved.

What do I mean by that? When a person chooses something morally wrong, he knows that he's pretending to be what he really isn't; so he has a goal for himself that he knows (in some respect) can't really be achieved. I mentioned early on the person who has a sex change. He knows he doesn't really change his sex, and this is what he'd really like; but he can *act as if* he'd done it by the

operation, and so he can achieve *more* of his goal than if he didn't have the operation. A thief would like to have the thing he steals belong to him, and he can't do that by taking it; but he can use it *as if* it did, and so most of his goal is achieved, though there's this niggling bit that it doesn't really belong to him that he can't do anything about. The murderer wants his own life to be inviolate (because he's human); but he kills the other human *as if* the other person weren't really human and human life wasn't inviolate.

And so on. There's always *something* about the immoral choice that sets up a goal that can't in principle be achieved, because it's a contradiction in terms. And so every immoral choice is in part frustrating; necessarily so. What I was talking about in the preceding section is that in *this* life it's not *as* frustrating as doing the right thing and giving up the main goal you were pursuing.

So what have I done by all of this? I've sketched out a case that this life can't be all there is to life. If it is, then our consciousness contradicts itself, because it need not stop with death, and yet it does; our life contradicts itself, because its essence is to preserve itself, and it stops when it could in principle continue; human choice contradicts itself, because it necessarily involves setting a goals which are the only meaning your life has, but goals which, in the last analysis, can't be fulfilled; and acting consistently with what you are contradicts itself, because this guarantees that you'll be farthest from achieving the goals you set for yourself. The most important aspects of human life are simply absurd and self-contradictory if our life ends with death.

From which it follows that **conscious life must continue after death, in such a way that all legitimate goals we set will be achieved, and all self-contradictory ones will lead to a worse condition than if we had not set them.**

Now to those who say, "Oh, puh-leeze! You expect us to believe that crap?" I answer, "Why not? You believe that there are such things as radio waves, which are in principle unobservable, simply on

the grounds that without them, it doesn't make sense that the receiver receives what the transmitter sends. When you think about it, you have no problem believing that you can throw little pictures invisibly through the nothingness from the moon or Mars to the earth; that's pretty wild, wouldn't you say? You believe that there were dinosaurs, even though no one has ever seen one, because otherwise the bones don't make sense."

New-morality science has so entrenched itself that any evidence that there might be something not material is rejected out of hand; whereas the most fantastic theories, if they deal with materiality, are accepted without batting an eye. After all, Einstein said, in essence, that straight lines in the presence of massive bodies are what normal people would call curves; there isn't any force acting on things; it's just that things follow the geometry of nothing, and time is part of space. Geometry of nothing? Time is part of space? Why do scientists accept this kind of thing? Because otherwise, what we observe doesn't make sense. Exactly.

The ultimate gamble.

Let me now be a little Pascalian. You are now confronted with two alternatives. Either, as I say, life goes on after death in such a way that if you're moral, you'll achieve all your ambitions, and if you're immoral, you'll be more frustrated than if you were moral—or it doesn't, and when you die, there's nothing. You have to bet one way or the other, because you won't be able to verify it for yourself until it's too late.

If you bet that life doesn't continue after death, you're a New Moralist, essentially; and what this implies is that you should be smart, be a Clinton, and never mind being moral. You should, of course, *appear* moral if you can get away with it, because that way, people will think highly of you and your life will be that much easier. But don't *be* moral whenever it's to your disadvantage, because then you're a fool. Or rather, since "to be immoral" is to act inhumanly,

then what you do is follow the First New Commandment and simply redefine “humanity” to be what you’re “comfortable with.” It’s only good in the *abstract* to do what’s objectively right; in the concrete, you do what will get you where you want to go.

