

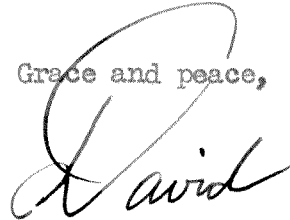
Dear Joesph,

As you may remember from some of our talking in London during March, I was involved in teaching a course in Ethics and Contemporary Values at the American College of Rome. The enclosed essay is a pulling together of some of the work I did in preparation for the course, and also some of the brooding I've done in relation to what we as an Order are doing in the whole arena of the new ethics.

I used your lecture on Indicative Ethics from several years ago as the basis for much of the paper. Then I took the classical structure for doing moral philosophy and have tried to articulate indicative ethics using these categories.

There is obviously a lot more to do on this, but I was quite excited by some of the things I discovered and wanted to somehow get anythings that might be helpful to our global brooding into the stew.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed text "Grace and peace,".

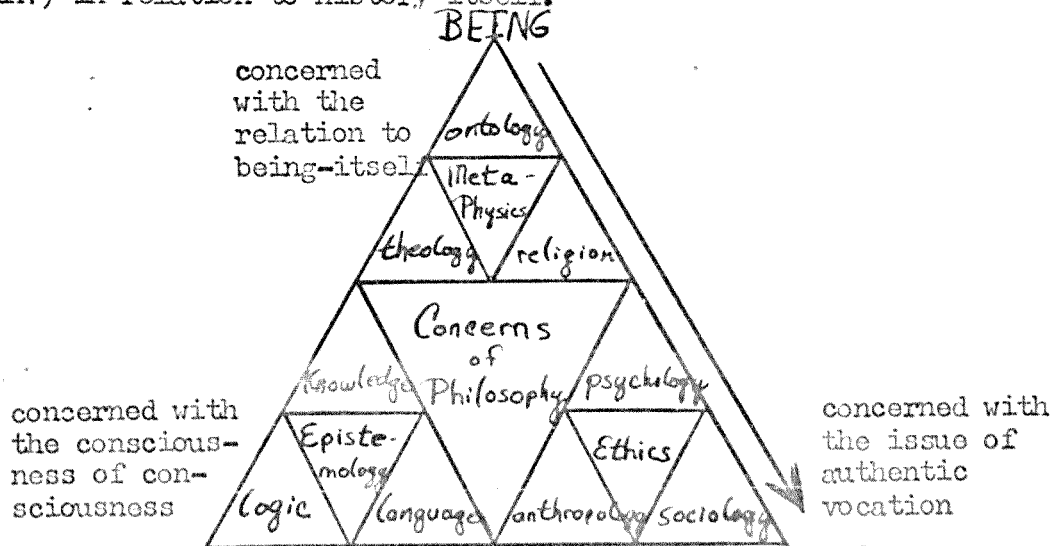
BUILDING A NEW ETHICAL MODE

INTRODUCTION

The history of moral philosophy or ethics in the 20th century has been the history of the struggle to come to terms with the rediscovery of the possibility of authentic, secular transcendence (i.e. the appearance of "the Other World in the midst of this world" or the "happening of transparency"). Every ethicist of this century has addressed his thinking in this direction or he has not really been taken seriously. The schools of thought vary greatly in terms of their understanding of the meaning of living as a moral man in the post-modern world; nevertheless, that a new ethical mode is being born is clear to all. This essay consists of a brief description of the impact of the "happening of transparency" on the whole philosophical enterprise, a historical sketch of the major strands of 20th century ethical thought, some notes toward articulating the philosophical foundations of a "new morality", and finally a brief exploration of the practical implications of a new ethical mode.

I. THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW PHILOSOPHY

Classically the discipline of philosophy is divided into at least three arenas of concern. The first is the knowing dimension of man's existence. This is called epistemology. It raises such issues as how man knows what he knows in relation to the way life is. What is language and how does it function? What constitutes logical, rational thinking? The real question underneath all of these is the question of identity—just what is man? How do we objectify the process of human consciousness in order to better understand human being? The second concern of philosophy is the being dimension of man's existence or the arena of metaphysics. The struggle here is to articulate the nature of final reality and how man relates himself to that which finally IS in the universe; namely, the Ground of Being itself. What is the ontological structure of existence? How does man authentically express and symbolise his life as ultimately significant over-against the void or the abyss—the absolute mystery which defines humanness itself? The real existential question here is discovering the courage to be rather than escape into the various avenues of an inauthentic life. Third, philosophy wrestles with the doing dimension of life, which obviously is the field of ethics. Ethics is always the task of relating ones doing to the knowing and being dimensions of existence. What is the life style that is an authentic response to the way things really are? What is the authentic deed? What is man's responsibility both for himself and the world? How does one talk about obligation and freedom? The profound moral question here is finally the question of vocation (i.e. what concretely do I do with my one life and one death?) in relation to history itself.