But before you leap too quickly on this Clintonian bandwagon, consider the implications. What you’re saying is that Stalin, Mao, Saddam Hussein, and Fidel Castro, to name just a few, did what people *should* do. They’ve done just fine for themselves, thank you, and if there’s a few million Georgians starved to death or a few hundred Kurds gassed, so what? Notice Saddam Hussein. His people seem to love him; they hate the Great Satan of the United States, who’s causing all their misery. (And, given what I’ve said in this book about the New Morality, of which the United States is a prime exponent, could it be that they might just have a point?) Fidel also is doing quite nicely, even if the Cubans are miserable—but that again is our fault, not his, of course. And what do you want to bet that each of these won’t die in their beds and be mourned by thousands?

What are these people doing but betting that this life is all there is, and that after it there’s just nothing? If after this life there *is* nothing, then they’d be idiots to do anything but what they’ve done. The fact that because of them millions of humans have been treated like cockroaches is irrelevant; *they* have managed to achieve the most that human beings can achieve. You never get anywhere in this life without walking on other people’s heads.

So this kind of thing is what really makes sense out of life. Well it does, if this life is all there is. But then, life itself doesn’t make sense.

—Unless there’s a life after death. You can bet that way. And, as I said, there’s evidence to support you. Real evidence, though not, I admit, knock-you-in-the-eye convincing evidence.

And in *Living Bodies* and *Modes of the Finite* I drew some conclusions about what this life after death would have to be like,

based on the evidence for saying that there is one. First of all, since only bodies can change, the life after death, as conscious life, would have to be in complete equilibrium, totally unchanging (though eternally active). You can't die or develop any further.

Secondly, since in this life, consciousness (though not the same as the brain's activity) depends on the brain's activity, it follows that when the brain stops putting out energy, either all consciousness ceases (in which case, there's no life after death, so we can rule that out), or consciousness becomes total consciousness—since there's no longer any nerve to determine *which* act you will have and which you will not have.

Presumably, then, when you die, you don't go to sleep, but you wake up—with every single act you've ever had present to you “all at once,” so to speak, in all its vividness, just as you originally lived it. (There's a hint of verification of this, by the way, in many so-called “near-death experiences,” in which the person's whole life flashes before him at once.) In other words, after death you are your absolutely complete self: the act of consciousness which is expressed in this sentence, “So this is what it really means to be me.” *This* is the act that never ends, the act by which you are all that you have made yourself.

But this act contains also all the choices you've made (they're conscious acts), together with the goals they imply. If those choices were immoral, then, as I said, you've set up a goal in them which is *in principle* impossible of achievement, and so is necessarily frustrating. And since you can no longer change, that frustration never disappears; you spend eternity striving for a goal you know you can't reach, determined to reach it, knowing that you never will.

The interesting thing is that even in this life, we can't get rid of an act of consciousness once we've made it. You can forget it, but it's there, as you can test by simply sending energy into the proper nerves. In my sixties, I find myself waking up humming songs I learned in Kindergarten, which I haven't thought of for decades. And

if I'm not careful, I'm apt to think of some of the really awful things that have happened to me, and there they are again after all these years, in all their agonizing vividness. Ask someone who's been through combat.

But when you lose your brain's nerves, it's got to be all or nothing—and the evidence seems to indicate that it's all.

So once you've made an immoral choice, you're stuck. You may forget it for years and years—for the rest of this life—but it's there, with its goal you want to achieve but can't. And it will wake up, in all its vividness, once you die, and you will forever be striving for the impossible, knowing (a) that it's impossible, and (b) that you could have had it, if only you had turned away from this immoral means and done the right thing, in spite of the fact that it *seemed* that you wouldn't be able to attain it in this way.

Just think. If Bill Clinton had let Monica and Paula and Jennifer and Juanita and how many others alone, then whatever satisfaction he could have had from them he would eternally have, without the unfulfillable desire to make a wife of someone who wasn't his wife. Whatever he *really* wanted from them was something he couldn't really have—from *them*. But it *was* something he could have had, if he hadn't tried to find it in them. But now he never will. And he'll always want it, and always try to find it, knowing that it's not there.