In the midst of the 20th century cultural revolution literally every foundation and presupposition upon which the philosophical enterprise was based in the past has been shaken, and a new philosophy is being born. The old epistemology based on 19th century rationalism, the old metaphysics based on a "two-story" understanding of the universe, and the old ethics based on natural law and moralism has collapsed with the advent of post-modernity.

1. towards the new epistemology. 20th century life has dramatically pushed human reason and the process of rationality to its limit. The very quest to know the real, to know what life is really all about, has in the final analysis revealed itself as futile. All of man's knowledge shows that he finally knows nothing. Human rationality itself is ultimately based on the irrational. As Ortega y Gasset has said, man's knowledge is nothing more or less than his own invention of a solution, a map, an architectural design of how he is going to cope with the great problem of his existence. Man only knows his world through his interpretive grid of the chaotic whirlwind of his times. The very question of what it means to be human is answered precisely when one dares to risk the invention of new alternatives of living, with his own life. Teilhard de Chardin has aptly described our era as a mutation of consciousness itself. The new epistemology is based on this mutation--a mutation which has to do with inventing trans-rational modes of thought and action by which a truly creative response to what is happening becomes possible.

2. towards the new metaphysics. The secular, scientific age has collapsed the previous "two-story" understanding of reality. The new clarity that the earth is but a miniscule speck of dust in the vast emptiness of the cosmos has not only altered our grasp of the universe, but has destroyed all "other worldly" quests for reality and meaning. Mankind has discovered that the only reality, meaning and significance there is, is found precisely in the living of life itself--in this world. The abyss of nothingness--the final mystery--is the only reality which can be labeled ultimate. The new metaphysics begins at this point. It is in and through the profound encounter with the abyss of existence that man grasps the final nature of things over-against which he lives and dies. There is no other world to which he can flee. There is no other encounter by which humanness can finally be understood. The new metaphysics is the profound rediscovery of the mystery, depth and greatness of being-itself.

3. towards the new ethics. The discovery that the direction of history is the result of the concrete deeds and decisions of men has exposed the raw freedom and creativity which is at the core of human being. Finally, man's life is nothing more or less than the concrete way in which he decides to impact and change the historical process. He no longer sees himself as a victim of unknown or natural forces which predetermine historical directions. Rather, he sees himself "in charge"; he is the inventor and creator of the future. The foundations of the new ethic are this new mode of participation in and responsibility for the course of history; a truly trans-moral stance. No past social forms can be presupposed. The answers of traditional morality are seen as but one among many possibilities. The new creation is out of nothing and is risked on behalf of the whole civilising adventure.

It is crucial to see that one's ethical stance is, consciously or unconsciously, formed out of his epistemology and metaphysics. No man ultimately commits himself to a mode of participation in history that is uninformed by what he knows to be the way life is. Such an ethic would be merely an abstraction and finally both irrelevant and destructive to human being. No man's doing is ultimately unrelated to his grasp of final reality (i.e. that which gives life its meaning and significance). Such an ethic would be mere superficiality and finally would reduce one to an inauthentic style of life.

## II. THE 20TH CENTURY ETHICAL STRUGGLE

There are at least four major schools of moral philosophy which have endeavoured to build new ethical foundations in response to the assault of the post-modern world. Although each approaches the problems and issues of ethics from a different set of presuppositions and perspectives, they are all striving to deal seriously with how to talk about and give practical form to a new morality, appropriate to the present age.

The classical structure of moral philosophy is key to discerning the exact nature of the 20th century struggle. This involves four basic questions and/or issues which grow out of man's practical experience of living: a) We do in fact distinguish between what we call "good" and "bad" actions, between "right" and "wrong." In many ways this is the fundamental question upon which one's whole moral philosophy rests. Just what is meant by the word "good" and specifically the "morally good"? Here, explicitly or implicitly will be both one's metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions. b) In our lives we experience a sense of obligation to do what we call right and good and to avoid doing what we call wrong and bad. More precisely, what is the nature and source of the obligation we experience? c) We likewise experience a sense of freedom in choosing to act in one way or the other. The issues and questions raised here are basically concerned with human choice over-against scientific laws of causality and determinism. Can we talk about man's freedom in any meaningful way? d) We do in fact experience a sense of responsibility for our actions and an inclination to hold others responsible for theirs. To what and for what is man responsible as he lives his life? This is obviously closely connected with how one understands man's freedom or lack of freedom.

These provide a framework in which to examine the work of some key 20th century moral philosophies. Following is a brief description of four of the most formative ethical positions of our time.

1) Naturalistic Ethics. Naturalism is first and foremost a philosophy of this world, (i. e. all aspects of our lives must be explained and decisions made only in relation to the world in which we live and within the realm of our human experience). For the naturalist, the good is understood as that which is maximally useful for human growth and progress. Because there are no fixed goals in our totally dynamical universe, man himself is "in charge" of his own evolution. That which contributes to his fullest development and progress is the good. Man's obligation is therefore to fully realise his potential as man in the world. He must rely solely on his own experience of life as it is interpreted and empirically tested by science (including psychology, phenomenology, history, anthropology, biology, physiology, economics and sociology). Freedom is this experience of being "in charge", both of one's own destiny and of the realisation of the world. In the ongoing process of observing, judging, weighing-up, deciding and acting man grasps new possibilities of being the master of history. This very fact is his responsibility; namely, that he live in such a way that all life is affirmed and that new possibilities in relation to the future are created.

2) Analytical Ethics. There are at least two major schools of thought here—the linguistic analysts, who claim that philosophy's only role is to analyse language and the various forms of logic and thinking, and the positivists who limit valid knowledge to that which is scientifically verifiable. For the analysts, to speak of the good as something objective (i. e. a quality which is perceived as real in relation to certain acts) is impossible for it is in no way empirically verifiable, either directly or indirectly. Therefore, all moral language is finally reduced to emotive responses to a given act, or merely the description of the processes of moral thought and action. But it has nothing

to do with the way things really are. Man's obligation is understood as the acceptance of the general consensus of society in relation to totally relative moral laws which are, nonetheless, necessary for society's functioning. A careful investigation of man's ethical patterns in terms of the "stimulus-response mechanism" is crucial to this task. Although man may subjectively feel freedom, the objective, verifiable fact is that he is to a greater or lesser degree totally conditioned by his society and does in fact act in relation to the various levels of socialisation which he has undergone. His responsibility is therefore to and for society in terms of its effective functioning and maintenance.

3. Existential Ethics. Probably no contemporary philosophy has had a greater popular impact on our age than existentialism. Although the formal articulations of the philosophy have been important, its practical manifestation in our culture has had a more profound effect on the masses (e.g. the cinema, poetry, painting, theatre, and music). The poetic key to existential philosophy is Jean-Paul Sartre's statement that "existence precedes essence." In other words, what and who man is, is not given or in any way predetermined. Man's life is a continual process of inventing his essence (i.e. deciding by the concrete way he lives and dies, what and who he is going to be). If we must talk about a "given" essence, then it is precisely this freedom and creativity to invent meaning and significance and direction for human life. The good is therefore seen to be that which fosters and elicits the freedom which man's existence is--the good is that which enables man to authentically embrace his freedom. It of course follows that there is but one obligation in life--freedom. This is however not merely an abstract ideal, for it is concretely manifest in and through concrete deeds of freedom performed in equally concrete situations of human decision. Everyman is assigned by history a very specific "project" to do; namely, his existence itself. Everyman has but one life to live and one death to die. His freedom is in choosing how to do his project in the midst of the concrete situations of history. His decision literally creates his being and the being of mankind. Man is finally alone in this decision and must assume the ultimate responsibility for what he creates by his actions, taking into himself all of the tension, conflict, risk and ambiguity of his freedom.

4. Psychological Ethics. The formal exploration of the subconscious dimension of man's life has opened many new arenas of struggle for moral philosophers. Human life is seen primarily as the tension between two forces: eros, the drive toward happiness, fulfillment, and creativity--the "life urge", and thanatos, the drive toward destruction, hostility and weakness--the "death urge." The good is a matter of affirming and coping with the reality of this tension both in terms of one's individual self and in the larger social context in which man must live. This provides a working definition of a mentally healthy person. Man is born with definite needs which define his nature as human: the need to find ways of transcending the immediacies of his life, the need for love, the need to experience himself as securely grounded in life, the need to exercise his creativity, the need for a sense of meaning and identity. His obligation is nothing less than to come to terms with the reality of the human situation and find within himself the creative potential to live in the reality of his situation (i.e. to cope with these tensions and needs as they are uniquely manifest in his own personality). Man's freedom is only at the point of his ability to adjust to his situation, for man is both psychologically and socially determined by many known and unknown forces which give form and structure to his personality. He is nonetheless responsible for developing and using his reasoning potential to gain both mastery of himself and of his world.