You see, the other side of this coin is that goals that are *not* immoral, that are in principle possible, however unlikely, *will* be fulfilled after death. Otherwise, this aspect of life contradicts itself, and the immoral person is better off in the long run than the moral one, because the immoral person has at least partially fulfilled himself, while the moral one has foregone his goal to act consistently with his reality; and so it isn't his fault he didn't achieve it while he lived.

The meaning of life.

So what this theory basically says is that you were constructed in

such a way that in this life, you decide what it is to be you, and to confirm that this is a true choice and not a daydream, you work to achieve that goal; and then after you die, you *are* what you have made yourself (you *do* what you have done and have chosen to do), forever and ever—always supposing that you didn't choose to do what is in principle impossible. In that case, you are eternally *not* your true, complete self, and are eternally trying to get there and eternally failing.

Presumably, this eternal frustration is the meaning of “the fires of hell,” since fire has always been a metaphor for desire. I should point out, however, that eternal frustration doesn't necessarily imply *complete* frustration. The immoral person has never been *absolutely* depraved, and so, we can assume, is fulfilled in some respects, and only frustrated in others. I would guess that the degree of frustration depends on how important the impossible goal is in your life—and importance, as I said, like the goal itself, is subjectively established. Thus, a person who in a moment of weakness cheats on a test he didn't really need to cheat on will be eternally frustrated for this lapse, but the frustration will be minuscule; and so he could on balance be much more happy than unhappy forever; while a person who *had* to cheat or his whole future is ruined will find that his whole life turns on the impossible goal, and will be miserable.

Consider the suicide, on this view. He finds his life here so intolerable that he chooses (let's suppose he's not driven out of his mind by emotions, and actually chooses this) to go out of existence. This theory implies that he spends eternity trying to go out of existence because he can't stand existing—and knowing he can't ever actually *go* out of existence. No matter how horrible your life now is, don't take this way out; because this theory might just be true, and it's not worth it; you won't succeed in being nothing, and you won't be able to stop trying.

Makes sense out of being moral, doesn't it, in spite of what I said earlier in this chapter?

I can also add another probable conclusion, that the more often you do something which in itself is insignificant, the more important it becomes in your life, and the more of your personality is wrapped up in it. For instance, I gave up smoking a pipe on July 4, 1980—note that I still remember the date. By that time smoking was an act which I didn't really enjoy any more anyway; but after I quit, I spent a whole year unable to write, and I'm a compulsive writer; I write the way some people eat. As soon as I'd sit down at the typewriter (those were the old days), I'd automatically reach for the nonexistent pipe, and try to organize my thoughts without gazing at the keyboard through the miasma of tobacco smoke—and nothing would happen. My handwriting changed, and so did my personality, in some respects not for the better. I was amazed at how much of myself was involved in this little act; how important it had become to me, even in spite of the meager pleasure it offered. Ask anyone who smokes.

So the immoral choice is self-frustrating, and the degree of frustration depends on how much a part of your life it has become; it's just that you can't ever get rid of it. Notice what I'm talking about here is absolutely perfect poetic justice. There is no "punishment" for sin; the punishment *is* the sin; the sin is what the frustration *is*, because the sin precisely consists in wanting what you know is impossible and refusing to accept the limitations you can't do anything about. Many people want to commit the sin and escape the punishment for it; but that's a contradiction in terms: what they want is to frustrate themselves without being frustrated.

We can *seem* to do this in this life, because good and bad things happen to us in this life based on our *acts*, irrespective of what our choices are. A man who tries to murder another one, and sneaks into his hospital room and scares him enough so that the patient recovers from his sickness has *chosen* to kill him, but has actually saved his life, and let us say is hailed as a hero for it. And yet, it doesn't make sense to be rewarded for the opposite of what you intended; and for life to

make sense, the choice itself (which is the only thing, in the last analysis, we have absolute control over) is what should ultimately have its good and bad effect. And it does, but only after death, if this theory is true.