SUMMARY CHART OF KEY 20TH CENTURY ETHICAL THEORIES

<i>theory</i> <i>structure</i>	NATURALISTIC ETHICS	ANALYTIC ETHICS	EXISTENTIAL ETHICS	PSYCHOLOGICAL ETHICS
GOOD right and wrong	Human Evolutionary Growth/Progress	Individual's Emotive Likes/Dislikes	Authentic Human Freedom/Creativity	Affirmed Personality Needs/Structure
OBLIGATION nature and source	Realising Human Potential	Accepting Societal Consensus	Creating Individual Essence	Coping With Situation
FREEDOM choice and causality	"In charge" Of the World	Totally Socially Conditioned	Invention Of Life "Project"	Adjustment To Behavioural Determinism
RESPONSIBLY self and world	Forging Historical Destiny	Enabling Societal Effectivity	Deciding Mankind's Being	Mastering Self and World

These positions have pioneered in laying crucial new foundations for doing ethics in a post-modern world. The new emphasis on man's ultimate responsibility for the world and for his own fate and destiny has broken the chains of an "other worldly" reference which has in the past too often been an escape from authentic responsibility for this world. The new clarity on the absolute ambiguity and total risk of any ethical decision, and yet the unavoidable fact of having to make just such decisions which do in fact alter the course of history, has forced man to struggle with the process of building temporal responses to the needs of the times, based on a dynamical and relative grasp of the universe. Likewise, the fresh emphasis on that which is objective and verifiable using the methods of science to describe life experiences has provided a new, common, "one-story" approach to the process of observing, judging, weighing-up, deciding and acting that is the essence of all decision making. Finally, a realistic picture of the relationship of society and the individual (i.e. man is in society and society is in man) has pushed beyond naivette regarding man's role in society as unlimited and undefined and beyond a social determinism which ethically emasculates man at the point of his responsibility for himself and society. Although none of these in themselves, nor the mere combination of them is equivalent to the forging of a new ethical mode, they are nevertheless crucial beginning places in relation to the new creation which is demanded for the contemporary age.

### III. TOWARD AN INDICATIVE MORALITY

To speak of an indicative morality is to begin with the question of the "is" rather than the "ought". It is primarily concerned neither with issues of goodness, virtue, goals, or values (classically known as the teleological or axiological

approach) nor with issues of conscience, mores or the right (the deontological approach). These concerns have defined moral philosophy to our present day, including, to a greater or lesser extent, the formal ethical thinking of the first half of this century. An indicative ethic focuses on the question of what is actually happening (i.e. what is going on in the times) and how does one forge an authentic response to what is given.

A second crucial dimension of an indicative ethical stance is the collapse of the "two-story" universe. Man today understands that he lives and dies in one world. There is no place else to go to find meaning, significance and possibility for life. When a man is born, he is born into this world--there is no other. When a man dies, he is really dead--there is nothing else. In other words, 20th century people grasp themselves as living on one plane. They have, however, at the same time experienced the transparency of that plane; namely, the inescapable encounter with the profound mystery, depth, and greatness of being-itself. And this encounter happens in the midst of the mundanity of daily life--in the midst of this world.

A third dimension, which is central to indicative ethics, is modern man's experience of the radical intensification of consciousness. Man today is not only aware of himself as a self, but he has seen that he is responsible for creating his own selfhood. Any meaning or purpose that his life has is his own decision and invention. Those who go searching for life's meaning and purpose, only make manifest their lack of identity and direction. Only those who have courageously embraced and affirmed the givenness of their lives as human have found meaning, significance and purpose. The pretense that there is someplace else to go, some other realm which gives life significance is really the negation of life as it is, in a futile attempt to find life on some other terms than human.

This section shall explore this ethics of the "IS" using the classical structure for moral philosophy.

1. The Good. To speak of the indicatives of life (i.e. the way life is foundationally) is to deal with that which is objective and universally definitive of human being. Only at this point is it possible to discuss the indicatives of man's existence; that is, the structure of being-itself. This is the meaning of the word ontological--the struggle to see the way humanness is "put together" so to speak--the struggle to discover that which is objectively true for everyman's life. The moral man is one who lives his life in relation to the indicatives of humanness as they are uniquely manifest in his own daily experience of living. This tension between the objective givens of life and the subjective experience of it is the happening of transparency; namely, in the very midst of ordinary life in this world, the profound mystery, depth and greatness of life itself appears. The particular content of this happening can in no way be presupposed for it is precisely at the centre of concrete living that one's unique experiences become transparent to the way life is for all men. A new awareness, an intensified consciousness is born in relation to the objective states of being which circumscribe humanness itself. Only at this point is authentic living possible. Only at this point does one grasp that the meaning of life is nothing more or less than the genuine living of real life. This then is the good in indicative ethics; namely, that which releases profound HUMAN being--that which releases man to live his humanness rather than pursue life on some other terms. The human indicative or "states of being" are at least as follows.

a) life IS mystery. In one way or another, every man experiences the final unknown, the inexplicable mystery which is at the centre of conscious life. The wonder and fascination experienced in the miracle of simply being (as opposed to not being) and the sheer dread experienced in the face of the

contingency of all things is the definitive human encounter. No man grasps his life as truly human without inescapably standing before the abyss, (i. e. final nothingness). This is not to say humanness ought to be about mystery. Humanness is about mystery. Humanness is not humanness except through this primordial encounter in the midst of life. The wonder of being man and the dread of being man appears whenever life's uncontrollable, unpredictable, limited nature intrudes into one's consciousness revealing the humiliation, weakness, resentment and tragedy of existence, and the consciousness of inevitable death.

b) life IS freedom. In one way or another, every man experiences the raw creativity which life is. The question is not whether man has freedom. His very existence is freedom. The radical intensification of his consciousness continually presents him with new possibilities of exercising his creativity. Man is far more than just his immediate relationship to life. He is in every moment relating to the particular, immediate relationship which defines and limits his existence. This awareness, this consciousness of consciousness is his freedom. The precise way in which he decides to act and live in fact alters history. He alone is unconditionally responsible for his life with no one else to blame. Nothing can take this freedom away, for life itself continues to give it anew in each new moment of possibility—with each new level of consciousness.

c) life IS care. In one way or another man, as man, cares for the world. He experiences a profound gratitude for the gift of life. In light of over five billion years of evolution, the very fact that humanness made it at all is a shocking, inexplicable fact. Prior to grasping himself as a member of a particular family, nation or race, man is in reality a member of humanity. He is born into humanness. When he therefore decides to embrace his life as human, his concern is inclusive. This is exactly the same experience as that of grasping his responsibility for all who likewise share and participate in the life of mankind. Try as he may, he cannot escape the fact of his commissioning by life to care for all. His gratitude for life and his universal concern are finally the same reality.

d) life IS fulfillment. In one way or another, every man experiences the over-whelming fact of the fulness and seemingly limitless possibilities of life (i. e. its "full-filled-ness"). A man need search no further than the depths of his own being for the profound meaning and significance of life. Every man is given but one life to live and but one death to die. These are finally the only important issues. Over-against the objective fact that life continues to affirm life, any so-called "problem" which seems to prevent one from genuinely living life is seen to be an illusion, an escape from coming to terms with the issue of courageously embracing life as gloriously human in all of its suffering and tragedy. Over-against the objective fact of his own personal contingency, any so-called "solution" to the reality of death is seen finally to be an illusion which masks the issue of how one will decide to expend the few fleeting moments of his life. Life, lived in the awareness that there are no problems which prevent man from completely living his life is fulfillment.

In the indicative ethical stance, the good is defined simply as that which releases and opens the profound depths of life as mystery, freedom, care, and fulfillment. The moral man is the one who embraces and affirms the way life actually is—the indicatives, the givenness of human being.

2. Obligation. How then is it possible to deal with the question of the "ought" in an ethic of the "is"? Is there any meaningful way to discuss the nature and source of man's obligation in life? Every man knows, consciously or unconsciously that finally he must decide to affirm or negate the way life really is. There is no middle ground. The decision to affirm some parts of reality is in fact ultimately a negation. Nevertheless, life itself continually beckons man to live in affirmation. In every new moment of his existence, he is given new possibilities for truly creative living. And yet, life likewise leaves man with his freedom to decide for or against being. This crisis of decision is inescapable. Man's answer to this question (i.e. the "yes" or "no" to living in reality) is all that matters throughout his entire life. It is a decision which must be remade in each new situation. Therefore, the one obligation which universally faces mankind is the obligation to live the indicatives of his humanness as an affirmation of being-itself. In other words, the indicatives of life are themselves the imperative of life. The moral man is one who has seen the great indicatives of his existence and has placed upon himself the necessary requirements to be what he actually is. Here emerges a new style of discipline--not something imposed on man from a supernatural or rationalistic universe--but a mode of life by which one obligates himself to a life lived before the final nature of things (i.e. before the ontological). This affirmation of reality can be spoken of as follows.

a) trusting the power of being (or the courage to be). The man who has decided to live his life as an affirmation of reality has taken into himself all of the dread and fascination of his humanness in the courageous decision to live his humanity to the bottom. In other words, in spite of all rational arguments to the contrary, in spite of all the ambiguity and uncertainty, he has decided to live in the ultimate trust of the power of being. He knows that life is mystery, freedom, care and fulfillment and that authenticity is nothing other than the "faith-full" embracing of life as it actually is. The decision to trust life is however not naive, for he is clear that life will continue to be as it is, mystery, freedom, care and fulfillment. This act of courage, in the midst of his existence, is the meaning of transcendence. Only as man dares to live beyond the borders of despair and illusion about life does he discover the profound possibility of affirming, and thus of creatively relating to life.