Well, but suppose you repent. Doesn't that solve the problem? Not at all, any more than if you cut off your arm, your being sorry will put it back on. Repentance simply *adds* another unrealistic choice saying, "If I had it to do over again (which I don't) I wouldn't do it; I choose not to have done what I did." You can't erase a choice once you've made it, any more than you can erase any other act of your consciousness; the old choice is there along with the contradictory new choice, forever and ever, fighting with each other.

Now I submit that *any* temporary suffering you endure in this life, however severe, will always be less than eternal frustration, however insignificant the frustration might be. Let me take an extreme example. Let us say that you are captured by the enemy and you can save all two hundred million of your people from nuclear destruction if you tell a lie. It's worth it, right? Wrong. Let us say that the minor frustration you endure for a million years is equal to the pain of the average person's death by the nuclear blast. Then a million years after you die, the amount of suffering you have experienced balances out the suffering you saved one person among the two hundred million. Fine. Now multiply that million years by two hundred million, and it's a wash; you've added the same amount of suffering you saved people from. But that's just the beginning of eternity, and from then on, it's a net loss.

"Well," comes the objection, "but you *did* save other people's lives." No you didn't. They all died anyway, didn't they? Not by a nuclear blast, but somehow. And the point of this theory is that death is a *transition to completeness*, not the disaster to end all disasters. Each person who died achieves after death (a) all that he actually accomplished in this life, and (b) all that he *intended* to accomplish; and so he is as completely fulfilled as he wishes to be,

eternally. The few moments we have in this life vanish to a point when considered in relation to the life we live after we die; *that* is our life; this life is simply a kind of gestation. You might just as well mourn the death of a seed while you look at the plant that grew from it as repine over the fact of somebody's death, if there's such a thing as eternal fulfillment afterwards.

But the point here is that you must never, ever, deliberately do what is morally wrong, or you have locked yourself into a box you can't get out of, and you're frustrated eternally. And that's why, whether you're a New Moralist or an Old Moralist, you *know* you can't violate the code you think is the right one, no matter how much you might gain from it. There seems to be something built into us which says, "It's not just bad to do what's inhuman; I had *better not* do it." And is this surprising, if there is a God who made us master over our lives, but gave us limitations which we can't surpass and must accept?

"But God loves me too much to do a thing like this to me!" I beg your pardon; he loves you too much *not* to do it, if that's what you want. Love is in essence respect for the reality of the beloved, not imposing one's own will on him by force. God made you free, but limited; you can *choose* to be anything; but you can only *be* human—and you know this. You've got plenty of wiggle room within the limits of human possibilities; but once you go outside those possibilities (and know you're doing it), what you're saying is, "What I really want is to be frustrated. I'd *rather* be frustrated pursuing this chimera than content myself with the limitations of my human reality."

Fine; if that's what you want, then that's what God wants for you, because that's what you've made yourself, which means that it's his eternal plan for you too. It would destroy your essence if He said, "Now laddie, you don't *really* want that; *I* know what's good for you, and I'm going to give it to you even if you hate it." If I happen to think that Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* is better music than Snoop

Doggy Dogg's stuff, and I drag you to a concert and have you sit through three hours of it, have I made you happy? Happiness is subjectively determined, remember, by the goals you freely set; you can't make a person happy by substituting something else for the goal he wants. And the point is that the sinner would be *more* unhappy accepting the limitations he was born with; and not even God can make him happier by making him more miserable.

Put it another way: This life consists in figuring out and deciding what "happiness" means in your case. Some people perversely define frustration as greater happiness than its lack. Those people too get what they ask for, forever and ever. That's what it means to be free.

Then we're all damned.

But since we've all sinned, then all of us are more or less eternally frustrated, and there's nothing we can do about it. You're catching on. And this, unfortunately, is as far as philosophy goes. But, as I mentioned, I happen to believe that this isn't the whole truth of life.

We've all made a mess of our lives; but no one of us realized, when we sinned, the full implications of the sin—though it was no sin unless we had *some* idea that it was a self-defeating act. Hence, our whole personality, unlike that of, say, Satan, was not wrapped up in this act, even if, as I mentioned with my smoking, more of it might be than we realized when we did it.