b) responsibility in the universal community (or inclusive living). The man who has decided to live his life as an affirmation of reality has experienced the fact that he is accountable to being-itself for the universal community (i.e. for all that participates in being). There is no dimension of life which he does not experience as his personal responsibility, from the most particular events of his own local situation to those happenings which effect the future of the entire globe. In fact, he is sensitive to the point of seeing that ultimately these are one and the same. Every decision or lack of decision, every deed or lack of a deed shapes the destiny of history. There is no such thing as an insignificant act in a world where final contingency faces all things. Every man decides, consciously or unconsciously, how he will live and how he will die. This is man's responsibility. No one can relieve him of the anxiety of deciding what mark his existence will leave on history. The moral man is one who has, in the very decision to affirm the way life really is, taken upon his own shoulders the weight of the future.

c) the transcendent reinterpretation of history (or the "nowness" of past and future). The man who has decided to live his life as an affirmation of reality has confessionally seen the goodness of all that is. In other words, being possibility, is seen by him to be the demonstration of its goodness, in spite of all the ambiguities that implies. He has grasped that his own particular life is unconditionally received by virtue of the fact that he is mysteriously

sustained in being. He has seen that the past is "approved" (i.e. no amount of discussion or disagreement or argument about how the past "should have been different" will in any way alter the facts of what it was). In reality it is that without which the present would not be possible. If it could be re-lived, he may have done things differently, but this is precisely the point—it cannot. Here the openness of the future faces man. Nothing that has happened in the past can prevent the possibility of the future. The moral man is one who has dared to gaze into the depths of history, and there has seen its transcendent meaning.

d) the unique, unrepeatable nature of life (or the concrete awareness of particular being). The man who has decided to live his life as an affirmation of reality stands in awe before the miracle of his own existence. Not only has the whole of evolution never before brought into being the particular configuration of relationships which define his life, but never again will this unique manifestation of human being appear. He in fact understands that all of history, as it were, has conspired to bring him into being and is likewise "waiting on tiptoes" for him to decide to be the unique self that he is. The moral man is one who dares to offer his own life as a gift to history.

In indicative ethics man's one obligation is to, with humility, gratitude and compassion for all men, live his humanity as a concrete sign and demonstration of what authentic living is for all who possess human being.

3. Freedom. Much has already been said about the radical freedom in which humanness is grounded—it has to do with the consciousness of consciousness; it has to do with the raw creative invention every moment of existence is; it has to do with one's experience of grasping himself as "in charge" of the fate and destiny of history, over-against the final mystery of life. The ultimate root of man's freedom is the unconditional fact of life's affirmation. As long as man refuses to accept and live out of the radical "YES" which being-itself has proclaimed in relation to all that is, he will inevitably experience himself in bondage to some particular dimension of reality. It is the paradox that only one's total obedience to the way life actually is opens him to the profound depths of freedom. The man who has decided to embrace the indicatives of life, as they are uniquely manifest both in his own particular experience and in the broader historical milieu of his day, has in that very decision posited human freedom. The implications of this are that the very essence of the "new ethical mode" is man's decision and creativity. It is the power of decision and creativity that is born when one finally realises that there is no one else to blame for what is or is not going on and that there is no one that is going to come and rescue man from having to come to terms with the givenness of his life and his times. It is man himself who decides and creates his world. Some of the dimensions of this can be stated as follows.

a) man invents life's meaning. Everyman longs for some definitive answer to the question of his identity in life; namely, what is the significance of human life? This profound struggle has intensified in recent years in light of his new lucidity that the earth existed for thousands of centuries without man and will someday likewise continue without him. He has seen that finally the meaning of life can only be found in the very living of life. That which is definitive of life's meaning and significance is life itself. Where else can one possibly look? The purpose and aim of human existence is in no way preordained in some rational or supernatural realm. Rather, it is invented and created by man in and through the concrete way he decides to live and die. This alone is his freedom. This alone creates and measure of humanness.