And in this life, we can change; our whole life is not present to us; it stretches out from the past to the future. Hence, *it is possible* for God to erase the choice as an operative choice (as long as we live in our bodies) without destroying our reality. There's no particular reason why he *should* do this, since we *did* deliberately make the choice; but he *could* if he wanted to. It would be a kind of miracle, because *we* can't get rid of the choice by our own efforts; but *he* can do it, since everything about us is ultimately under his control.

This, by the way, is what is meant by "supernatural." Supernatural doesn't mean *against* nature, or impossible, but impossible by nature

left to itself. For instance, if you send a birthday card to your mother and you take your dog and hold a pen in its paw and guide the paw and pen to write “Trixie” on the card, the dog’s signature is a supernatural act. The *dog* couldn’t write its name; but its paw could be *directed* to do it by a higher power—in this case, yours.

And, since, as I said, God *can* do this for us, I believe he *does* do it, under two conditions: First, since the choice does in fact permeate our whole personality, we must be willing to reject the self we have made for ourselves up to this point, and be willing to be made over into someone else we know not who. (“Unless you deny yourself, you cannot enter.”)

Let me expand on this a minute. Those who treat alcoholics and smokers and drug addicts know that the real problem with these people is not giving up the *act*. The drinker’s problem isn’t that he has to give up drinking; he has to give up the *drinker*. And who will he be after he’s done it? His whole life is tied up with having alcohol available in case he needs it. What will he be if it’s not there any more?

No one can tell him. He has to make an act of faith that he will find himself—a different self, but himself—on the other side, and be willing to say, “All right, I refuse to be myself. But I can’t give myself up by myself. How could I? I’m me. I’m helpless. You take me away from myself; make me into someone else. I trust you that the self will be someone I’ll be glad I became.” This is what I’m talking about.

The second thing is that the person has to be willing to love God more than he loves himself. And that’s not so hard, once you make the first leap. The *fact* is that you aren’t the most important person in the universe; objectively, you have no importance whatever, because importance, as I’ve mentioned, is subjective. You *can* regard yourself as just another creature of a loving God, a creature God as made to create himself unto his own image and likeness, and now has rescued to be able to do it without the botch the creature made of it up to now.

And there's an added fillip to this. Once you have given yourself up, rejected yourself, and asked God to remake you, he remakes you in two ways: You are first of all the finite self that you choose with your newly-partly-erased life to be; but secondly, your consciousness (which in the abstract is unlimited, but in practice must limit itself) is miraculously expanded so that it also thinks The Infinite Thought, whose name is YHWH, and who calls Himself Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "It is not I who live any more," says St. Paul; "Christ, the Prince, lives in me." "I pray," says Jesus at the Last Supper, "that they will all be one and the same thing [*hen*, the neuter singular of "one"; one thing] in us, just exactly [*hosper*, not *hos*] as you are one in me and I am one in you, Father." Jesus is one "with" God in that he *is* God; in exactly the same way, we are made one thing in Him. "We will be like him, because we will see him as he is," says St. John. We will, in some sense, *be* God, without losing the finite self we are.

—Don't ask *me*. I'm just telling you what's there in the Book I believe in. *I* don't understand it.

In fact, no one knows what this entails; no one can desire it, because it is inconceivable. It is a pure gift, beyond anything we can imagine. But it is promised us, if Christianity is true. If it isn't, of course, then we still have our sins, and they will be with us eternally.

"But you can't believe all this! It's all just wishful thinking; it's too good to be true!" I beg your pardon. *If* there is a God who needs nothing from this world (and there is; I can prove it), and therefore who created us purely and simply for our sake and not for his own amusement, isn't it too good *not* to be true? What else would you expect?

But there's a catch.