b) man decides the right and wrong. Everyman longs for some definitive answer to the question of morality in life; namely, what is right and wrong? The new awareness of the fact of relativity has intensified the struggle with the ambiguity and final uncertainty of every decision. The discovery that each man not only creates and keeps his own conscience, in spite of the many forces trying to rob him of his creative moral decisions, but he also stands ultimately answerable to history itself for the decisions he has made and the consequences they have wrought. This is the experience of finding oneself forced to live beyond good and evil in the realm of what constitutes a truly comprehensive response to what is actually happening in the times. Past definitions of the good and the right are certainly relevant as part of the observing, judging, weighing-up, deciding and acting that must be done, but they in no way relieve man of the contemporary demand for a fresh, creative moral invention in each new situation.

c) man acts without final justification. Everyman longs for some definitive answer to the question of the adequate reasons and values behind any decision; namely, upon what sure ground can one stand when faced with a moral decision? Man today has seen that by virtue of the fact that he is alive he is responsible for his world. His every action, or lack of action, effects the lives, not only of his immediate family and acquaintances, but of hundreds and thousands of persons he will never know or see. In the contemporary situation of global responsibility he has discovered anew that the truly free deed is performed in a situation of complete ethical risk. There is finally nothing to which man can withdraw or appeal as the ultimate justification for his deeds. Any attempt to establish such foundations is an attempt to escape the nauseating weight of responsibility for history. In his freedom he alone must decide what deed has become historically necessary and surrender the judgement of its worth to the future.

d) total obligation alone gives total freedom. Everyman longs for some definitive answer to the question of his own creative potential in life; namely, how does one live out of the ultimate freedom life is? In our day man has seen anew that the various obligations he has in life circumscribe or limit his possibilities of creative response (i.e. a decision to live in obligation to one sphere of existence, such as the family or one's occupation, implies the limiting of one's operating context and the possibility of creative response to events and occurrences outside that limiting obligation). However, as long as man lives, obligating himself to spheres of life is inescapable, even if he finally reduces his context to only himself and his own happiness. Therefore, the answer to the question of total and complete freedom cannot be the popular suggestion of getting rid of as much obligation as possible. In fact, the more narrow one's operating context (and thus his sphere of obligation) the less he experiences the possibility of a truly creative response to life. However, what if one expands the sphere of his obligation to that which is utterly inclusive of reality? What if one decides that he will live in responsiveness to the needs of the whole world and the whole of history, and to judge all lesser obligations by this one? Here man experiences entire freedom which is born and realised only as he totally obligates himself to the way life actually is. At this point man experiences the profundity of his freedom; namely, human life is raw, creative possibility limited only by the mystery of being-itself.

Indicative ethics is a decisional ethic—an ethic of creativity—an ethic of freedom. Man creates his own morality in every situation. All of life is a relationship to the ontological and thus each new situation demands the creation out of nothingness of a concrete response to the ontological. The fulness of man's freedom is manifest only as he creatively comes to terms with the indicatives of humanness.

4. Responsibility. The real question of one's responsibility to himself and others is responsible to what for what? This is the question of accountability without which it is finally impossible to speak meaningfully of man's responsibility. In this experience of accountability man finds himself answerable for his life and how he is spending it, and for the world in which he lives and how his participation in it alters its development and future. This question is not addressed to man from an "authority" located outside of the ordinary realms of his experience, or from some traditional standards of judgement or value which is imposed on his life as the measure of his deeds. Rather, life itself addresses the question to everyman and it is therefore inescapable, for it is an integral part of the struggle with being. The ultimate experience of this accountability is seen whenever one is confronted with his own death—that one event which forever seals a man's destiny and freezes him in his authenticity or inauthenticity. Everyman, consciously or unconsciously, is finally responsible to being-itself for the world and his own life. The standard by which one's life is finally judged is the indicatives of human being and one's relationship of authenticity to the living of his life as profoundly human.

- a) the new integrity: assuming responsibility for concrete deeds. The man of the new integrity is one who is sensitive to the destinal implications of every deed. He is clear that every action, or lack thereof, alters and shapes the future. He is therefore one who grasps himself as living in a situation of continual accountability for his every decision. There is finally no escape from the deeds one has performed or the consequences they have brought. The man of the "new morality" has become one, so to speak, with the concrete modes of engagement he has in his freedom chosen. He is his deeds. There is no other way to adequately define his being than by the thrust into history which his life is. This is the foundation of the new integrity.
- b) the new discipline: being the indicatives of life. The birth and creation of a new disciplined style is grounded in one's decision to live the givenness of human being. Therefore, it is a style that is beyond imperatives (i.e. beyond the "oughts") of traditional morality. In this ethic there are no imperatives, and yet there are imperatives on every horizon. But these are those imperatives and requirements one places on himself out of and in response to the great indicatives of his existence. In other words, when the moral man sees the indicatives he requires of himself that he be what he is—human to the core. And this is always related to the concrete day by day, moment by moment way he has decided to live his life as a sign of authentic humanness. This is the imperative in the midst of the indicative.
- c) the new authenticity: focusing life's singular thrust. The authenticity or inauthenticity of any man's life is finally the issue of his death (i.e. the concrete expenditure of life). Man is given but one chance to do his life and but one chance to die his death. Until he comes to terms with and faces this fact, he spends his time searching for and creating ways to evade the profound question this raises for his existence; namely, how he will choose to live and die. No one can decide this for any one else. It is a solitary decision. The man of the new ethic dares to view his entire and each part of it, standing, as it were, at the edge of his own grave. From this perspective the whole of one's existence is seen as but one deed—as but one creative thrust in the vast process of history. The authentic man has reconciled himself to this fact and has focused his concrete living into the one thing and one deed he has discerned as the necessary response to the indicatives of history.
- d) the new vocation: living on behalf of all. The man of the new ethic is