Still, it's not all quite that rosy and simple. Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that what I said above might actually be true. What it means is that you'll be just exactly what you choose to be, no more and no less, forever and ever and ever; and even if you made

perverse and stupid choices, if you actually want to get rid of them, you are rescued from them, and your eternal life won't be frustrated by them.

So what's the problem? Just this. You get what you *choose*, not what you would like to have. You have to want it enough to say, "Yes, that's what I'm going to be; I'll start work on that right now." You don't have to make it the be-all and end-all of your life; it doesn't have to be your *only* goal; but it has to be an actual goal, not just a daydream.

Let me tell you a Blairian parable. There was a man who was assistant office manager in a firm; and it happened that his desk looked out into the door of the president's office, where he could see the eight-foot mahogany desk with its secretary-arranged little piles of papers to sign, and behind it the recliner chair—and the closet with the golf clubs for "power conferences." He would dream, "What I wouldn't give to be president! Look at the life he lives!"

Now it came to pass one day that the manager of that little section of the office moved up, and the personnel director said to our hero, "The manager's slot is open, and you're the logical choice. What do you say?" And our friend became afraid. He answered, "Look, it's Friday. Could I have the weekend to think it over?" The director said, "Sure, no problem. But I want a definite answer by Monday; we can't let that post go vacant."

And over the weekend, our man could not sleep. He thought, "How often have I seen the manager about to make a foolish decision that would have cost the company money, and maybe himself his job; and I saved him by pointing out where he was going wrong. If I do something like that, who is going to save me? I could lose my job."

And so on the following Monday, he said to the personnel director, "Really, Smith is an up-and-coming guy who needs the extra salary more than I do; I think he'd do a fine job. And if I stay where I am, I can steer him right if he's going to do something

wrong. I think you'd be better off with him, actually." And the director answered, saying, "Actually, I'm glad to hear you say that. We considered him, but felt we had to ask you first, because you're next in line. You're sure this is the way you want it?" "Oh yes," said the man.

And so the man kept his little position and his desk, and kept looking through the door of the president's office and saying to himself, "What I wouldn't give to be president of this company!"

The moral? He'd give anything *not* to be president of the company. What is the president except the one who is responsible for all the decisions of the whole company? And this man didn't want the responsibility for the little decisions of his small corner of it. And so, he had defined his happiness—his *eternal* happiness—to be sitting there at that desk, looking through the door to the president's office, and dreaming of being something he would reject if he were actually offered it.

That's what I mean by saying you have to actually make the choice. It's not enough to say "wouldn't it be nice if..." You have to say, "I'm going to have it; at least, I'm going to try." You'll be what you've *chosen* to be—and you can choose to be anything that's not a contradiction in terms—but you have to choose to be it. God is not going to give you after you die something you had a chance to go for and decided wasn't worth it.

You may have noticed in the course of this book how many things I've said I "do." I'm an amateur in just about everything. My field of expertise is philosophy, and specifically two Greek words that Aristotle used; I know more than anybody in the whole world about those two words. But *that's* not something to base a life on. So I paint paintings, and given a couple of art shows (and sold some); I used to sing (until I found out what my voice sounded like to others), and plan to do some composing now that I've retired; I've acted in amateur theater, and even made money playing Charles Dickens reading his novels and I still do a solo performance of John's

Gospel; I invented a camera which can take more-or-less three-dimensional pictures (which I call “natural-eye” pictures) you can see without glasses or special processing; I’ve translated the New Testament and gone into detail in physics and biology, and I think I’ve been able to see some things there that not even physicists or biologists have; I’ve written novels (some of which I hope will be published some day); I lift weights; I have, of course, taught for years, just about every aspect of philosophy.