one who has seen that ultimately his responsibility is for all that is, all that has been and all that ever will be. The concrete expenditure of his life is where this vocation on behalf of all is finally manifest. He is one who lives and dies on the "cutting edge" of history itself, where the future is being forged. He has given his own being as a bridge to the future, that a new possibility for humanity might be born. This is not however an abstract ideal. The man of the new vocation is practically and concretely engaged in the task of building the new earth in his own local situation. He has discerned the historical trends of the future as they are locally manifest and is, at the point where they are being blocked, laying down his life to create the practical models which will release the possibility of a human future. He is a solitary, vulnerable man of profound interior resolve, who stands as a perpetual revolutionary in the great human adventure.

Indicative ethics is an ethic of authenticity--an ethic in which man requires of himself that he fully be his humanness on behalf of civilisation itself. His authenticity is in no way separate from the mundane givens of his daily existence. It is rather manifest precisely in the midst of his real life as he decides to embrace the way life is, as its meaning and possibility. In this decision he grasps the universal scope of his responsibility; namely, in his living and dying the entire human drama is altered.

Probably in no other sphere of life than that of morality has the impact of the 20th century been felt more strongly. The fact that the meaning of having shown up as human is being radically redefined has meant that literally every dimension of man's existence is in a state of upheaval and flux. Past answers to the question of being a moral man or a man of integrity no longer speak to the edge of life experience of 20th century people. Many have sought to cope with the present crisis by asserting more loudly the traditional formulas from a previous age, and thus a neo-rationalistic humanism on the one hand or a rebirth of supernaturalistic mysticism on the other. And yet, regardless of how vociferously the glories of past answers are proclaimed, and even dressed in 20th century garb, the new questions of a new era thunder in man's ear, calling for a new moral invention. Many have sought to cope with the present crisis by asserting the final impossibility of dealing with the changing times and thus the emergence of a situational ethic on the one hand, or a "do your own thing" liberalism on the other. And yet, regardless of how vociferously reduced answers to the present moral dilemma are proclaimed, the call for a truly comprehensive, futuristic and intentional ethical mode appears on every front. Civilisation literally stands on the threshold, between the no longer and the not yet. What the future will be is decided by the concrete ways in which people decide to lay down their lives. Indicative ethics is finally a call for man, come of age, to freely and self-consciously take upon himself the burden of the world and to join the long march of care for the future.

#### IV. PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NEW CONSTRUCTION

The final section of this essay is far from finished. For the next several years it will be being written by thousand of people to are practically struggling to find ways of concretely caring for the earth. The actual task of building the new morality or a new ethical mode is in no way an abstract, philosophical concern. The intellectual struggle to articulate the foundations for the new morality is intimately related to its concrete manifestation in society; nevertheless, the present moment is a time of engagement, a time of practical action out of which will emerge new clarity in relation to the necessary intellectual task. Likewise, the task of building the new ethic is not primarily focused on issues of individual morality, but is rather concerned with developing new forms of social morality.

Ultimately, the profound struggle of the individual with ethical questions is the precise arena in which his authenticity as a human being is born. And yet, the authenticity is found nowhere but in the midst of the decision to give one's life for the sake of history (i.e. for the sake of the universal society of mankind). This is the social morality that the contemporary age demands. Finally, the task of building the new ethic is in no way the establishment of new standards of behaviour or new moral principles or rules. It is rather the task of forging a practical operating context for living, that is comprehensive, futuristic and intentional. Man must learn practical model building skills in order to creatively respond to the needs of the whole globe. Man must learn to read the signs of the times and act in response to what is actually happening, rather than what one wishes was happening or in the past learned somehow "ought" to be happening.

Indicative ethics is actually more of a practical method for authentic engagement in the times than it is a formal system of ethical thought. It is the building and sustaining of a practical context that embraces the whole of history and the whole of the earth.