Why am I saying this? Not to make you think, “Wow! What a person Blair is!” What am I? Nobody. The point, and the only reason for mentioning all of this is that I believe in what I was just saying—at least enough so that I think it’s worth a try. So what if I’m not Cézanne or Monet? So what if I’m not Pavarotti or Beethoven? So what if I’m not Einstein or Tolstoy or Aristotle or Tyndale or Daguerre or Leonardo? These things interest me, and I see no reason for not pursuing my interest. As G. K. Chesterton once said, “If a thing is worth doing at all, it’s worth doing badly.” Many of the things I’ve done wouldn’t have been done at all if I hadn’t undertaken them, because there’s nobody else with the weirdo point of view that I have who would even bother to do them. And who knows? Even if what I’ve done is mediocre or worse, it may be a start for somebody else to pursue to great heights. If it’s possible for you, as the Army says, to “be all that you can be,” I intend to be something really complex.

Because, even if I fail now, and I’m right, I’ll succeed after I die. And I’ll tell you a not-very-well-kept secret: my ambition in life is to change the way the world thinks for the next thousand years—minimum (always supposing the world has that much time left). Why not? Socrates did it, and he never wrote a word; he’s still doing it through Plato’s writings. St. Augustine did it; Thomas Aquinas did it. Why not me?

You see, the beauty of this theory is that your success after death doesn’t depend on your actual abilities, but your ambition. All you

have to do is try. And the higher you set your goals, the more your life here will be a failure and a frustration, because what you do here depends on your abilities and your luck; but your life after death is the *real* life, and that just depends on what you tried to do—provided always that you didn't cheat to get there.

My students would sometimes laugh at me when I told them what my ambition was. They could see what I'd accomplished. There I was, wanting to change the lives of millions upon millions of people, give them hope and ambition, inspire them to strive for greatness, and I was talking to maybe twenty people, perhaps five of whom were anything but bored right out of their minds—especially when I got to the “not cheating” part. And when I dared to bring up sex—well. And in my whole career of teaching, I've had to print my books myself, because publishers I've sent them to have said, “Well sure, that's very nice and interesting and everything, but who's going to use it except you in class; we can't make money that way.” And they have a point.

And now I'm retired, and not even teaching any more; and so far I haven't even got a nibble to the queries I've sent out about this book. But I'm not asking for your sympathy any more than I was asking for your admiration a minute ago. My life is an experiment.

If I'm right, two hundred years from now, people will be talking about George Blair the way they talk now about David Hume or Thomas Aquinas, or Leonardo—because, after all, part of the experiment is to prove that the Renaissance Man isn't impossible in our day and age. Not that it matters that they'll be talking about me—except in this sense: it matters because of the prediction I'm making now. This son of a piano tuner and a farmer's daughter, a blind man and an alcoholic, the dope of the family, changed the course of world culture from one headed for disaster to one headed for hope and glory. And that must be because he was right. Therefore, let's get on the bandwagon and set lofty goals for ourselves. He did it, why can't we?

And if I'm wrong, well, I will have tried. No one will know about me two hundred years from now; but then I won't be anything two hundred years from now, and nothingness won't care that nobody knows about it. But my life up to now, at least, has been fascinating. Not a lot of fun, I'll admit, in many ways; but certainly interesting; and it makes sense. How few in our present age can make that statement!

Notice something very important: **It simply doesn't matter what you are now, whether you're black or white or Asian or Indian or male or female or handsome or ugly or short or tall, or whether you were abused as a child or whether you had a wonderful life; what matters is what you *choose* to be; and in the last analysis, that's *all* that matters, because that's what you will *be* forever and ever. Just don't give up and keep trying.**

You'll fail, in this life. So what. Fail forward, and I'll see you on the other side—millions upon millions of you, I hope; and I'll modestly laugh when you tell me, "Without you I never would have even thought of trying to be what I am, and look at me! I made it!" and I'll say, "I know; isn't God wonderful?"

Think of it. What more can you ask out of life than to get out of it exactly what you ask of it, forever and ever and ever? And yet that's the conclusion that seems to emerge if you have the courage to face *all* the evidence about what life is, and face it *squarely*, without the bias that life is at bottom a fraud and a cheat that cons us into thinking we're in control and our life can make sense, even though it really doesn't.

Well, maybe it doesn't. But maybe—just maybe—it does. Is it worth a try? That's up to you.